



Quick Look:

There are now fewer claimants in adjudication than prior to the launch of CONNECT.

Key Terms:

Reemployment Assistance (RA): a benefit for Floridians who have lost their job through no fault of their own, are able and available for work, and actively seeking employment

CONNECT: new system to calculate, track, and disperse RA benefits to Floridians

Claimant: individual seeking Reemployment Assistance from the State of Florida

Initial Claim: first time a claimant files for an RA benefit

Continued Claim: after the initial claim is determined to be eligible for RA, all further claims are considered continued claims

Adjudication: review of a claimant's application if any issues are raised when they apply for RA or claim benefits

Contact Center: physical locations of customer service representatives who field calls from claimants about the RA process

CONNECT: Update on the Adjudication Process

Background:

When Florida workers lose their job through no fault of their own, are able and available for work, and are actively seeking employment, they are eligible for **Reemployment Assistance (RA)**. Some requests, or claims, for this benefit may need to be reviewed, or adjudicated, to verify information, prevent fraud, or determine the eligibility of the claim. **Adjudication** is a review process that occurs if there are any issues raised on a specific claim. For example, if there is a dispute between a claimant and an employer as to whether an employee was laid off or quit, that issue goes to adjudication. This is a normal part of the RA process in all states, and may take days or weeks to complete. There is always an active adjudication caseload as part of normal RA operations.

Pursuant to statutory requirements, and after more than six years of planning, development, and design, **CONNECT**, a new RA system, was launched on October 15, 2013. The project's vendor, Deloitte, as well as third-party consultants, assured the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) that the system was ready to launch based on more than a year of testing every component of the system. Shortly after launch, technical defects caused productivity delays and increased the wait time for some claimants, especially for claimants in adjudication. DEO's top priority is assisting claimants as quickly and accurately as possible and resolving the issues associated with the launch of the CONNECT system. The agency carried out several initiatives to help claimants experiencing delays including increasing staff, increasing working hours, system workarounds, and the unprecedented move to pay first and adjudicate later.

By The Numbers:

- Prior to the launch of CONNECT on October 15, 2013, the active caseload for adjudication was approximately **48,000** individuals who had **initial** or **continued claims** with at least one week of payment held for review.
- In December 2013, due to the delays caused by the technical problems, the active caseload in adjudication increased to approximately **65,000** individuals who had initial or continued claims with at least one week of payment held for review.
- On January 15, 2014, the active caseload was slightly less than **60,000** individuals who had initial or continued claims with at least one week of payment held for review.
- These numbers steadily decreased throughout the month of January 2014. The decrease in the active caseload was a result of system fixes, DEO implemented workarounds, increased staff, and increased staff productivity.
- In early February 2014, it was determined that approximately 10,000 individuals were determined monetarily ineligible and their claims did not require adjudication. Those individuals were sent a notice advising them of this determination and their appeal rights.
- **As of February 10, 2014, there are now approximately 13,000 individuals in adjudication who have initial or continued claims with at least one week of payment held for review. The active adjudication caseload is, therefore, now far less than legacy levels.**

****It is important to note that all of these figures have been presented to DEO by Deloitte so this is the best information we have available at this time.*



Timeline:

2006 and 2008

Phase one of the unemployment compensation project is codified into law by the Florida Legislature after independent studies determined it was at serious risk of failure

November 2010

After a competitive procurement process and evaluation, Deloitte is selected as the vendor to negotiate with to design, build, and implement the CONNECT system

March 2011

A contract is signed with Deloitte Consulting and system design begins for CONNECT

January 2012

System testing begins for CONNECT

June 2012

DEO implements Corrective Action Plan after Deloitte fails to meet contractual deliverables; Deloitte agrees to pay \$4.5 million in financial restitution

September 2013

DEO receives validation from multiple third party vendors that CONNECT is ready for launch

October 2013

CONNECT is launched

December 2013

DEO withholds \$3 million payment from Deloitte and begins instituting liquidated damages of \$15,000 per business day

January 2014

DEO takes unprecedented action of paying continued claims first before reviewing claims that have been in adjudication for more than seven days

February 2014

The active caseload in adjudication is lower than before the launch of CONNECT

Where We Are Today:

As a result of DEO's acknowledgement of the issues claimants faced and the agency's swift action to resolve them:

- DEO has successfully and significantly reduced the active caseload of claimants in adjudication;
- There are now fewer claimants in adjudication than prior to the launch of CONNECT.

What Does This Mean For A Claimant?

If you are an RA claimant with an initial or continued claim in adjudication, one of the following applies:

- You have started receiving your reemployment assistance benefits;
- You have received an ineligibility notice as well as information about your legal right to appeal this decision; or
- You are one of 13,000 claimants with initial or continued claims under review and waiting for determination. DEO's top priority is resolving your issues. Wait time for adjudication should be similar to or better than the previous system's performance.

More On The Adjudication Process:

There are five main steps when DEO reviews a claim related to the adjudication process:

1. When a claim is filed, the claimant is asked a variety of questions regarding his or her separation from employment (or continuing employment status if there is continuing employment). The claimant is also asked a number of questions concerning whether or not he or she is able and available for work.
2. The claimant's responses to the questions asked during the initial claim filing process might create issues on the claim, which then have to be adjudicated. These issues are then referred to the adjudication unit for handling. The disposition of these issues will determine whether or not the claimant is eligible for RA benefits.
3. Additional issues that might also be created during the continued claim process when a claimant submits the bi-weekly claim certification. These issues would also be referred to the adjudication unit for handling.
4. Issues might also be added to a claim when a claimant interacts with DEO staff and indicates to the staff member that there is a potential issue. The other way that issues might be added to a claim is when a response is received from an employer or relevant third party that indicates the existence of an issue. When that response is processed, the appropriate issue will be added to the claim by the staff member processing the response. These issues would also be referred to the adjudication unit for handling.
5. Once an issue is referred to the adjudication unit, the adjudicator handling the issue reviews any relevant information, contacts the appropriate parties if any additional information is required, and, once the relevant information has been obtained, makes a determination on the claimant's eligibility, as long as all parties have been given an appropriate time to respond. When the determination is entered, it is then sent to all relevant parties, who always have the right to appeal any determination.