

## WHAT DO I DO IF I SUSPECT I AM A VICTIM OF UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD?

Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans have had their identity stolen or attempted to be stolen as their names and Social Security numbers and other information were fraudulently used by scammers to claim Ohio unemployment benefits.

Many people are just finding out now that they may be identity theft victims as the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has begun the process of mailing out the 1099 tax forms to presumed recipients of Ohio unemployment benefits in 2020.

In 2020, when a person filed for unemployment, there was typically nothing sent by mail from the State to confirm the status of the application. All correspondence with applicants occurred through email. The payments were usually sent by direct deposit or, if the payment was made via a debit card, easily redirected to another address by the scammer. A 1099 form in the mailbox may be the first “notice” a person finds out anything is wrong.

These scams have had significant negative impact on the State’s unemployment funds. ODJFS officials have estimated the amount to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars in fraudulent unemployment claims.

Ohio is not alone. This criminal activity has spanned the entire nation as criminals took advantage of expanded federal unemployment benefits (known as the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance or PUA program) during the COVID-19 pandemic without the normal identity confirmation processes in place. The PUA program allowed for people who normally don’t qualify for unemployment benefits, like self-employed workers, to claim unemployment, in addition to people in the traditional unemployment program.

New checks and balances were enacted on Dec. 27 for unemployment benefit applications, but by that time much of the damage had already been done.

If you get a 1099 tax form from the State of Ohio saying you claimed unemployment benefits when you didn’t or if you get notice that an unemployment benefit claim has been attempted in your name, ODJFS requests you visit their website at [unemployment.ohio.gov](https://unemployment.ohio.gov) where you will see two large red buttons on the top of the page. Click on the "Report Identify Theft" button to notify ODJFS that you received a fraudulent 1099 so the agency can begin the process of reissuing you a 1099 stating you did not receive any unemployment benefit income. This revised benefit income information is also reported to the IRS.

The website also gives you additional information about identity theft, how to file a local police report, and how to notify the Ohio Attorney General that you were a victim of identity theft.