



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Virginia Employment Commission

Demetrios J. Melis
Commissioner

Post Office Box 26441
Richmond, VA 23261-6441

October 1, 2025

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia, 23218

The Honorable R. Creigh Deeds
Chair, Senate Commerce and Labor
Senate of Virginia
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218

The Honorable Jeion A. Ward
Chair, House Labor and Commerce
Virginia House of Delegates
P.O. Box 7310
Hampton, Virginia 23666

The Honorable Adam Ebbin
Chair, Commission on Unemployment Compensation
Senate of Virginia
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218

FROM: Demetrios J. Melis, Commissioner

RE: Update on the Office of the Unemployment Compensation Ombudsman – 3rd Quarter,
FY 2025

Dear Governor, Chairmen, and Madam Chair:

Per the Appropriation Act – Chapter 2, Item 356 I. (Special Session I, 2024) of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) is required to provide a quarterly report to update the General Assembly on the Unemployment Compensation Ombudsman, to the Governor, House Labor and Commerce Committee, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, and the Commission on Unemployment Compensation. This letter serves to meet that requirement.

Specialized Escalation Team:

The Ombudsman duties are carried out by VEC's Chief Customer Advocate. In the third quarter of 2025, the Chief Customer Advocate continued to serve Virginians in need of unemployment assistance. The Chief Customer Advocate is supported by VEC's Escalation Team that includes up to 12-15 employees, overseen by two supervisors. The goal of the Escalation Team has been to provide specialized assistance, within 48 hours, to customers facing challenges navigating the VEC systems, as well as cases forwarded to them by other VEC units and legislative offices.

In the third quarter of 2025, the Escalation Team received 8,403 cases and closed 8,237 cases. On average, the Escalation Team was successful in contacting customers within 47.1 hours and closing cases within 3.7 days. Over 75% of those customers contacted the VEC through the customer contact form on the new VEC website, highlighting VEC's progress in expanding direct lines of communication with those whom we serve. This online form and collaboration with the Escalation Team have helped reduce the waiting times for those who need to contact VEC by phone.

Additionally, the Chief Customer Advocate pays close attention to the case escalation trends. Challenges in filing the initial or weekly claims formed the majority (26%) of cases that needed to be escalated in the third quarter of 2025, followed by payment issues (18%) and specific claim issues (16%). Continued data analysis over time will help the Chief Customer Advocate identify any operational inefficiencies and propose potential solutions.

The Office of Communications:

The Office of Communications is an important resource that the Chief Customer Advocate continues to rely on to expand VEC's reach. In March 2025, to support individuals impacted by the federal workforce transition, VEC's Communications Director attended a phone bank and evening news segment on NBC12 to answer Virginians' questions. The Communications Director also leveraged earned media and social media to educate the public about Unemployment Insurance. Additionally, a dedicated resource page for former federal workers was added to the VEC website.

Outreach and Stakeholder Engagements:

The Chief Customer Advocate conducts approximately 23 meetings with attorneys every month and replies to over 250 emails from employers every quarter. Similarly, the Chief Customer Advocate responded to several mass layoffs in Southwest Virginia through regular communication with Human Resource representatives of the impacted companies. This direct involvement helped route hundreds of calls away from the contact center and provided concierge support to those separated employees. Moreover, during his outreach visits, the Chief Customer Advocate observed technological challenges in Southwest Virginia that many claimants were facing, an opportunity which the Chief Customer Advocate utilized to educate those claimants about VEC's upgraded digital processes.

In conclusion, I am very pleased with the momentum we are seeing in our service improvements, education and outreach efforts, and the positive and collaborative partnerships we have with other interested stakeholders. I look forward to providing updates on our future progress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at demetrios.melis@vec.virginia.gov with any questions or feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Melis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Demetrios J. Melis
Commissioner

Attachment: Escalation Cases by Submission Source in Quarter 3, 2025

Escalation Submission Source	Cases Received	Cases Closed	Avg. 1st Contact Time (Hours)	Avg. Case Turnaround Time (Days)
Agency/Internal	1,434	1,393	41.71	3.8
Customer Web Form	6,408	6,330	50.93	3.4
Governor's Office	259	236	16.92	8.4
Legislator	302	278	17.05	6.2
Total	8,403	8,237	47.09	3.7

