

STATE OF OHIO
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

RANDALL J. MEYER, INSPECTOR GENERAL

**REPORT OF
INVESTIGATION**



AGENCY: OHIO DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES
FILE ID NO.: 2023-CA00008
DATE OF REPORT: JULY 11, 2024

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General ... The State Watchdog

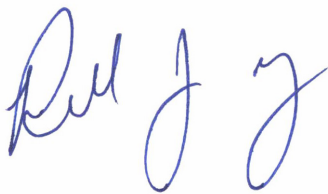
“Safeguarding integrity in state government”

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General is authorized by state law to investigate alleged wrongful acts or omissions committed by state officers or state employees involved in the management and operation of state agencies. We at the Inspector General’s Office recognize that the majority of state employees and public officials are hardworking, honest, and trustworthy individuals. However, we also believe that the responsibilities of this Office are critical in ensuring that state government and those doing or seeking to do business with the State of Ohio act with the highest of standards. It is the commitment of the Inspector General’s Office to fulfill its mission of safeguarding integrity in state government. We strive to restore trust in government by conducting impartial investigations in matters referred for investigation and offering objective conclusions based upon those investigations.

Statutory authority for conducting such investigations is defined in *Ohio Revised Code §121.41* through *121.50*. A *Report of Investigation* is issued based on the findings of the Office, and copies are delivered to the Governor of Ohio and the director of the agency subject to the investigation. At the discretion of the Inspector General, copies of the report may also be forwarded to law enforcement agencies or other state agencies responsible for investigating, auditing, reviewing, or evaluating the management and operation of state agencies. The *Report of Investigation* by the Ohio Inspector General is a public record under *Ohio Revised Code §149.43* and related sections of *Chapter 149*. It is available to the public for a fee that does not exceed the cost of reproducing and delivering the report.

The Office of the Inspector General does not serve as an advocate for either the complainant or the agency involved in a particular case. The role of the Office is to ensure that the process of investigating state agencies is conducted completely, fairly, and impartially. The Inspector General’s Office may or may not find wrongdoing associated with a particular investigation. However, the Office always reserves the right to make administrative recommendations for improving the operation of state government or referring a matter to the appropriate agency for review.

The Inspector General’s Office remains dedicated to the principle that no public servant, regardless of rank or position, is above the law, and the strength of our government is built on the solid character of the individuals who hold the public trust.



Randall J. Meyer
Ohio Inspector General



STATE OF OHIO

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

RANDALL J. MEYER, INSPECTOR GENERAL

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

FILE ID NUMBER: 2023-CA000008

SUBJECT NAME: Janelle Thrower-Rivera

POSITION: Intermittent Customer Service Representative (CSR)

AGENCY: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION: Referral

ALLEGATIONS: Criminal Conduct

INITIATED: June 23, 2023

DATE OF REPORT: July 11, 2024

INITIAL ALLEGATION AND COMPLAINT SUMMARY

On June 23, 2023, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) referred an allegation of wrongdoing by intermittent¹ Customer Service Representative (CSR) Janelle Thrower-Rivera to the Office of the Ohio Inspector General. ODJFS alleged that Thrower-Rivera improperly accessed six PUA unemployment claims, and voided issues on five of the six previously denied claims. Thrower-Rivera's improper actions resulted in the release of PUA funds in one of the five claims. The other four claims had additional issues that prevented Thrower-Rivera from releasing PUA funds to the claimants. The sixth claim that Thrower-Rivera improperly accessed was her own claim for PUA funds that was submitted by her during the time she was employed by ODJFS as a customer services representative.

BACKGROUND

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is responsible for improving the well-being of Ohio's workforce and families by promoting economic self-sufficiency for Ohio's most vulnerable citizens. The department administers various programs that provide public assistance, promote child welfare and facilitate child support payments, provide benefits to the unemployed, and assist individuals in obtaining employment. The department also administers the Medicaid program for the state of Ohio.² The ODJFS Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations (ODJFS OUI) is responsible for administering the State of Ohio's Unemployment Insurance Program for workers and businesses. The ODJFS Benefit Payment Control (ODJFS BPC) section is part of ODJFS OUI and is responsible for promoting and maintaining, "... the integrity of the Unemployment Insurance Program through the prevention, early detection, investigation, enforcement and recovery of improper unemployment insurance benefits."³

¹ Intermittent employees review unemployment claims to assure claimants submit proper identification and meet requirements to receive benefits. Intermittent employees are temporary employees hired for a definite number of hours.

² Source: Biennial budget documents.

³ Source: Benefit Payment Control | Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations | Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (PUA)

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act⁴ was a \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by the 116th U.S. Congress and was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The CARES Act included provisions for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program. The PUA program provided temporary benefits and support to self-employed individuals, independent contractors, and others who did not qualify for traditional unemployment benefits and had lost work due to COVID-19 related reasons. Additionally, the PUA program provided temporary benefits and support to workers whose earnings averaged less than \$280 per week in their former jobs, and permitted qualified applicants to receive these benefits for up to 39 weeks. The CARES Act stipulated that the distribution of PUA benefits to individuals was to end on December 31, 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ODJFS Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations (ODJFS OUI) was responsible for the distribution of PUA benefits to qualified individuals in Ohio.

On December 27, 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021,⁵ was signed into law and extended the expiration date set by the CARES Act for the payment of PUA benefits to qualified applicants from December 31, 2020, to March 14, 2021. The Act further extended the number of weeks an eligible applicant could receive these benefits from 39 weeks to 50 weeks.

Additionally, to strengthen the integrity of the PUA program, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, amended the CARES Act by:

- Requiring states to verify the identity of applicants.
- Requiring applicants to substantiate employment or self-employment, and wages earned or paid, to confirm eligibility for pandemic unemployment assistance no later than 90 days from the date of application.

⁴ The text of this legislation can be found at: Text - S.3548 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): CARES Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress.

⁵ The text of this legislation can be found at: H.R.133 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress.

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021⁶ was signed into law and extended the payment of PUA benefits to qualified individuals from March 14, 2021, to September 6, 2021, and extended the maximum weeks an eligible applicant could receive these benefits from 50 to 70 weeks. The State of Ohio ended the PUA program on September 4, 2021.

During the period when PUA benefits were available for distribution, ODJFS posted on their website⁷ the requirement that PUA applicants self-certify that they met a COVID-19 related reason for their unemployment. The U.S. Department of Labor issued guidance and defined PUA eligibility to three groups of people:

- Those previously receiving traditional unemployment benefits who refuse to return to work or refuse an offer of work because the workplace is not in compliance with local, state, or national health and safety standards directly related to COVID-19.
- Those who provide services to an educational institution or educational service agency and are fully or partially unemployed due to COVID-19 related reasons.
- Those who are laid-off or had their work hours reduced due to COVID-19 reasons.

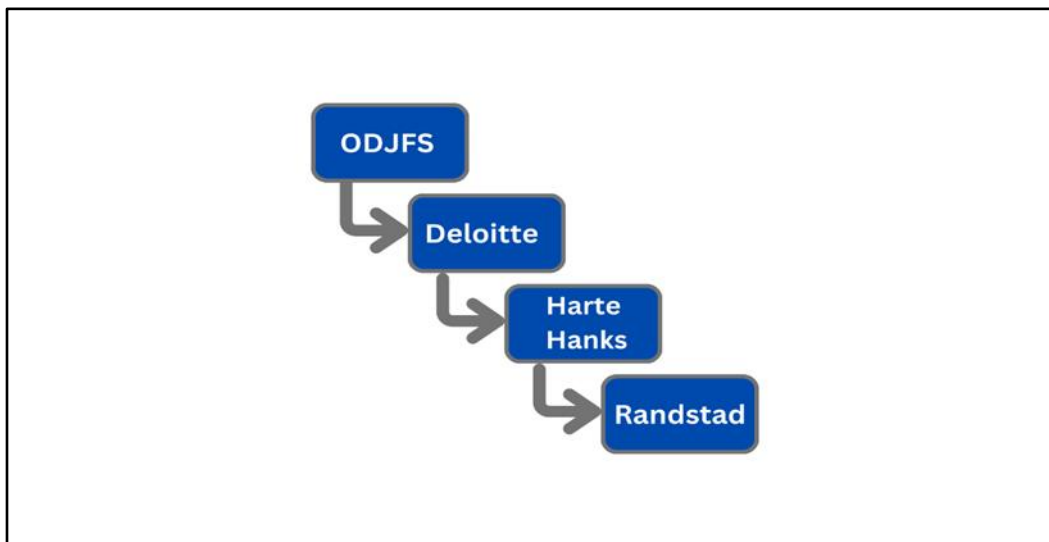
Ohio claimants have the option of receiving their unemployment benefits as a direct deposit in a current bank account or in the form of a debit card which is issued as a US Bank ReliaCard[®] debit card. Once ODJFS approves a claim, ODJFS contacts US Bank ReliaCard[®] who then mails the debit card to the claimant. ODJFS then deposits the approved benefit amount to the debit card. Claimants can make purchases with the US Bank ReliaCard[®] anywhere Visa[®] and Mastercard[®] debit cards are accepted or can withdraw cash from bank ATMs. The US Bank ReliaCard[®] debit card does not require a PIN number for signature-based purchases should the claimant choose credit when making the purchase. However, a PIN number is needed for debit card purchases and cash withdrawals from ATMs. The four-digit PIN number is created by the cardholder when activating the card.

⁶ The text of this legislation can be found at: H.R.1319 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress.

⁷ <https://jfs.ohio.gov/ouio/pdf/COVID-19-CARES-Act-Reasons.pdf>

ODJFS Contractors and Sub-Contractors

Investigators learned that ODJFS had contracted with several companies to help process the unprecedented number of unemployment compensation claims they were receiving during the pandemic. One company, Deloitte,⁸ was contracted by ODJFS to provide manpower to process the claims. Investigators discovered Deloitte then subcontracted with another company, Harte Hanks,⁹ to provide manpower to help Deloitte meet the requirements of their contract with ODJFS. Investigators further discovered that Harte Hanks then subcontracted their contract with Deloitte to another company, Randstad, to provide the additional manpower ODJFS had contracted with Deloitte to provide. Investigators learned that Harte Hanks was the company who provided the supervisors and the training for the PUA workers provided by Randstad.



APPLICABLE RULES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Confidentiality of ODJFS Information

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) §4141.21 states that, except as provided in ORC §4141.162 and subject to ORC §4141.43,

⁸ Deloitte is a company that provides a variety of services to business and governmental entities.

⁹ Harte Hanks describes itself as a marketing service, customer care, and fulfillment and logistics company. Hartehanks.com

... the information maintained by the director of job and family services or furnished to the director by employers or employees pursuant to this chapter is for the exclusive use and information of the department of job and family services in the discharge of its duties and shall not be open to the public

As such, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General will not include in this report any claimant identifying information obtained during the investigation received by ODJFS in accordance with Ohio Revised Code §4141.21.

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

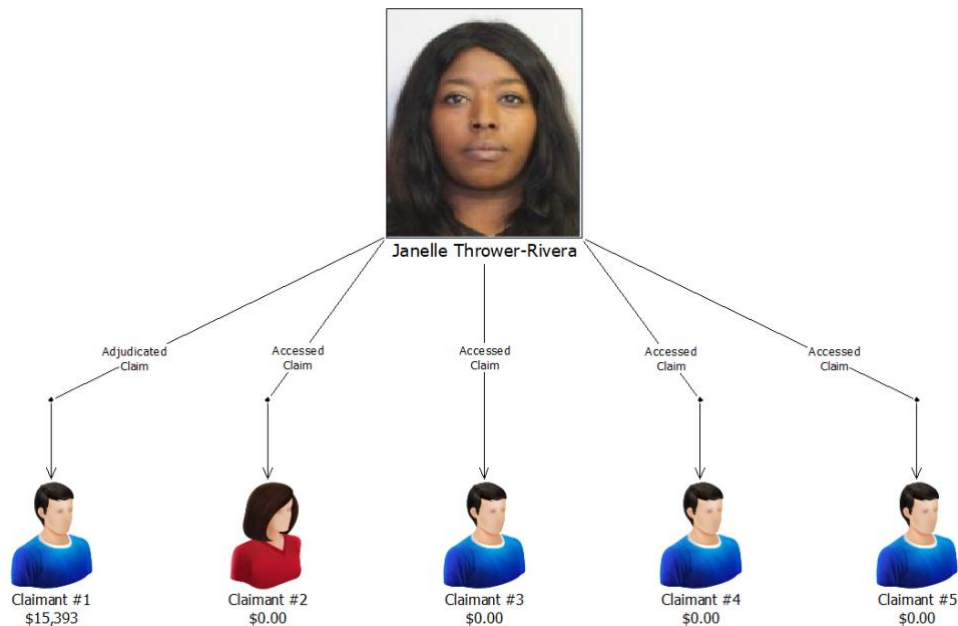
On June 29, 2021, ODJFS contractor Deloitte Consulting LLP notified ODJFS that, “During the verification process that we conducted, it has come to our attention that the following agent [Intermittent CSR Janelle Thrower-Rivera] accounts seem to merit further investigation based on possible suspicious activity.”

Deloitte Consulting was contracted by ODJFS to hire intermittent CSRs to process the unprecedented number of PUA unemployment compensation claims. Deloitte Consulting subcontracted with Harte Hanks to provide intermittent CSRs to help Deloitte meet the requirements of their contract with ODJFS. Harte Hanks subcontracted with Randstad to provide intermittent CSRs. Intermittent Customer Service Representative (CSR) Janelle Thrower-Rivera was hired by Randstad on June 8, 2020, and was terminated on August 12, 2020, for poor attendance/job abandonment. During a review of the claims accessed by Thrower-Rivera during her period of employment, Harte Hanks discovered that Thrower-Rivera was employed by Randstad at the time she filed her own application on July 3, 2020, to receive PUA benefits. A review of her PUA application showed that Thrower-Rivera stated she was unemployed at the time she filed the original claim. On August 19, 2020, Harte Hanks notified Deloitte of the termination of Thrower-Rivera. According to Deloitte, the final time Thrower-Rivera logged into the PUA claims system was on September 9, 2020. However, investigators discovered records indicating that Deloitte did not terminate Thrower-Rivera’s access to the PUA claims system until June 7, 2021.

In July 2021, ODJFS received an email notification from Deloitte alleging Thrower-Rivera improperly accessed PUA claims. After receiving this email, ODJFS conducted an audit of all 883 PUA claims accessed by Thrower-Rivera and discovered that she had searched claims without a business reason. ODJFS also discovered Thrower-Rivera had accessed six claims numerous times, and that one of those six claims was her own PUA unemployment claim filed during the same time she was employed by ODJFS/Randstad. According to ODJFS, Thrower-Rivera improperly received \$32,463 in PUA funds while employed by ODJFS and at Digital Risk Mortgage Services LLC.

On June 22, 2023, ODJFS notified the Office of the Ohio Inspector General of Thrower-Rivera's suspected illegal activity. Investigators searched and evaluated the claims improperly accessed by Thrower-Rivera to determine if there were any connections between her and the claims in question. From this evaluation, investigators discovered Thrower-Rivera was able to release PUA funds for payment for only one of the six claims she had improperly accessed. Investigators conducted a social media search and discovered connections between Thrower-Rivera and four of the claimants. Investigators also learned that five of the six claimants, including Thrower-Rivera, lived in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Summary of Thrower-Rivera Actions



Claimant #1

Claimant #1 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on June 12, 2020. However, the claim was denied because it did not meet the program eligibility requirements. Thrower-Rivera was not authorized to adjudicate a program eligibility issue in this claim. However, on August 22, 2020, Thrower-Rivera accessed this claim and adjudicated the program eligibility issue as eligible. According to ODJFS, her actions resulted in the improper release to a US Bank ReliaCard® debit card of \$15,393 to Claimant #1. Investigators learned that Thrower-Rivera was a Facebook friend with a relative of Claimant #1. According to Facebook conversations, Claimant #1's relative is the godparent to a relative of Thrower-Rivera.

Claimant #2

Claimant #2 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on August 6, 2020, and is a close relative to Thrower-Rivera. On six different dates, Thrower-Rivera accessed Claimant #2's claim, and attempted to adjudicate the claim as eligible. However, Thrower-Rivera was unable to release payment of any PUA funds in these instances, because the claim had been denied based on other issues of which she was either unaware or incapable of clearing.

Claimant #3

Claimant #3 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on June 20, 2020, and again on August 25, 2020. Thrower-Rivera attempted to adjudicate the claim; however, she was unable to release payment of any PUA funds in these instances, because the claims had been denied based on other issues of which she was either unaware or incapable of clearing.

Claimant #4

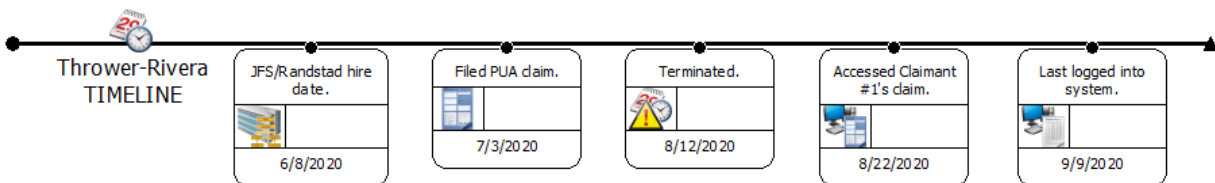
Claimant #4 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on June 23, 2020, and again on September 1, 2020. Thrower-Rivera attempted to adjudicate the claim; however, she was unable to release payment of any PUA funds in these instances, because the claims had been denied based on other issues of which she was either unaware or incapable of clearing.

Claimant #5

Claimant #5 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on July 11, 2020, and again on August 5, 2020. Thrower-Rivera attempted to adjudicate the claim; however, she was unable to release payment of any PUA funds in these instances, because the claims had been denied based on other issues of which she was either unaware or incapable of clearing.

Claim #6 - CSR Janelle Thrower-Rivera Accessed her Own PUA Claim

Intermittent CSR Janelle Thrower-Rivera was hired by sub-contractor Randstad on June 8, 2020, to provide guidance to ODJFS claimants who had issues with their PUA unemployment claims. On July 3, 2020, Thrower-Rivera filed her own PUA unemployment claim to ODJFS while employed at ODJFS/Randstad. On several occasions while working for ODJFS/Randstad, Thrower-Rivera improperly accessed her own PUA unemployment claim which she was prohibited from accessing. On July 21, 2020, Thrower-Rivera's PUA claim was backdated to March 15, 2020, by another ODJFS employee. Investigators obtained from ODJFS and reviewed the weekly filings Thrower-Rivera had submitted to ODJFS to receive PUA funds, in which she claimed she was unemployed due to Covid-19. Although Thrower-Rivera did not take any action on her own PUA claim, she acted improperly when she filed a claim for PUA benefits while she was employed and falsely claimed to be unemployed. From a review of records, investigators determined Thrower-Rivera improperly received \$32,463 in PUA unemployment funds during the same period she had received \$3,205.86 in income from her employment with ODJFS/Randstad. Investigators concluded Thrower-Rivera falsely claimed to be unemployed while employed by ODJFS/Randstad, and was terminated for poor work attendance/job abandonment on August 12, 2020. On September 13, 2023, Thrower-Rivera declined to be interviewed.



From a review of the Ohio wage and earnings records, investigators learned Thrower-Rivera was not employed during the third and fourth quarters of 2019, and the first quarter of 2020.

However, after her termination from ODJFS/Randstad on August 12, 2020, investigators discovered Thrower-Rivera had continued to receive PUA unemployment funds while employed at Digital Risk Mortgage Services, LLC during the third and fourth quarters of 2020 and all of 2021, by falsely submitting weekly PUA unemployment claims attesting she was not employed.

On September 13, 2023, investigators went to Thrower-Rivera's residence. A male subject answered the door, said Thrower-Rivera was not there and he did not know how to reach her. Investigators left their business card with a contact number with the male subject. Minutes later Thrower-Rivera called investigators wanting to know what their inquiry was about. When told it was regarding her employment with ODJFS/Randstad, Thrower-Rivera said she did not want to talk at that time but would call investigators the following day. Thrower-Rivera did not call investigators the following day, and when investigators called her, she would hang up.

Thrower-Rivera's Bank Records

Investigators obtained and reviewed Thrower-Rivera's bank records. For the period from June 18, 2020, through September 30, 2021, investigators determined the following dollar amounts Thrower-Rivera had received from her employers and from her PUA unemployment claims:

DATE RANGE	THROWER-RIVERA SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT
6/18/2020 – 8/21/2020	ODJFS/Randstad Income	\$ 3,205.86
7/23/2020 – 7/13/2021	PUA Unemployment Benefits	\$ 32,463.00
9/15/2020 – 9/30/2021	Digital Risk Mortgage Services Income	\$ 64,596.47
TOTAL:		\$ 100, 265.33

Social Media Connections Between Thrower-Rivera and Claimants

Investigators reviewed Facebook records and discovered that there were Facebook connections between Thrower-Rivera and PUA fund claimants #1, #2, #3, and #4. Investigators also found a Facebook connection between Thrower-Rivera and a relative of Claimant #1, which included

Venmo^{®10} transactions. In additional Facebook posts, the relative of Claimant #1 is identified as the godparent of Thrower-Rivera's relative. Facebook records also identify the relative of Claimant #1 and Claimant #3 as Facebook friends.

Connections Linking IP Addresses of Electronic Devices Used by Thrower-Rivera and Claimants

Investigators analyzed ODJFS' PUA dashboard and captured the IP addresses of the electronic devices used by Thrower-Rivera and PUA claimants #1, #2, #3, and #4. From a review of these records, investigators discovered IP address connections linking Thrower-Rivera to both Claimant #1 and Claimant #2, and an IP address connection linking Claimant #2 to Claimant # 1 and Claimant #4. The IP address connections are displayed in the chart below:

IP Address	Claimant	Provider
162.154.226.162	Claimant #2	Charter Communications
162.154.226.162	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	Charter Communications
162.154.226.162	Claimant #1	Charter Communications
172.58.11.123	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.11.123	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.174.205	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.174.205	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.203.149	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.203.149	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.203.65	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.203.65	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.204.73	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.204.73	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.206.135	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.206.135	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.206.248	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.206.248	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
172.58.207.45	Claimant #2	T-Mobile
172.58.207.45	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	T-Mobile
184.54.145.49	Claimant #2	Charter Communications
184.54.145.49	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	Charter Communications
184.54.31.237	Claimant #2	Charter Communications
184.54.31.237	Claimant #1	Charter Communications
184.54.31.237	Claimant #4	Charter Communications
76.182.149.67	Claimant #2	Charter Communications
76.182.149.67	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	Charter Communications
8.20.97.213	Claimant #2	Charter Communications
8.20.97.213	Janelle Thrower-Rivera	Charter Communications

¹⁰ Venmo[®] is a digital wallet that lets you send and receive money with friends, split the necessities, and earn customized cash back.

CONCLUSION

On June 29, 2021, ODJFS contractor Deloitte Consulting LLP notified ODJFS that, “During the verification process that we conducted, it has come to our attention that the following agent [Intermittent CSR Janelle Thrower-Rivera] accounts seem to merit further investigation based on possible suspicious activity.” During the COVID-19 pandemic, Deloitte Consulting was contracted by ODJFS to hire intermittent customer service representatives (CSRs) to process the unprecedented number of PUA unemployment compensation claims. Deloitte Consulting subcontracted with Harte Hanks and Harte Hanks subcontracted with Randstad to provide intermittent CSRs. Intermittent CSR Janelle Thrower-Rivera was hired by Randstad on June 8, 2020, and was terminated on August 12, 2020. During a review of the claims accessed by Thrower-Rivera during her period of employment, Harte Hanks discovered that Thrower-Rivera had filed on July 3, 2020, an application to receive PUA unemployment benefits when she was employed by Randstad. A review of her PUA application showed that Thrower-Rivera attested she was unemployed at the time she filed the original claim. Thrower-Rivera was terminated from Randstad on August 12, 2020, for poor attendance/job abandonment. On August 19, 2020, Harte Hanks notified Deloitte of the termination of Thrower-Rivera. According to Deloitte, the final occasion Thrower-Rivera logged into the PUA claims system was on September 9, 2020. However, investigators discovered records indicating that Thrower-Rivera’s access to the PUA system was not terminated by Deloitte until June 7, 2021.

In July 2021, ODJFS received an email notification from Deloitte alleging Thrower-Rivera improperly accessed PUA claims. After receiving this email, ODJFS conducted an audit of all 883 PUA claims accessed by Thrower-Rivera and discovered that she had searched claims without a business reason. ODJFS also discovered Thrower-Rivera had improperly accessed six claims numerous times, and that one of those six claims was her own PUA unemployment claim filed during the same time she was employed by ODJFS/Randstad.

On June 22, 2023, ODJFS notified the Office of the Ohio Inspector General of Thrower-Rivera’s suspected illegal activity. Investigators searched and evaluated the claims improperly accessed by Thrower-Rivera to determine if there were any connections between her and the six claims in

question. From this evaluation, investigators discovered Thrower-Rivera was able to release PUA funds for payment for only one of the six claims she had improperly accessed. In the other four ineligible claims Thrower-Rivera accessed and attempted to manipulate, there were additional issues that prevented Thrower-Rivera from releasing PUA funds on those claims. The sixth claim Thrower-Rivera accessed was a claim for PUA funds that she filed for herself during the time she was employed by ODJFS/Randstad to conduct CSR duties. A review of her PUA application showed that Thrower-Rivera falsely attested she was unemployed at the time she filed her claim. Investigators learned that after her termination from ODJFS/Randstad, Thrower-Rivera was employed by Digital Risk Mortgage Services, LLC (Digital Risk) during the third and fourth quarters of 2020 and all of 2021. Investigators discovered Thrower-Rivera also submitted weekly PUA claims during her employment with Digital Risk, falsely attesting she was unemployed and improperly receiving PUA unemployment benefits. According to ODJFS, Thrower-Rivera improperly received \$32,463 in PUA unemployment funds during times she was either employed by ODJFS/Randstad or by Digital Risk Mortgage Services, LLC.

From their evaluation of Facebook, IP addresses, and Venmo[®] records and the claims Thrower-Rivera improperly accessed, investigators determined the following:

Claimant #1 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on June 12, 2020. However, the claim was denied because it did not meet the program eligibility requirements. Thrower-Rivera was not authorized to adjudicate a program eligibility issue in this claim. However, on August 22, 2020, Thrower-Rivera accessed this claim and adjudicated the program eligibility issue as eligible. According to ODJFS, her actions resulted in the improper release to a US Bank ReliaCard[®] debit card of \$15,393 to Claimant #1. Thrower-Rivera is a Facebook friend with a relative of Claimant #1. According to Facebook conversations, Claimant #1's relative is the godparent to a relative of Thrower-Rivera.

Claimant #2 filed a PUA claim with ODJFS on August 6, 2020, and is a close relative to Thrower-Rivera. On six different occasions, Thrower-Rivera accessed Claimant #2's claim, and attempted to adjudicate the claim as eligible. However, Thrower-Rivera was unable to release

payment of any PUA funds in these instances, because the claim had been denied based on other issues of which she was either unaware or incapable of clearing.

Claimants #3, #4, and #5 each filed more than one PUA claim with ODJFS. Thrower-Rivera attempted to adjudicate the claims for these three individuals; however, she was unable to release payment of any PUA funds in these instances, because the claims had been denied based on other issues of which she was either unaware or incapable of clearing.

Investigators reviewed Facebook records and discovered that there were Facebook connections between Thrower-Rivera and PUA fund claimants #1, #2, #3, and #4. Investigators also found a Facebook connection between Thrower-Rivera and a relative of Claimant #1, which included Venmo[®] transactions. In additional Facebook posts, the relative of Claimant #1 is identified as the godparent of Thrower-Rivera's relative. Facebook identifies the relative of Claimant #1 and Claimant #3 as Facebook friends.

Investigators analyzed ODJFS' PUA dashboard and captured the IP addresses of the electronic devices used by Thrower-Rivera and PUA claimants #1, #2, #3, and #4. From a review of these records, investigators discovered IP address connections linking Thrower-Rivera to both Claimant #1 and Claimant #2, and an IP address connection linking Claimant #2 to Claimant # 1 and Claimant #4.

Accordingly, the Office of the Inspector General finds reasonable cause to believe a wrongful act or omission occurred in this instance.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General has determined that no recommendations are warranted for this report of investigation.

REFERRAL(S)

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General referred this report of investigation to the Hamilton County Prosecutor for consideration.



STATE OF OHIO

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

RANDALL J. MEYER, INSPECTOR GENERAL

NAME OF REPORT: Ohio Department of Job & Family Services

FILE ID #: 2023-CA00008

KEEPER OF RECORDS CERTIFICATION

This is a true and correct copy of the report which is required to be prepared by the Office of the Ohio Inspector General pursuant to Section 121.42 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Jill Jones
KEEPER OF RECORDS

CERTIFIED
July 11, 2024

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