



New UI Chat Feature Expands Communication Options for Users

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) launched a new Unemployment Insurance (UI) chat feature July 8, 2024, to increase communication options for those with questions about their respective claims and to specifically help support individuals with hearing loss who find it difficult to communicate by telephone.

"We're always looking to expand communication channels to meet everyone's needs," said Melissa McKenzie, DWD Director of Contact Center Operations. "One of our main drivers with this was to support the deaf and hard of hearing community. It's a way for them to work through a claim without having to use an interpreter."

According to McKenzie, DWD Workforce website functionality already offers a chat feature. Additionally, the Indiana State Government website (IN.gov) has an existing chat bot option.

While a live chat provides human-to-human communication capability, a chat bot, short for chatterbot, is a computer program that uses artificial intelligence.

"Our next step is to create an all-purpose chat bot," McKenzie said. "We're working to combine with the Workforce chat option by the end of this year."

However, the newly implemented UI chat feature is a big step forward.

"This provides everyone with another avenue for communication. Also, there's a modernization side to it," McKenzie added. "Prior to this, we really only provided email and voice. This expansion is about modernization and equal opportunity."