



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2020

Pennsylvania Now Accepting Applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Benefits

Self-employed, others not eligible for regular unemployment compensation may apply

Harrisburg, PA – Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Jerry Oleksiak today announced Pennsylvania's self-employed, independent contractors, gig workers, and others not eligible for regular unemployment compensation (UC) can begin filing claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. PUA is included in the new federal expansion to unemployment benefits provided by the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#).

Pennsylvanians who meet [PUA eligibility requirements](#) can apply [online](#). L&I anticipates a high volume of applications over the next few days which may temporarily slow the system. The department is continuing to add improvements to make it easier to use. L&I expects to begin making payments to approved claimants within two to four weeks after they submit their initial claim.

Who Should File for PUA

Eligible individuals who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 include:

- Self-employed;
- Independent contractors;
- Gig workers;
- Clergy and those working for religious organizations; and
- People without sufficient work history to qualify for regular UC.

PUA Benefits

In general, PUA:

- Provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits;
- May not be more than the state's maximum weekly benefit rate for regular UC of \$572;
- May not be less than half of the state's average weekly benefit amount of \$195.
- Payments will be backdated to January 27, 2020 or the first week you were unable to work due to COVID-19 (whichever of the two dates is later); and
- Benefits will not be payable for weeks of unemployment after December 31, 2020.

Information Needed for COVID-19-related Employment Disruptions

Acceptable documentation to verify COVID-19 reasons for being unable to work can include, but is not limited to:

- Documentation from medical professionals regarding diagnosis or isolation instructions for you or a person in your home;
- Notices or emails from school or childcare providers;
- Notices or emails from county or state government regarding closure of businesses or stay at home orders;
- Notices or emails from entities for which you were contracting stating that your services are not needed due to COVID-19 related shutdowns; and/or
- Documentation from a prospective employer that includes start date, hours, and pay of a job offer that was cancelled or delayed.

Information Needed for Proof of Employment or Self-employment

Acceptable documentation can include, but is not limited to:

- Copies of recent paycheck stubs;
- Bank receipts showing deposits;
- 1099s;
- Billing notices provided to your customers;
- Recent advertisements for your business or services;
- Statements from recent customers;
- Current business licenses, ledgers, contracts, invoices; and/or
- Building leases.

Information Needed to Show Previous Income

Acceptable documentation of wages can include, but is not limited to:

- Tax returns;
- Paycheck stubs;
- Bank receipts;
- Ledgers;
- Contracts;
- Invoices; and/or
- Billing statements.

Additional \$600 Per Week

Anyone collecting PUA benefits is also eligible for the extra \$600 per week from the [Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation \(FPUC\)](#) program:

- Effective from the week ending April 4, 2020 through the week ending July 25, 2020;
- Payments will be backdated and paid in a lump sum; and
- You don't need to do anything to receive the extra \$600 – it will be paid automatically.

The new PUA system is web-based and operates differently than the state's regular UC mainframe system. This means PUA applicants will receive login information to file their

continued claims and do not need a Personal Identification Number (PIN). After opening their initial PUA claim and filing for any retroactive weeks, individuals will file continuing claims on a weekly basis with a one-week grace period if they miss filing for any week.

A new PUA phone line will soon be available for individuals without internet access or for those who require a translator. In the meantime, please direct questions to UCPUA@pa.gov. This email address is for PUA questions only.

Learn More

Additional COVID-19 information from L&I:

- [PUA frequently asked questions](#)
- [L&I COVID-19 Info for Workers and Businesses](#)
- [Unemployment compensation](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)

Visit the commonwealth's [Responding to COVID-19 guide](#) for the latest guidance and resources for Pennsylvanians or the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated coronavirus webpage for the [most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19](#).