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**Subject:** Self-employed and Others Can Now File for Backdated Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Benefits



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 7, 2020**

## **Self-employed and Others Can Now File for Backdated Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Benefits**

*Approved claimants should get lump sum payments within 1 week of filing  
Weekly certifications MUST be filed every week to continue receiving payments*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Jerry Oleksiak today announced eligible self-employed, independent contractors, gig workers and others not normally eligible for regular unemployment compensation (UC) can begin filing backdated claims in the new [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance \(PUA\) website](#).

The new PUA system, which [launched its first phase on April 18](#), was completed early this morning and is now fully operational. L&I opted to roll out the system in two phases to collect as many applications ahead of time as possible so that payments could be made quickly after the website's completion. To date, more than [174,000](#) new PUA claims have been filed.

Important information follows about the new PUA system and the process to file for previous weeks of unemployment and weekly certifications moving forward, and more.

### **Backdated PUA Claims and Payments**

- PUA claims can be backdated to January 27, 2020 or to the first week you were unemployed due to COVID-19, whichever of the two dates is later.
- The system will backdate your claim to when you first became unemployed, as reported by you when you enter your last day of work.
- You will NOT receive a confirmation email after submitting your initial PUA claim. Your determination information will be available in your dashboard on the [PUA website](#).
- Payments will be made in one lump sum either via [direct deposit or to a UC-issued debit card](#) through U.S. Bank, whichever method you chose when you applied.

- If you're eligible, approved and have no issues with your PUA claim, you should receive your first lump sum payment within one week or less after filing backdated claims.

### Weekly Certifications and Payments

- Moving forward, claimants **MUST** file their PUA certifications **WEEKLY** to get paid. You will receive a one-week grace period if you miss filing your weekly certification.
- An unemployment week is Sunday through Saturday, so the first day you can file your weekly certification is on a Sunday.
- You don't have to file on Sunday – you can file your weekly certification any day Sunday through Friday.
- You can't file for future weeks, only for the prior week(s).
- Your very first payment – whether it's the backdated lump sum payment or a regular weekly payment – will arrive within one week or less after you file your first certification.
- Your regular weekly payments will arrive within three business days after you file your weekly certification.
- The maximum weekly PUA benefit rate is \$572. The minimum weekly amount is \$195.

### Additional \$600 Per Week Payments

- If you receive PUA payments, you will **automatically** receive an extra \$600 per week through the [Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation \(FPUC\)](#) program.
- You will receive your first FPUC payment the week **after** your first PUA payment. You will receive your PUA and FPUC payments separately.
- FPUC benefits are for the week ending April 4, 2020 through the week ending July 25, 2020. These payments will also be backdated and paid in one lump sum.

### Important Information About the Newly Completed PUA Website

- You can refer to the [PUA System Guide](#) or the following helpful screenshot guides to guide you through the process:
  - [PUA Weekly Certification Filing Guide](#)
  - [Part-time Job – PUA Weekly Certification Filing Guide](#) – Use this guide if you have part-time earnings to report.
- You do **NOT** need a Personal Identification Number (PIN) – you will have a username and password that you create.
- Manage everything through your PUA dashboard on the website through [www.uc.pa.gov/PUA](http://www.uc.pa.gov/PUA) – check on your claim and payment status, upload documents, etc.
- Currently, questions about your claims should be emailed to [UCPUA@pa.gov](mailto:UCPUA@pa.gov). You should expect to receive a response within 7 days. This email address is for PUA questions only. Any emails unrelated to PUA will not receive a response.
- A new phone line will soon be available as well – please continue to check [www.uc.pa.gov/PUA](http://www.uc.pa.gov/PUA).

### Applications Still Being Accepted for PUA Benefits

- If you haven't yet applied for PUA benefits and are eligible, please apply [online](#).
- 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 to Show Previous Income

Acceptable documentation of wages earned or paid during calendar year 2019 can include, but is not limited to:

- 2019 tax returns;
- 2019 1099s;
- Paycheck stubs;
- Bank receipts;
- Ledgers;
- Contracts;
- Invoices; and/or
- Billing statements.

## UC Payments

Since March 15, the department has made over **11.7 million payments** to claimants for a total of more than **\$5.4 billion in benefits** – approximately \$4 billion from regular UC and over \$1.41 billion from the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program (extra \$600 per week).

## UC Claim Statistics

Since March 15, more than 1.7 million Pennsylvanians have filed for regular UC and more than 174,000 have filed for PUA. Regular UC claim statistics are available [here](#) and the breakdown of that data by industry and county is [here](#). PUA claim statistics are available [here](#).

PUA and FPUC are included in the new federal expansion to unemployment benefits provided by the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#).

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](#).

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