



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

CONSEJO NACIONAL DE SALUD Y SEGURIDAD OCUPACIONAL



CARES ACT PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

UPDATE FROM DEPARTMENT OF LABOR: 2/25/2021

The Department of Labor has released new ways workers can qualify to receive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance is money given to workers impacted by COVID-19. It works similar to regular Unemployment.

You may qualify for PUA benefits if:

You have refused to return to work because the workplace was not following COVID-19 guidelines.

You have refused a job offer because the workplace was not following COVID-19 guidelines.

You work for a school, and have been unable to work because of COVID-19 school closures.

You have been getting fewer hours, or been laid off because of COVID-19.

You are not eligible for regular Unemployment benefits.

What you need to do:

- [Find your state's Unemployment Insurance Program](#)
- Complete a PUA application
- State the reason you are eligible (one of the reasons above)

To read the full document, [click here](#).

Additional Information:

- Updated guidelines for who is eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)
 - Adds three new reasons workers can qualify
 - Apply retroactively to the beginning of the PUA program (3/27/2020), as long as you filed a claim before 12/27/2020
 - If you didn't, you can only claim from 12/6/2020 onward

Workers can qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance for these NEW reasons:

1. Refusing to return to a workplace that is unsafe, or to accept a job somewhere that is unsafe
 - a. For example, if the workplace doesn't observe local, state, or national COVID-19 safety recommendations, whichever is most stringent
 - b. Workers can self-certify that the workplace was unsafe, and then qualify for PUA
2. Workers who provide services to schools or education agencies, and are having their income impacted by closures
 - a. If you have worked for a school, you can qualify even if you don't have a contract with them or a "reasonable assurance" to work for them the next year
 - i. You must self-certify that you are eligible
 - b. If you have a contract with a school and are in-between work times, you do not qualify UNLESS you also have another employment (not a school) and are losing hours there
3. Workers whose hours have been reduced or who have been laid off because of the pandemic
 - a. Includes workers who are laid off because their workplace is partially closed (temporarily or permanently), or who have been getting fewer hours
 - i. Can self-certify that you are eligible
 - b. Many workers would qualify for regular unemployment compensation in this scenario - this protects workers who don't, including:
 - i. Those who don't have enough earnings to qualify for regular unemployment
 - ii. Those who have been previously disqualified from regular unemployment
 - iii. Those who have already claimed the maximum amount of regular unemployment compensation

Workers can qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance for these OLD reasons:

1. Not eligible for regular Unemployment Compensation, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, or Extended Benefits,
Including those who:
 - a. Have already claimed as much as they can of these benefits
 - b. Are self-employed, INCLUDING independent contractors and gig workers
 - c. Are looking for part-time work
 - d. Don't have enough wage history to qualify for benefits from their work

- e. Otherwise don't qualify for benefits
2. Workers who are out of work because of "COVID-19-related reasons," including
 - a. Self-employed workers (including independent contractors and gig workers), who have had significantly less work than usual because of COVID-19
 - i. Must report weekly earnings and show they are less than usual

Workers DO NOT qualify for PUA if they:

1. Can work virtually (telework) with pay
2. Are receiving paid sick leave
3. Are receiving full pay even if they are not working
4. Are receiving other unemployment benefits
5. Are not generally eligible for unemployment benefits because they are not authorized to work in the U.S.

To become eligible, WORKERS must:

- Complete a PUA application
 - If you haven't already filed a claim
 - This includes verifying your identity
- Self-certify that you are eligible
 - If the state finds you not eligible, you can appeal
- Once accepted, there are more forms you have to fill out

Further questions, contact covid-19@dol.gov