

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE (PUA)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

How do I know if I should apply for “regular” unemployment insurance (UI) or for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)?

You MUST file for [regular UI benefits](#) before completing the [PUA application](#). If you are eligible for regular UI, then that is the benefit you will receive. PUA is only available to individuals that are ineligible for regular UI. Please carefully review [How to File a PUA Claim](#).

You may be eligible for [regular UI](#) if you have an employer and

- you have been laid off, or
- your hours have been reduced through no fault of your own, or
- you cannot work because a medical or public official has directed you to quarantine or self-isolate because of COVID-19 exposure, symptoms, or a positive diagnosis.

You may be eligible [for PUA](#) if you are ineligible for regular UI because you have lost income due to COVID-19 and

- are self-employed, or
- are seeking part-time work, or
- lack sufficient work history, or
- have exhausted all rights to regular UI and extended benefits.

How do I know if I am eligible for PUA?

You may be eligible for PUA if you are self-employed, seeking part-time work, do not have sufficient work history to qualify for regular UI, or have exhausted your rights to regular UI benefits and extended benefits.

PUA provides up to 39 weeks of benefits to covered individuals who are not eligible for regular UI and who are otherwise able and available to work except that they are unemployed or partially employed because of one of the following COVID-19-related reasons:

- Your place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- You are unable to reach your place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- You are unable to reach your place of employment because you have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
- You have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis.
- A member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- You are providing care for a family member or a member of your household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

- A child or other person in your household for which you are the primary caregiver is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and such school or facility care is required for you to work.
- You have become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19.
- You were scheduled to commence employment and do not have a job or are unable to reach your job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- You quit your job as a direct result of COVID-19.

How do I apply for PUA?

[Pandemic Unemployment Assistance \(PUA\) Application](#)

You MUST file for [regular UI benefits](#) before completing the PUA application. If you are eligible for regular UI, then that is the benefit you will receive. PUA is only available to individuals that are ineligible for regular UI. Please carefully review [How to File a PUA Claim](#).

How do I determine if I am “self-employed”?

Federal guidelines for PUA define “self-employed individuals” as those whose primary reliance for income is on the performance of services in the individual’s own business.

For the purposes of PUA, “self-employed” includes independent contractors (i.e. 1099 workers), gig economy workers (i.e. Uber and Lyft drivers), and workers for certain religious entities.

The determination of whether you are an “employee” or an “independent contractor” depends on the conditions of your work, not on what your employer tells you or how your employer has classified you.

I have never worked before. Am I eligible for PUA?

You may be eligible for PUA even if you have never worked before and

- you were scheduled to commence employment and do not have a job or are unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; OR
- your job offer was rescinded because of COVID-19; OR
- you have become the breadwinner or major supporter for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19.

I am a small business owner. Am I eligible for PUA?

You may be eligible for PUA if your primary source of income is from the work you do for your own business.

What documentation do I need to provide to show my 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.

What documentation do I need to substantiate my COVID-19 PUA claim?

Individuals must self-certify that they are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of a COVID-19 related reason.

An intentional misrepresentation is fraud and is under penalty of perjury. Individuals may be subject to criminal prosecution if found to have committed fraud.

How much will I receive in PUA benefits?

The amount of PUA benefits you will receive is based on your previous income reported. PUA benefits may not be more than the District's maximum weekly benefit amount for regular UI, which is \$444. PUA benefits may not be less than half of the state's average weekly benefit amount. In the District of Columbia, the minimum PUA payment is \$179 per week.

All individuals collecting PUA will receive \$600 per week from Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), in addition to weekly benefits as calculated above. FPUC payments began the week ending April 4, 2020. The last week that FPUC is payable is the week ending July 25, 2020.

My PUA claim was established with a weekly benefit amount of \$179, but I think I am entitled to a higher amount based on my wages. What should I do?

Initially, your PUA claim may be established with the minimum PUA weekly benefit amount of \$179. Once our team reviews the wage documentation you provided when you filed your PUA application, we may re-determine your claim for a higher weekly benefit amount if you qualify.

The wage review process will take time, so please be patient. Our staff will contact you if additional information or documentation is needed.

How far back can I request PUA benefits?

You may submit PUA claims backdated to February 2, 2020, if you have been unemployed due to one of the COVID-19 related reasons that are PUA-eligible. If you are found eligible for PUA, you will receive compensation retroactive to February 2, 2020, or the date when you are determined to be eligible for PUA, whichever is more recent.

PUA provides benefits for up to 39 weeks for weeks of unemployment beginning on February 2, 2020. PUA payments will not be made for weeks of unemployment ending after December 26, 2020.

I was determined eligible on my "regular" UI claim, what should I do?

If you were determined eligible on your "regular" UI claim, then you are not eligible for PUA. Continue to [file your weekly continued claim forms](#) to receive benefits on your regular UI claim.

Am I eligible for the extra \$600 FPUC payment?

Yes, if you are eligible for PUA, then you are also eligible for the \$600 per week payment under the FPUC program.

PUA provides benefits for up to 39 weeks for weeks of unemployment beginning on February 2, 2020. PUA payments will not be made for weeks of unemployment ending after December 26, 2020. No additional forms or applications are required for FPUC. The \$600 per week additional payment will be automatically added to your PUA benefit.

How long will these benefits be available?

The maximum length of time a person may collect PUA benefits is 39 weeks. Eligibility is based on your unemployment caused by one or more of the COVID-19 related reasons that are PUA-eligible.

PUA benefits will no longer be available after the week ending December 26, 2020. The last week the \$600 FPUC payment is payable is the week ending July 25, 2020.

I'm able to telework for my normal work hours. Can I collect benefits under PUA?

No. If you can telework with pay for your normal work hours or if you declined an option to telework for the same number of hours, you are not eligible for PUA.

My hours have been reduced. Can I collect benefits under PUA?

If you are working fewer hours due to a COVID-19 related reason and it has resulted in a loss of income, and if you are not eligible for regular UI, you may be eligible for PUA.

My employer remains open, but I am on paid leave. Should I file for PUA instead?

If you are receiving paid sick leave or other leave benefits, you are not eligible for PUA.

If you exhaust your paid leave but are unable to work for one or more of the COVID-19 related reasons that are PUA-eligible, you may be eligible for regular UI or PUA at that time.

Am I eligible for PUA if I had to quit my job because I tested positive for COVID-19 or was being treated by a medical professional for COVID-19 symptoms and could not telework or otherwise continue work activities?

Yes, you may be eligible for PUA in this situation.

Am I eligible for PUA if I had to quit my job because I came in direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been diagnosed by a medical professional as having COVID-19, and on the advice of a qualified medical health professional, I was required to resign?

Yes, you may be eligible for PUA in this situation.

I work in the gig economy. Am I eligible for PUA?

Yes, gig workers with reportable income may be eligible if:

- You are unemployed, partially employed, or unable or unavailable to work because of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- The COVID-19 pandemic has severely limited your ability to continue performing your customary work activities and you have had to suspend your work or experience a significant diminution of work

Federal guidelines include specific eligibility criteria to gig workers who otherwise may not meet the eligibility requirements as "covered individuals" under PUA.

I am self-employed and my income and hours have declined greatly because of COVID-19. Am I eligible for PUA?

Yes, self-employed individuals, independent contractors, or gig workers who are unable to work because of a valid COVID-19 related reason and have had to suspend their work or experienced a significant diminution of work may be eligible for PUA.

I am self-employed. While I was working, I was exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19. Am I eligible for PUA?

Yes, self-employed individuals, independent contractors, and gig workers who are unable to work may be eligible for PUA if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis or if they are under quarantine or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine.