



SC Department of Employment and Workforce
NEWS RELEASE

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The Applications Process for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Begins Today

Self-employed, gig workers, contractors, 1099s and individuals not eligible for regular UI, or the first program of the CARES Act, can now begin the self-service process to receive funds through PUA.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is here and ready for self-service applications. The Department of Employment and Workforce has been working feverishly to build this federal program into the state's system, and South Carolina is one of the first wave of states to offer these resources. DEW committed to accepting applications by the end claim week of April 25, 2020, and the agency is delivering on that promise.

To roll this program out, an email notification was sent to individuals who have already filed a claim in the system and were found ineligible for state unemployment insurance benefits. In order to be eligible for the expanded benefits offered through PUA, a claimant must be identified as not eligible for state UI benefits. The notification invites individuals to return to the MyBenefits portal, login, use the self-service tools and complete the application process.

"It's been a massive effort by our staff and vendor in the last two weeks to get this program off the ground. We share in the excitement to launch PUA so we can begin the next phase of paying benefits to those who are in need. We understand that people around the state are experiencing a great deal of uncertainty due to COVID-19, and our agency is glad to be one of the first states to help its citizens with this economic relief," said Dan Ellzey, Executive Director of the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce.

PUA is 100 percent federally funded, and those who are determined eligible under this program will receive a weekly benefit amount plus the \$600 per week available through the CARES Act. The program is effective from claim week ending February 8, 2020 and is federally approved through the claim week ending December 26, 2020. The Department of Employment and Workforce will retroactively pay PUA benefits from the first week of unemployment caused by COVID-19 within that period.

Who is eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA):

The federal PUA program was created through the CARES Act to expand eligibility to those who are self-employed, 1099, gig workers, contractors, and those who lost their job as a direct result of COVID-19, but were not eligible for regular UI under South Carolina state law. The program also includes individuals who are unable to work as a direct result of one of the following COVID-19 reasons:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;



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- A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are providing care for a family member or a member of their household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are the primary caregiver for a child who is unable to attend school or daycare because the school or daycare has closed due to COVID-19, and the school or daycare is necessary for them to work;
- They are unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They are unable to reach the place of employment because a healthcare provider has advised them to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns;
- They were scheduled to start employment and could not or are unable to reach the new job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They have become the breadwinner or major support for their household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19.

Here are some hints and tips to help familiarize individuals with the process.

- Once an individual has successfully completed a PUA application, they will receive a confirmation number at the top of the screen.
- If something needs to be clarified once a person has applied under PUA, a claims specialist will reach out – there is no need to call.
- We anticipate being able to make payments within 7-14 days, however, some of the more complex claims, could take longer.

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce has launched several additional self-service resources for individuals who are ready to complete the application process, including:

- [A chatbot available through the dew.sc.gov website.](#)
- [A video tutorial created for the PUA application process.](#)
- [A PDF Tutorial created for the PUA application process.](#)
- [Updates to our FAQ materials for this program.](#)

To create a context for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance:

The state's UI benefits program is funded by South Carolina employer taxes and therefore available to eligible employees of those businesses. The first program to be implemented under the CARES Act was the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program which provided \$600 in additional weekly benefits to individuals who were eligible under the state UI program. In the last five weeks since the COVID-19 crisis began, the agency has paid more than \$378 million in state UI benefits, to include the CARES Act \$600 contribution.



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The next federal program from the CARES Act to be implemented by the Department of Employment and Workforce is Federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC). This program will provide 13 additional weeks of state unemployment insurance benefits after the 20 weeks provided under South Carolina law have exhausted. The agency is preparing this program to launch in the next few weeks as individuals potentially begin to exhaust their benefits.

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About the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce is putting South Carolinians to work. The agency has four missions: (1) workforce development; (2) free job match employment services; (3) unemployment insurance; and (4) labor market information. All four missions contribute to workforce development. The agency is dedicated to advancing South Carolina through services and programs that meet the needs of our businesses, jobseekers and those looking to advance their careers.