



SC Department of Employment and Workforce NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:
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For Immediate Release:

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DEW Continues to Add Resources as the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program Successfully Launches in South Carolina

*More than 4.6 Million in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) paid out over weekend
as the agency continues to support South Carolinians*

Since launching the self-service Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program on Friday, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce has released more than \$4.6 million in federal PUA funding to eligible claimants.

Today DEW is encouraging individuals who have not returned to their portal to file for PUA to do so, and the agency is inviting those in the state who have yet to file a claim to begin the process.

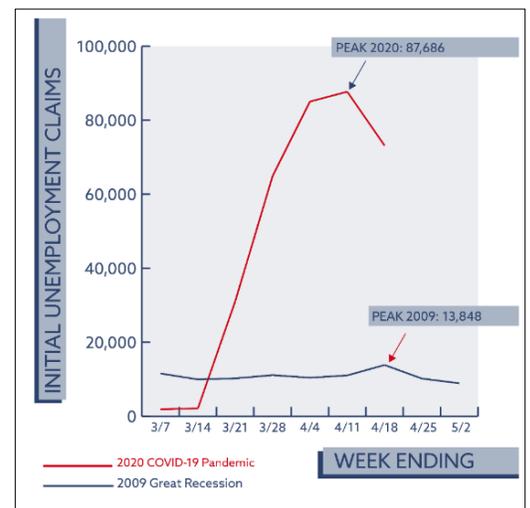
To help with an additional anticipated spike in call volume, starting today, we will be extending hours for our call center. Please take note of the new hours:

**Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Beginning May 2, 2020, Saturday hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

“My promise to South Carolina is that our staff is working around the clock to serve, and we are committed to these relief efforts until our communities can begin to reengage in employment and find a sense of normalcy. We keep hearing the word unprecedented, but truthfully that word doesn’t truly paint a picture of what our state is experiencing right now. Our agency and our dedicated staff is rising to the challenge, and we assure you we will see this through,” said Jamie Suber, Department of Employment and Workforce Chief of Staff.

The agency ran a comparison of initial claims during the Great Recession versus current volume with the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the results are staggering. At the peak of the Great Recession, the largest week for initial claims was in April of 2018, with 13,848 initial claims filed. The peak experienced to date with the COVID-19 Pandemic is 87,686 claims in a one-week period of time.

“We know due to the massive call volumes we’ve been experiencing over the past weeks that not everyone is getting through to us on the phones, and we know there are frustrations because of that,” Suber said. “We continue to respond to that demand by training and adding staff to the phones each week, but simultaneously, our agency has continued to create resources designed to help you through this process. We would encourage people to utilize those resources or log back into the claims





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portal to check their status before calling. Allow individuals who have specific claim problems to talk with staff to help them resolve issues that might delay their benefits.”

Additional Resources:

- If you visit our website you will find:
 - Eligibility scenarios for PUA, you can visit this [link](#).
 - Step-by-step instructions on how to apply.
 - Claims process overviews.

- Tools specific to the PUA application process, including:
 - [A video tutorial with step-by-step instructions for the PUA application process.](#)
 - [A PDF Tutorial with step-by-step instructions for the PUA application process.](#)
 - [Updates to our FAQ materials for this program.](#)

- If you visit our SC DEW YouTube you will find videos, including:
 - Step-by-step instructions on how to register, file a claim and how to certify each week.
 - Recording of town halls for employers and the self-employed.
 - Our executive leadership speaking about our current unemployment situation.
 - Employer resources: employer filed claims, understanding your dashboard and wage audit notices.

- On social media we will be looking for trends of common questions and posting hints and tips regularly. For instance, here are some hints and tips to help individuals with the PUA process:
 - Once your PUA application is approved, you will need to certify each week in your MyBenefits portal.
 - Once you begin seeing payment notices in your portal, it takes 24-72 hours to appear in your bank account, per your bank’s rules.
 - If you have not filed prior to today, you would need to fill out a regular UI claim, and within 24 hours your regular UI eligibility will be determined. If found ineligible, you will then see an “Apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance” link on the customer menu page of your MyBenefits portal.

Here’s how to file for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA):

- 1) **If you have already filed in the MyBenefits portal:** you will receive a notification with next steps. Please log into your portal, click the link on your dashboard and answer the prompted questions.
- 2) **If you have NOT already filed in the MyBenefits portal:** Now is the time to apply. You can read more about the program and the process here, <https://dew.sc.gov/individuals/self-employed> or you can visit dew.sc.gov and click the MyBenefits portal in the top right corner.

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



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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.

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.