

DC Unemployment Insurance (UI) Basics for COVID-19 Emergency

Updated April 10, 2020

Am I eligible for Unemployment Insurance?

I am a W-2 employee, and I received a layoff notice or significant reduction of work hours from my DC-based employer.

YES, you should apply for UI. UI is the best way to give you cash assistance, and your employer has been paying into the UI Trust Fund for this reason.

I receive a 1099, I am self-employed, I have little work history, and/or I earn money through gig work such as Pared and Uber.

YES, independent contractors, self-employed, gig workers, and new workers now are eligible for UI under the federal CARES Act, but changes to DC's UI claims system need to be made before you can apply. April 28 currently is the target date for the system to be ready, and you can email PUA@dc.gov to get an alert when you can file. If you have already applied and received a denial, you will need to reapply.

I have been diagnosed with COVID-19, I have had contact with a COVID-19 positive case, I have been ordered to quarantine/isolate or I have decided to self-quarantine/isolate on recommendation from a doctor, which has led to temporary separation from work.

Before applying for UI, determine if you are eligible for **paid sick leave** under new federal and District laws (more information at elissasilverman.com/coronavirus). If you meet eligibility, talk to your employer about staying on staff while you isolate. If you aren't eligible for paid time off or if you use up all your paid sick leave and need more, then you should apply for UI.

How does UI work?

How much money will I receive and for how long?

DC's maximum weekly benefit is **\$444 a week**. If you earn less than \$45,000 a year, your DC weekly benefit is about half of your average weekly earnings over the last year. Per the federal CARES Act, every claimant will receive an additional **\$600 per week** for four months; the additional \$600 payments likely will start late April. UI benefits can last up to 39 weeks, but you will need to complete recertification each week to maintain UI eligibility.

When will I start getting my benefits?

UI cash assistance is given through direct deposit or a benefit card (like a debit card). Benefits will begin about 21 days after you apply.

Do I need to prove I am looking for work? Is there still a one-week waiting period?

DC has **waived the one-week waiting period and work search requirements** for all claimants. If you receive a denial based on these questions, email covid19.ui@dc.gov to remedy. Keep all records from the agency.

Email covid19.ui@dc.gov with specific questions about your claim

How do I apply?

Best to use desktop or laptop computer to fill out application online at **dcnetworks.org**. The application is most compatible with Internet Explorer browser and cannot be filed with a cell phone. If you don't have computer or internet access, call **202-724-7000**.

What documents/information do I need when applying?

- Name, address, phone number of employer
- Dates of employment
- Social Security Number
- If not U.S. citizen, alien registration number
- If ex-military, DD-214
- If former federal employee, Standard Form 8 or 50
- Any severance pay from your employer
- Any pension benefit

Who can I talk to about my rights?

[Washington Lawyers' Committee Workers' Rights Clinic](#)
202-319-1000

[Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia](#)
202-628-1161