

DC Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Basics for COVID-19 Emergency

Updated April 24, 2020

What is Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)?

PUA is a cash assistance, wage-replacement program for workers who are traditionally ineligible for Unemployment Insurance (UI).

This includes independent contractors, self-employed, 1099s, new workers, and those who have exhausted unemployment insurance during the year. Like UI, you apply for PUA in the jurisdiction in which you perform work.

PUA is for people in the following situations:

- **You receive a 1099**, are self-employed, are an independent contractor, and/or earn money through gig work such as Pared and Uber and can no longer earn money due to COVID-19.
- **You just started a new job** or were just about to start a new job when the business closed due to COVID-19.
- You are a **primary caretaker** of a child whose school has closed due to COVID-19.
- You **received UI for 26 weeks in the past year** or are close to exhausting UI. (PUA extends unemployment assistance for 13 extra weeks.)

What if I am a W-2 employee who has been at my job a while, and I received a layoff notice or significant reduction of work hours from my DC-based employer due to COVID-19.

You are **eligible for traditional UI**, and you should apply at dcnetworks.org.

How does PUA work?

How much will I receive and for how long?

DC's maximum weekly unemployment benefit is \$444 a week; your PUA benefit will roughly replace half your wages up to the maximum benefit amount. Per the federal CARES Act, claimants will receive an additional \$600 per week for four months from April–July. PUA benefits can last up to 39 weeks, but you will need to complete recertification each week to maintain eligibility.

When will I start getting my benefits?

PUA cash assistance is given through direct deposit or a benefit card (like a debit card). You need to fill out the direct deposit form after you apply. Generally, it takes about 21 days to process claims but volume is extremely high right now. We ask for your patience.

Do I need to prove I am looking for work?

DC has waived the job search requirements for all claimants.

How do I apply?

Apply for PUA in two steps: First file a UI claim at dcnetworks.org (you will be denied due to ineligibility) and then fill out the PUA application at dcdoes.force.com/PUAForm/s/. Use a desktop or laptop computer to fill out the UI claim online with the Internet Explorer browser, if possible. If you don't have computer or internet access, call **202-724-7000**.

What documents/information do I need when applying?

- Your name, address, phone number, and email
- Social Security Number
- If not a U.S. citizen, USCIS number
- Documentation of earnings from 2019 & 2020 (either 1099, pay stubs, or tax return)
- Estimate of quarterly earnings from 2020

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**

Claimant Advocacy Program of Metro Washington AFL-CIO: **202-974-8159**

Email Specific Questions About Your Claim to covid19.ui@dc.gov