

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE (PUA)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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 worked for a covered 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 you:

- are self-employed,
- are a gig worker,
- are an independent contractor,
- lack sufficient work history, or
- have exhausted all rights to regular UI and all extended benefits (including Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Extended Benefits).

How do I know if I am eligible for PUA?

You may be eligible for PUA if you are self-employed, are a gig worker, an independent contractor, 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 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 cannot work because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- You cannot work 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.
- You are a freelance writer who has experienced a significant reduction in freelance work because of COVID-19.
- You are a self-employed childcare provider who has experienced a significant reduction in children because of COVID-19.
- You are an independent contractor with reportable income who is forced to suspend operations because 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 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.

Any individual who receives a PUA payment after December 27, 2020 is required to provide documentation validating employment or self-employment, or the planned beginning of employment or self-employment. If I was already approved for PUA benefits before December 27, 2020 do I still have to provide documentation?

Individuals who applied for PUA before January 31, 2021 and receive a payment of PUA on or after December 27, 2020 (regardless of which week ending date is being paid) are required to provide documentation validating employment or self-employment, or the planned start of employment or self-employment, within 90 days of being contacted by a claim examiner.

Individuals filing a new PUA application on or after January 31, 2021 (regardless of whether the claim is backdated), are required to provide documentation within 21 days of application.

What are acceptable documents that will validate employment, self-employment, or the planned start of employment or self-employment?

- Proof of employment includes, but is not limited to, paycheck stubs, earnings and leave statements showing the employer's name and address, and W-2 forms.
- Proof of the planned commencement of employment includes, but is not limited to, letters offering employment, statements or affidavits by individuals (with name and contact information) verifying an offer of employment.
- Proof of self-employment includes, but is not limited to, state or federal employer identification numbers, business licenses, tax returns, business receipts, and signed affidavits from persons verifying the individual's self-employment.
- Proof of the planned start of self-employment includes, but is not limited to, business licenses, state or federal employer identification numbers, written business plans, or a lease agreement.

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 \$300 per week from Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), in addition to weekly benefits as calculated above. FPUC payments began the week ending January 2, 2021. The last week that FPUC is payable is the week ending March 13, 2021.

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 redetermine your claim for a higher weekly benefit amount if you qualify.

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

If you believe that you are eligible for a higher WBA, and you have the supporting wage documentation available, please email PUA@dc.gov with your request for redetermination. All requests for redetermination will be processed in the order in which they are received.

What wage documentation do I need to provide to request a redetermination on my PUA claim?

Acceptable forms of wage documentation can include, but is not limited to:

- tax returns for 2019;
- paycheck stubs;
- bank receipts;
- ledgers;
- contracts;
- form 1099-MISC;
- invoices; and/or
- billing statements.

How long will it take to process my request for redetermination of my PUA claim?

All requests for redetermination will be processed in the order in which they are received. We appreciate your patience as we process the unprecedented volume of claims.

If I am owed weeks of backpay, will this be processed with my request for redetermination?

Yes, if any weeks of backpay are owed, DOES will process the week(s) along with your request for redetermination.

What do I need to include when I email PUA@dc.gov to request a redetermination?

Your email should indicate what you are requesting for DOES to do with your PUA claim. For example, if you are only requesting a redetermination of your PUA claim, or if you are requesting both a redetermination of your PUA claim and payment for back weeks.

Please provide supporting net wage documentation for calendar year 2019. Any missing weekly certifications for weeks in which you are claiming impact and requesting payment for back weeks will be emailed to you.

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. However, new applications filed after December 26, 2020 cannot be backdated earlier than December 1, 2020 per the Continued Assistance Act. Recipients can receive PUA for up to 50 weeks.

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 \$300 FPUC payment?

Yes, if you are eligible for PUA, then you are also eligible for the \$300 per week payment under the FPUC program. PUA recipients will receive the extra \$300 beginning the week that ended January 2, 2021 and all eligible weeks through March 13, 2021.

No additional forms or applications are required for FPUC. The \$300 per week additional payment will be automatically added to your PUA benefit.

[Learn more about FPUC here.](#)

How long will these benefits be available?

PUA benefits are eligible to be received for up to 50 weeks. PUA benefits will no longer be available after the week ending April 10, 2021. The last week the \$300 FPUC payment is payable is the week ending March 13, 2021.

I am 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:

- 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 reduction in 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 reduction in 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.