



## PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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## PROGRAM PURPOSE

On March 27, 2020, the President of the United States signed the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) into law, which includes the Relief for Workers Affected by Coronavirus Act set out in Title II, Subtitle A. Section 2102 of the CARES Act creates a new temporary federal program, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) that provides, in general, up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits for unemployed individuals and funding to states for the administration of the program.

PUA is authorized by the rules set forth in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act). The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) oversees the PUA program which is administered by the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES).

Like Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), the PUA program is an emergency program activated in response to a crisis and designed to provide benefits to certain individuals who are ineligible for or who have exhausted entitlement to regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) or Extended Benefits. PUA is also like DUA in that it has a defined assistance period and a set minimum weekly benefit amount (WBA) which is determined based on each state's WBA.

The federal regulations covering the DUA program can be found in the [Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 20, Part 625 \(20 CFR 265\)](#).

**The purpose of this handbook is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under PUA.**

## PROGRAM BENEFITS

PUA was created by the CARES Act of 2020 specifically to address the nationwide COVID-19 pandemic as a temporary benefit for individuals who have exhausted their entitlement to regular unemployment insurance as well as coverage for individuals who are not eligible for regular UI (such as individuals who are self-employed or who have limited recent work history).

PUA is payable for weeks of unemployment, partial unemployment, or inability to work caused by the COVID-19 related reasons listed in the section below beginning on or after January 27, 2020. PUA is payable for eligible weeks of unemployment from February 2, 2020 through December 26, 2020.

More information regarding the PUA program is available at [www.azdes.gov/pua](http://www.azdes.gov/pua) Reemployment Assistance and services are also available to those who apply for PUA.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PUA?

PUA provides benefits to covered individuals who are not eligible for regular Unemployment Compensation, Extended Benefits, or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC). Included are claimants who have exhausted all rights to these benefits or not eligible. You must be a covered individual under the CARES Act, section 2102.

To qualify for PUA you must:

- Be a covered individual who:
  - Is not qualified for regular Unemployment Compensation (UC), Extended Benefits under state or federal law, or PEUC, or have exhausted all rights to these benefits.
  - Is self-employed,
  - Is seeking part-time employment,
  - Lacks sufficient work history meaning:
    - You did not have enough wages in covered employment during the last 18 months to establish a claim under regular UC; and
    - You became unemployed or partially unemployed because of one of the COVID-19 related reasons below; or you had a bona fide offer to start working on a specific date and were unable to start because of one of the COVID-19 related reasons below.
- Self-certify that you are otherwise able to work and available for work; and
- Meet one of the COVID-19 related reasons listed below, including but not limited to:
  - Diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;
  - A member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
  - Providing care for a family member or a member of your household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
  - Responsible for providing primary care for a child or other person in your household who is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed because of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and their care is required for you to work;
  - Unable to reach your place of employment because of a quarantine imposed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
  - Unable to reach your place of employment because you were advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;
  - Scheduled to begin employment and you do not have a job or are unable to reach your job because of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
  - Have become the primary wage earner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died due to COVID-19;
  - Had to quit or take leave of absence from your job because of COVID-19; or
  - Your place of employment is closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

**Note:** When you file for PUA during the Pandemic Assistance Period and you meet the eligibility requirements to qualify for any other UC benefits, your entitlement to PUA benefits will be suspended until you exhaust all your UC entitlement.

## SELF-CERTIFICATION

In order to be eligible for PUA benefits you must self-certify that you are otherwise able to and available for work under Arizona Revised Statutes Title 23, Chapter 4, except that you are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work as a direct result of one of the COVID-19 related reasons identified in Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I) of the CARES Act. This is a requirement of receiving PUA benefits and you will be asked when you file your initial claim and again when file your weekly certifications in the PUA portal. Additionally, you must acknowledge you understand that making this certification is under penalty of perjury; that intentional misrepresentation in self certifying is fraud; and that you may be subject to criminal prosecution if you are found to have committed fraud. Additional information can be found at [www.azdes.gov/pua](http://www.azdes.gov/pua).

## WHEN AND WHERE TO FILE

If you believe you are entitled to PUA, you should file online at [pua.azdes.gov](http://pua.azdes.gov) and click on the *File a PUA Claim*. If you have already filed a claim for unemployment insurance and received a notice that you are not monetarily eligible, you will need to file for PUA separately using the link above.

Beginning May 12, 2020, the PUA portal will accept initial claims and documentation to establish your eligibility and weekly benefit amount for PUA. You will need to provide basic demographic information and the following for any and all employment from calendar year 2019, including self-employment and platform or “gig” work:

- Name and address of the employer(s) (if there was an employer other than yourself)
- Employer’s telephone number (optional if unknown)
- Your occupation, beginning date, and last date you worked for each individual/company
- Reason for separation (examples are layoff, furlough, quit, discharged/fired)
- Documentation regarding 2019 income (see examples below)

## Wage Verification

Your wage information from calendar year 2019 will be used to determine your PUA weekly benefit amount. Please prepare to provide documentation of any wages and/or self-employment. Acceptable documentation can include, but is not limited to:

- 2019 Tax Returns, including Schedule C (if completed);
- 2019 W2s or 1099s;
- Copies of paycheck stubs showing your 2019 earnings;
- Bank receipts showing deposits in 2019;
- Your 2019 business records, including: ledgers, invoices or billing notices you provided to your clients or customers, business licenses, business lease agreements and invoices, and advertisements for your business or services.

You do not need all documents listed above, only those relevant to your work history. Additionally, if you do not have any of the documents listed above, or those documents do not reflect your full 2019 income, you may submit copies of other documents that you believe would demonstrate your 2019 income. If you do not have sufficient wages or you do not provide proof of wages, and you are otherwise eligible, you will receive the minimum weekly benefit amount of \$117.

If you cannot file online, call 1-877-600-2722 and a PUA representative will help you file your online application.

If you use text-based telecommunications (TTY, TDD, TT), call toll-free, 1-877-600-2722 and a PUA claims representative will take your initial application.

When you call, you should have your Social Security Number (SSN) available and, if possible, your Federal Income Tax Return for the most recent tax year that ended prior to the date the pandemic began.

### **PROOF OF INCOME/WAGES – REQUIRED**

If Arizona does not have a record of your income/wages and you have not provided proof, this important message applies to you:

20 C.F.R. § 625.6 in part, requires that an individual must furnish documentation to substantiate the wages earned from or paid for such employment or self-employment. This documentation must be submitted within 21 calendar days from the filing of the initial application for PUA. If Arizona does not have any existing wage records and you do not provide documentation to support a higher PUA weekly benefit amount, you will be provided the minimum PUA WBA of \$117. Inaccurate earning submissions could result in an overpayment of benefits with applicable appeal rights.

Proof of wages may include but is not limited to:

- Prior year tax forms;
- Check stubs;
- Bank receipts; and
- Billing statements.

Proof may be submitted to this agency:

- Online (fastest option) by uploading the document(s) to your claimant portal.
- By fax. Specify PUA on the cover page to expedite the proper routing of your documents and include your: name, address, and SSN. On the top of each page you submit, write your name and SSN.

If you fail to follow these instructions, processing of your benefits may be delayed.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you move, you must report your new address as soon as possible. You can manage and update your address information directly by going to [pua.azdes.gov](http://pua.azdes.gov). On your dashboard, go to the “My Personal Profile” section and select the “Update Contact Information” link to complete the information.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

In addition to filing an application for PUA, you may still be required to go in-person to an ARIZONA@WORK Job Center near you to register for work at [www.azjobconnection.gov](http://www.azjobconnection.gov) and for reemployment services.

**Note:** Work registration and work search requirements are waived until the disaster declaration in Arizona is lifted. Work registration and work search will resume and again be required the disaster declaration has been lifted.

### How to File for Weekly PUA Benefits

To file for weekly PUA benefits, you must:

- File online at [pua.azdes.gov](http://pua.azdes.gov) for each week of PUA benefits claimed.
- You will have to file certifications for each week that you are claiming eligibility for benefits.
- Certify each week for as long as you continue to claim and be eligible for benefits, generally up to 39 weeks of total benefits.
- If you work or earn any money, you must report the total amount earned before deductions when you file your weekly claim. You must report any work you do during a week, even if you have not been paid at the time you file your weekly claim.
- You cannot file your next weekly continued claim until the prior week has ended.
- If you file your initial PUA claim after the week in which you become unemployed, you will be provided with additional instructions for filing retroactive benefit weeks.
- Be able and available for work. You are still considered able and available even if you are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable/unavailable for work due to one of the following COVID-19-related reasons:
  - Diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;
  - A member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
  - Providing care for a household or family member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
  - Responsible for providing primary care for a child or other person in your household who is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed because of the COVID-19 public health emergency and their care is required for you to return to work;
  - Unable to reach your place of employment because of a quarantine imposed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency;

- Unable to reach the place of employment because you were advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;
- Scheduled to begin employment and you do not have a job or unable to reach your job because of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Have become the primary wage earner or major support for the household because the head of household has died due to COVID-19;
- Had to quit or take leave of absence from your job because of COVID-19;
- Place of employment is closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Self-employed and you do not otherwise qualify for benefits and meets one of the requirements above; or
- Worked as an independent contractor with reportable income and the COVID-19 public health emergency has severely limited your ability to continue performing work activities and/or has forced you to suspend these activities, for example:
  - A driver for a ridesharing service who receives an IRS Form 1099 from the ridesharing service.
  - Clergy and those working for religious organizations.
  - Other workers who may not be covered by the regular UI program under Arizona law.

### **Report All Work and Income from Employment/Self-Employment**

Income includes but is not limited to:

- Payment Protection Program earnings
- Holiday pay
- Vacation pay
- Severance pay
- Tips

### **INDIVIDUALS NOT COVERED**

Individuals who can telework with pay and choose not to work are not eligible for PUA. However, individuals who telework less than their customary work week may still be eligible for PUA.

### **ONLINE REGISTRATION**

During online registration, you must establish a Username and Password. You must remember your Username and Password to use each time you claim benefits by telephone or online.

**Warning: Your Username/Password has the same legal authority as your signature.** Protect these security measures and do not share them with anyone. If you believe someone knows your information or accessed your file, you must immediately contact the UI Call Center at 1-877-600-2722.

## DEBIT CARD OR DIRECT DEPOSIT

Benefit payments will be made through debit card or direct deposit. If you select to receive your benefits on a debit card, you will receive your debit card in the mail shortly after you file your claim. It will have instructions on how to activate the card. You may inquire about the balance on your debit card without a charge by contacting the customer service center listed on the card.

If you have problems with the debit card, contact Bank of America at 1-855-847-2030. DES does not have access to your debit card account balance and cannot answer questions about disputed charges. If you have questions about your statement, please contact Bank of America.

You will need your bank's routing number and your account number in order to set up direct deposit through the PUA portal. You can manage and update your direct deposit information directly by going to [pua.azdes.gov](http://pua.azdes.gov) and click on the "File for PUA" link. From your dashboard, go to the "My Personal Profile" section and select the "Update Banking Information" link. If you use direct deposit, be sure to check your balance each week to determine when your benefits have been paid.

## PUA WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT

PUA is payable to you for a week of unemployment only if you are not entitled to any other UI benefits.

The PUA WBA is computed according to the same formula used in Arizona UI Law to compute UI weekly benefit amounts under the regular UI program. Special rules apply to the method used to calculate the PUA WBA for certain individuals. (See page 9, Special Rules for Computing the Weekly PUA Benefit Amount.)

If you claim a week during which you were employed less than full-time, your weekly PUA amount payable may be reduced by the income or wages you earned in that week, regardless of when you received this income. You may earn up to \$30.50 in a week without affecting your WBA. If you earn over \$30.50 in a week, the Department will deduct each dollar in earnings over that amount from your WBA.

The maximum weekly amount of PUA payable must be reduced by the amount of certain types of benefits you qualify to receive, or would receive, if you took all procedural steps necessary under the law, contract, or policy to receive this payment.

- A supplemental unemployment benefit (SUB) payment pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement;
- Any worker's compensation by virtue of the death of the head of your household as the result of the pandemic, prorated by weeks, if you have become the head of your household and are seeking suitable work; and
- The prorated amount of any retirement pension or annuity under a public or private retirement plan or system to the extent they would be deducted from regular unemployment compensation.

## Deductions

- **Pensions and annuities** are subject to the pension deduction provisions of Section 625.13 of the Federal DUA Regulations and Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) 23-791 of the Arizona UI Law. If you are receiving pensions and annuities that would be deductible from regular UI benefits under Arizona UI Law, they will be deductible from weekly PUA in the same manner. Examples of the most common deductible pensions and annuities include:
  - State and local government pensions
  - Federal Civil Service pensions
  - Military retirement pensions

If you become eligible for an additional pension or annuity, or should the amount of the current pension or annuity change, this new amount must be reported immediately.

- PUA benefits are included in the individual's gross income for federal income tax purposes and subject to federal income tax withholding if he or she elects to have federal withholding deducted from the PUA payments. An individual will receive Form 1099-G to file with his or her income tax return.
- Child support obligations must be deducted from PUA payments in the same manner and to the same extent as they are deducted from regular UC.

## DURATION OF BENEFITS

The eligibility period for PUA is January 27, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The first payable Benefit Week Ending (BWE) is February 8, 2020 and the last payable BWE is December 26, 2020. PUA provides up to 39 weeks of benefits.

For each week you file a PUA claim, your reason for being unemployed must be because of a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. A shorter or abbreviated pandemic assistance period may be provided if it determined that the pandemic is of a shorter duration.

## HOW IS THE PUA WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT COMPUTED?

Your WBA is computed under the provisions of Arizona UI Law, except that is it based on your wages paid and/or net income earned from self-employment during your **most recent federal tax year** that ended **prior to the beginning of the pandemic**. This is your **base period**. The base period for PUA is calendar year 2019.

### Minimum PUA WBA

If an individual's PUA WBA is less than 50 percent of the Arizona average WBA or if the individual has insufficient wages from employment or no net income from self-employment, the PUA minimum amount is determined under 20 CFR 6.5.6. The DOL determined the minimum PUA amount for this pandemic in Arizona is \$117 per week.

## **SPECIAL RULES FOR COMPUTING THE PUA WBA**

### **Weekly Amount of PUA in Cases Involving Death of Head of Household**

If you are an unemployed individual who has become the breadwinner or major support because the head of household has died as a direct result of the pandemic, you may be eligible to receive PUA benefits. You must now be able to and available for work. Pages 4 and 5 of this Handbook lists possible exceptions to this. If it is not possible to compute a weekly PUA amount for you due to a lack of sufficient employment in your base period, your weekly amount for PUA will be the weekly amount the deceased head of your household would have been entitled to if he or she had not died. If a PUA claim can be established using your actual wages, you will receive the higher of the two entitlements.

### **Rules for Family Businesses**

If you worked in or were part owner of a family business, you and all members of the family business may be eligible for PUA benefits. All members of the family who were customarily or routinely employed or self-employed as a family unit, or in the same self-employment business prior to the date you and the other family business members became unemployed as a direct result of the pandemic, will be eligible to apply for PUA benefits. The wages from this employment or net income from self-employment will be allocated equally among all adult family members that are considered part of the working family unit. All family members must be over the age of majority, as defined by state law, on or before their application for PUA. The applicant's equal portion of the wages or net income will be used to determine their PUA WBA.

**Exception:** If the documentation substantiating employment or self-employment and wages from the family business justifies a different allocation, it will be used rather than the equal allocation.

The term "family" as used for determining a WBA, is not limited to the traditional family of husband, wife, and children but includes any family members related by blood, adoption, or marriage who customarily work as a family unit.

### **Rules for Minors**

If you are a minor child who worked in a family-owned business or if there were any minor children working in the family business at the time you became unemployed as a direct result of the pandemic, you or the minor children may be eligible for PUA benefits. The DOL has found that minor children of a family often work in the family business or share in the profits of the family business. This occurs particularly in the agricultural industry, where family members may share in the profits from the sale of crops or livestock. This type of employment or self-employment is usually performed during periods when these individuals are not attending school and may be full-time during vacation or between term periods, and part-time or not at all during times school is in session. The fact that these children are under the age of majority does not in itself mean they are not entitled to PUA. These individuals will be entitled to PUA if they meet the definition of unemployed worker or unemployed self-employed individual and the eligibility requirements for a week of unemployment.

## **Computing the PUA WBA of Minors**

If the method used by the Department to compute a PUA WBA for an individual under the age of majority uses the actual wages earned or received during the base-year period in employment or self-employment, rather than an equal allocation of the wages as provided for family members over the age of majority, the PUA WBA for these individuals will be based on whether they were working full-time or part-time when they became unemployed as a direct result of the pandemic. In either case, the PUA WBA is calculated in the same manner as if they were not employed in a family-owned business.

## **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)**

For weeks of unemployment beginning on or after March 27, 2020, and ending on or before July 31, 2020, individuals eligible to receive PUA are also eligible to receive FPUC, authorized under section 2104 of the CARES Act. FPUC provides an additional \$600 per week for eligible weekly claims.

## **PUA Based on Part-Time Employment**

If you were customarily or routinely employed or self-employed less than full-time prior to your unemployment as a direct result of the pandemic, your weekly benefit amount will be the minimum PUA WBA of \$117.

## **DISQUALIFICATION OR TERMINATION OF BENEFITS**

You may be disqualified or your PUA benefit may be terminated if you:

- Became employed in a suitable position;
- Returned to your pre-pandemic self-employment status;
- Refused without good cause to accept suitable employment or did not resume or commence suitable self-employment
- Refused without good cause to accept a referral to suitable employment;
- Were not able to or available for work, except that you are not able to or available for work as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- Were determined unemployed due to reasons other than a direct result of the pandemic.

## **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is your responsibility to give correct answers to any questions asked regarding your initial and weekly claims for PUA benefits.

Failure to furnish requested documents or information could result in a delay of your benefits.

All information is subject to verification. PUA benefits are provided through federal funds. Criminal and/or civil penalties for violations of federal and/or state laws will be enforced for willfully making false statements or concealing information to obtain or increase your PUA benefits.

## KEEPING RECORDS

It is your responsibility to keep accurate records of the weeks you claim, payments you receive, wages you earn, and work search contacts you make. When you inquire about your claim, we will be better able to assist you if you keep accurate records.

## STATEMENT REQUIRED UNDER THE PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that you be furnished this statement because you are being asked to furnish your Social Security Account Number on claim forms that are given to you. Your SSN is solicited under the authority of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (26U.S.C. 85, 6011(a), 6050B, and 6109(a)). Disclosure of your SSN for this purpose is MANDATORY and must be entered on forms you submit to claim PUA benefits. If you decline to disclose your SSN, your claim for payment of PUA will not be processed.

## APPEALS INFORMATION

If DES denies PUA benefits, a written determination will be issued. You will be informed of your eligibility for PUA benefits. This determination may cover one or more weeks of PUA or your total eligibility for PUA benefits.

If you disagree with the determination, you may file an appeal **within 15 days** from the date of the determination. The last day to file your appeal appears on the front of the determination notice you will receive. You must file your appeal on or before this deadline.

You may file your appeal:

- By fax to 602-364-1210; 602-364-1211; 520-770-3357; or 520-770-3358
- Online on the [Electronic Appeals Submissions portal](#).

The appeal must include your name, SSN, a copy of the determination (if possible), a statement that you want to file an appeal from this determination, and the reason(s) for your appeal. The appeal must be received by close of business on the last day to appeal.

## FRAUD

If you knowingly make a false statement or withhold information in order to collect Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits you are not entitled to, this may be considered fraud and you could be disqualified from receiving benefits. The Department may take civil or criminal action and you may be required to repay the amount you receive illegally. Unemployment Insurance fraud is a potential Class VI Felony punishable by up to two years in prison and fines up to \$150,000 for each overpaid benefit week.

## **PRIVACY ACT**

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that you be furnished this statement because you are asked to provide your Social Security Number. Your Social Security Number is requested under the authority of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 [26 U.S.C. 85, 6011(a), 6050B, and 6109(a)]. Disclosure of your Social Security Number is mandatory and must be furnished to process your claim for unemployment insurance. Should you decline to disclose your Social Security Number, your claim for unemployment insurance will not be processed.

Your Social Security Number will be used: (1) to process your claim and determine your eligibility for unemployment insurance, (2) to report your unemployment insurance benefits to the Internal Revenue Service as income, (3) for statistical purposes, (4) for cross-matching by public assistance agencies or other government entities in the official performance of their duties.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Although federal and state laws prohibit the revealing of information about your unemployment insurance claim to your spouse, relatives, friends, non-interested parties and private interest groups, federal legislation requires that such information will be used for other governmental purposes, including verifying eligibility for other governmental programs. Confidentiality will be the responsibility of all agencies using the information.