

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DES Distributes Record High to Arizona Unemployment Insurance Beneficiaries

Additional \$600 In Benefits Began Reaching Claimants This Week

PHOENIX – (April 15, 2020) The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) last week distributed more than \$26.9 million in Unemployment Insurance (UI) payments to Arizonans as a result of an unprecedented number of Arizonans applying for unemployment benefits for job losses related to the Coronavirus disease pandemic.

An additional \$55 million in benefits was distributed Monday to claimants that filed weekly certifications Sunday. Those benefits included the weekly supplemental \$600 in benefits referred to as the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, provided by the CARES Act.

Claims for unemployment benefits due to COVID-19 have led to unprecedented volume for the Department, including a record number of applications, benefits paid and calls received.

“We know from these numbers that this is an extremely challenging time for Arizonans, and the Department of Economic Security is working hard to process unemployment claims as quickly as possible,” said Tom Betlach, from the Office of the Director. “We are paying out higher numbers each week and this will only continue as we enhance our systems and scale our staff.”

By the Numbers (week ending April 11):

- 95,382 Initial Claims
- 164,483 Continued Weekly Claims
- 22,000 Calls Answered (highest on record)

In Comparison: (week ending March 14):

- 3,844 Initial Claims
- 17,595 Continued Weekly Claims
- 3,400 Calls Answered

*Weekly Claims report can be found at www.azui.com

DES staff have been working around the clock to serve the record number of Arizonans in need of Unemployment Insurance. To assist with the rapid increase in requests, the Department has significantly increased staffing, extended call center hours, enhanced web resources, installed a chat bot on the website to answer frequently asked questions, implemented system changes and contracted with a private sector call center company to assist with record-breaking call volume. In addition, **call centers will begin accepting calls on Sundays, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. beginning April 26 to further increase capacity and assist more Arizonans.**

CARES Act – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) Program

The CARES Act provides for a temporary emergency increase in benefits above the weekly benefit amount an individual receives from certain other Unemployment Compensation programs.

Last week, DES implemented the system modifications required to distribute the weekly supplemental \$600 FPUC benefits provided by the CARES Act. Active claimants should receive these funds by the end of this week. Individuals with active claims beginning March 29 will also receive retroactive payments. The additional funds will continue to be added to regular benefits for every week a claim is filed through July 25, 2020. No additional steps are needed to receive these funds.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) provides benefits to certain individuals who would not otherwise be eligible for Unemployment Insurance.

PUA is a brand-new program that is being built from the ground up. DES continues to review federal guidance and implement significant system changes to expand eligibility for PUA. The implementation of this benefit is still to be determined, but DES is working as quickly as possible to make these payments. If someone has already applied for Unemployment Insurance benefits and thinks they may be eligible for PUA, the Department will contact them when further action is needed.

DES has been communicating, and will continue to communicate, to all individuals who have been denied for being monetarily ineligible for regular Unemployment Insurance back to the effective date of the CARES Act. Individuals should keep a record of their earnings each week as this information will be required to determine eligibility when PUA is implemented. Visit <https://des.az.gov/pua> for updates and additional information.

Through July 25, 2020, individuals receiving PUA benefits may also receive the additional \$600 FPUC payment if they are eligible for benefits for the week. This additional payment will be implemented alongside PUA.

Weekly Claims Reminder

Unemployment Insurance claimants **must file weekly claims** to continue to receive benefits (even if the initial claim is still pending, individuals must file a weekly claim to receive benefits for that week). UI claimants can file weekly claims at www.azui.com. The online Weekly Claims System is available from 12:01 a.m. Sunday to 6 p.m. Friday. More information about filing weekly claims can be found [HERE](#).

Where To Find Information On Job Openings

ARIZONA@WORK staff can provide people with no-cost job assistance to help them get back to work. More information about the services available and a list of jobs with immediate openings can be found at: www.ArizonaAtWork.com.

For more information about Unemployment Insurance, or to apply, please visit www.azui.com.

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