

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is an expansion to California's existing unemployment benefits program in response to the global pandemic crisis. More information can be found at the EDD website found [HERE](#).

Who is Eligible?

PUA is designed to provide relief to individuals who cannot work due to reasons directly related to COVID-19 but do not qualify for regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, state Disability Insurance, or Paid Family Leave benefits. This includes:

- Business owners
- Self-employed individuals
- Independent contractors (Form 1099)
- Gig-workers
- Anyone who have exhausted their regular UI benefits
- Anyone who doesn't have sufficient work history
(This generally means you don't have enough wages reported as an employee during the last 18 months to establish a regular UI claim.)

I Don't Think I'm Unemployed. I'm Still Working But Work is Slow. Am I Still Eligible?

Yes! Both regular unemployment and the PUA allow for "partial unemployment". If you are still employed but your hours and/or wages have been reduced because of COVID-19, we recommend you apply. The EDD will make a determination what reduced unemployment benefits you are eligible for, if any.

How Do I Apply?

The EDD began accepting on-line applications from new applicants on April 28, 2020.

- You may file a PUA claim through UI Online, just as you would for regular unemployment insurance (UI) benefits.
- To access UI Online, you will need a Benefits Program Online account. You may register for an account online [HERE](#).
- The EDD has also provided several YouTube tutorial videos that can help walk you through the online portal processes. These can all be accessed [HERE](#).

What are the PUA Benefits?

PUA will provide a range of \$167–\$450 per week depending on the applicant's level of normal income. For 2021, the new coronavirus relief bill also allows for 11 weeks of \$300 payments on top of the normal benefits.

How Far Back Can I Claim Unemployment?

You can request to backdate your claim date to the week you became unemployed due to COVID-19. If approved, benefits will be back paid based on your last day of work. For new PUA applications received on or after December 27, 2020, the earliest start date for a PUA claim is December 6, 2020.

I Have a Problem But Can't Get the EDD on the Phone

Due to the unprecedented demand for unemployment assistance, the EDD has experienced so much phone traffic that they are screening all calls, automatically sending callers to a voice machine that simply advises them to go online.

We have found that by entering a specific extension number code, you are able to be placed in a waiting queue to speak with actual human EDD staff. In our experience, this may need to be tried several times before you are successful, but eventually you should be put in touch with an EDD staff member who was able to address your issues directly.

OPTION #1

- Call the UI General helpline between the hours of 8am-8pm: **1-833-978-2511**.
- Ideally, try calling early in the morning around 8am when there is theoretically less traffic.
- Immediately dial the "1" once the automated answer begins.
- Dial "1" a second time once an automated answer continues. You should be put in line to speak to a human being.

OPTION #2

- Call the UI helpline between the hours of 8am-8pm: **1-800-300-5616**.
- Ideally, try calling early in the morning around 8am when there is theoretically less traffic.
- Wait for the voice recording of someone speaking.
- As soon as they give you the first Prompt, Dial "**1341**". You should be put in line to speak to a human being.

Note that persistence is key. The hold function may automatically hang up on you if a human does not answer your call in time. Other small businesses have reported they usually get through to a human being after using this method 3-5 times in a row.

To clarify, this information is not official, and the EDD may end this quote-on-quote "secret" resource at any time. But over the last several months, we have confirmed with several of our small businesses that these methods were able to solve their unemployment issues.



Let us know if you have more questions!

Johannus L. Reijnders

Associate

Townsend Public Affairs, Inc.

BusinessAssistance@townsendpa.com

www.townsendpa.com

Appendix of URLs

PUA Main Website:

https://edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019/pandemic-unemployment-assistance.htm

Register for UI Online Benefits Program Online Account:

https://portal.edd.ca.gov/WebApp/Login?resource_url=https%3A%2F%2Fportal.edd.ca.gov%2FWebApp%2FHome

EDD YouTube Tutorial Videos:

https://www.edd.ca.gov/unemployment/UI_Online_Videos.htm



State Capitol Office ▪ 925 L Street ▪ Suite 1404 ▪ Sacramento, CA 95814 ▪ Phone (916) 447-4086 ▪ Fax (916) 444-0383
Southern California Office ▪ 1401 Dove Street ▪ Suite 330 ▪ Newport Beach, CA 92660 ▪ Phone (949) 399-9050 ▪ Fax (949) 476-8215
Central California Office ▪ 744 P Street ▪ Suite 308 ▪ Fresno, CA 93721 ▪ (949) 399-9050 ▪ Fax (949) 476-8215
Federal Office ▪ 600 Pennsylvania SE ▪ Suite 207 ▪ Washington, DC 20003 ▪ Phone (202) 546-8696 ▪ Fax (202) 546-4555
Northern California Office ▪ 300 Frank Ogawa Plaza ▪ Suite 204 ▪ Oakland, CA 94612 ▪ Phone (510) 835-9050 ▪ Fax (510) 835-9030