

## **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Benefit Payment Q&A**

On March 27, 2020, President Trump signed into law what is known as the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” or the “CARES Act” which included the PUA program. This program is designed to provide benefits to individuals who are ineligible for regular Unemployment Insurance (UI), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) or state Extended Benefits (EB).

### **Q: How do I find out if I’m eligible?**

A: You have to first test to see if you are eligible for any other program such as regular UI, PEUC, or EB. This generally requires that you first fill out a regular UI application which can be done at <https://my.alaska.gov/>. Examples of people likely to be eligible for PUA are those individuals ineligible for the prior listed programs, including those who have received and exhausted all of their other UI benefits from all eligible programs; the self-employed; those who have not had sufficient work history to be eligible for regular UI benefits; or those seeking only part-time work.

### **Q: What if I already applied for regular UI and was denied?**

A: You have taken a necessary step. We are still working on getting the PUA program in place so for right now you should have filed for payment of benefits every week through myAlaska. Once the program is in place, there will be a press release and individuals will be notified of their potential eligibility. At that time, we may need to gather additional employment information from you to determine if you are eligible for the PUA program. If you are determined to be eligible, you may receive retroactive payments for eligible weeks.

### **Q: How far back will these benefits be paid?**

A: The first payable week of PUA is Feb. 2, 2020, if you filed a claim on or before that and meet the eligibility criteria to receive PUA.

### **Q: How long will these benefits be available in case I’m currently still working, but there’s a possibility I may not be much longer?**

A: The PUA program will be available through Dec. 26, 2020.

### **Q: If I’m eligible how long can I receive these payments?**

A: There is a maximum potential of 39 weeks. However, if you received payment for any weeks from UI or EB then the total number of weeks of payment from those programs will be deducted from the possible 39 weeks. Weeks of payment from the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program will not be deducted.

**Q: What makes someone eligible for PUA?**

A: They must be out of work because of one of the following:

- ▶ The individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
- ▶ A member of the individual’s household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- ▶ The individual is providing care for a family member or a member of the individual’s household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- ▶ A child or other person in the household for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility 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 the individual to work;
- ▶ The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- ▶ The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because the individual has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;
- ▶ The individual was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job, or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;

A: Or, not able or available to work because of one of the following:

- ▶ The individual has become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- ▶ The individual has to quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- ▶ The individual’s place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; or
- ▶ The individual meets any additional criteria established by the Secretary for PUA (provided in the UIPL).

**Q: What if I have the ability to telework and receive pay?**

A: If you are eligible to work through telecommuting, and your hours have not been reduced, you are not eligible for PUA.

**Q: What if I’m not telecommuting, but I’m receiving some form of paid leave to cover my normal hours worked?**

A: If you are receiving paid leave to cover your wages for your normal work week you will not be eligible for PUA.

**Q: What if I am working some, but my hours are reduced?**

A: You will need to report any income earned each week you file, but if it is below a specific threshold (unique to your specific claim) then you may still be eligible for some payment of PUA during weeks you worked and earned income.

**Q: What if I am disqualified from receiving regular UI because of a job separation that occurred before the COVID-19 public health emergency?**

A: You may be eligible for PUA, so long as you are unemployed (partial or total), unable, or unavailable to work as a direct result of one of the COVID-19 reasons listed.

**Q: What if I am on approved unpaid medical leave from work and are ineligible for regular UI because I am unable/unavailable for work?**

A: You may be eligible for PUA, so long as your approved unpaid medical leave is a direct result of one of the COVID-19 qualifying reasons.

**Q: If I am a full-time student, can I receive PUA?**

A: You might be eligible for PUA if you have worked part-time and are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of one of the COVID-19 reasons.

**Q: If I own more than one business, how will my earnings amount be determined?**

A: If an individual owns two or more separate businesses, eligibility to PUA is based on an accumulation of income from all businesses.

**Q: If I performed self-employment in more than one state, in which state should I file my PUA application?**

A: An individual who is self-employed must file with the state where the individual was working at the time of becoming unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of a COVID-19 related reason listed in section 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I) of the CARES Act. This is true even if the individual is living in one state, and is self-employed in another state. If an individual worked in more than one state at this time, the individual may file in any of those states.

**Q: I have heard this is similar to Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), but you can only file for DUA for 30 days. Will I only have 30 days to apply?**

A: There is no 30-day limit for PUA, but you should apply as soon as possible. Again, it must first be determined that you are not eligible for regular UI benefits so applying for those through myAlaska is a good place to start the process.

**Q: What about this \$600 payment? Will I be eligible for it?**

A: Any week in which you are eligible for benefits from a state or federal UI program, you will also be eligible for the \$600. The \$600 will be in addition to the PUA payment. For information regarding this payment see the Q&A for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)

**Below are acceptable forms of wage proof for self-employment:**

- State agency wage records
- 2019 Tax Returns
- Pay Checks stubs
- Bank receipts
- Business records
- Ledgers
- Contracts
- Invoices
- Billing statements
- 1099