



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

BENEFIT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES HANDBOOK

**PANDEMIC
UNEMPLOYMENT
ASSISTANCE**

PUA

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and Training Services**

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We are an equal opportunity
employer/program. Auxiliary aids and
services are available upon request to
individuals with disabilities.

OVERVIEW

The following handbook provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities while filing for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). The explanations included in this handbook are to help you to understand the benefit provisions of the PUA program.

Do not rely on advice from friends or relatives. If you do not understand something or have a concern about your claim, not covered in this handbook, contact the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) at (907) 465-5552.

Due to the Privacy Act, the Alaska DOLWD staff cannot discuss your claim with anyone other than you. This includes your spouse, mother, father, or another family member.

WHAT IS PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE?

On Mar. 27, 2020, the President signed into law what is known as the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” or the “CARES Act,” which included the PUA program.

On Dec. 27, 2020, the President signed into law the “Continued Assistance to Unemployed Workers Act of 2020,” which extended the duration of PUA and added additional requirements for eligibility.

On Mar. 11, 2021, the President signed into law what is known as the “American Rescue Plan Act, 2021” which extended the duration of 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).

PUA benefits are only available when the President of the United States declares that a public health emergency has occurred. States administer the PUA program through voluntary agreements with the United States Department of Labor and Workforce Development (US DOLWD). PUA is available to aid individuals who are unable to work as a direct result of the

pandemic. US DOLWD, not employer payroll taxes, provides the funding for PUA.

DEFINITION OF A PANDEMIC

A “pandemic” is a worldwide disease that may result in the declaration of a public health emergency and which may warrant federal government assistance to individuals and communities.

DURATION OF BENEFITS

PUA is available to eligible individuals for a total of 79 weeks of benefits, minus any weeks paid under any other state or federal UI program issued during this pandemic period, except PEUC. Weeks paid through PEUC do not count against the potential 79 weeks available through PUA.

Continued eligibility for benefits is determined on a week-to-week basis, and individuals must file weekly claims to receive weekly payments.

PUA benefits for individuals affected by COVID-19 are available starting with the week ending Feb. 8, 2020, and can be paid up to the week ending Sep. 4, 2021, if the individual remains eligible. The “Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act of 2020,” added 11 weeks to the original 39 from the “CARES Act,” for a total of 50 potential weeks.

The “American Rescue Plan Act” adds 29 weeks to the 50 from the two previous acts for a total of 79 potential weeks, and extends the program-end date to Sep. 4, 2021.

WHO MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE?

PUA is available to unemployed workers or self-employed individuals who lost employment or were to begin employment when the pandemic occurred. Individuals who cannot work because of an illness as a direct result of the pandemic or have become the breadwinner because the head of household has died as a direct result of

the pandemic may also be eligible for PUA benefits.

I AM NOT A UNITED STATES CITIZEN, AM I ELIGIBLE FOR PUA BENEFITS?

PUA is only available to U.S. Citizens or U.S. non-citizen nationals, or qualified aliens under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Individuals who wish to receive PUA benefits must provide proof of identity and demonstrate their status as U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or qualified aliens. This is irrespective of territory law eligibility criteria for regular unemployment benefits. Qualified aliens include:

- Legal permanent resident (“green card” holder)
- An asylee, refugee, or an alien whose deportation is being withheld
- Alien paroled into the U.S. for at least one year
- Alien granted conditional entry (per law in effect before Apr. 1, 1980)
- Cuban/Haitian entrant
- Aliens in the U.S. who have been abused, subject to battery or extreme cruelty by a spouse or other family/household member, or have been a victim of a severe form of human trafficking
- Aliens whose children have been abused and alien children whose parent has been abused who fit certain criteria

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for PUA you must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- An initial application for PUA filed after Alaska DOLWD announced PUA availability on Apr. 16, 2020. Timely applications for PUA are accepted through Sep. 4, 2021. Any PUA application received after Sep. 4, 2021, may result in a denial of PUA benefits unless it is determined there was good cause for late filing.
- Your unemployment or inability to perform services as a self-employed individual must have been a direct result of the pandemic.

- Your principal source of income must have been generated from your employment or self-employment.
- You do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits from any state.
- You must present documented proof that you had existing or pending employment or self-employment when the pandemic occurred. You may have already met this requirement if you provided documentation verifying your income. Your deadline depends on when you first filed your claim. If you had an existing claim and filed for payment for the week ending Dec. 26, 2020, or after, you will be required to substantiate your existing or pending employment or self-employment at the time the pandemic began. If you filed a new claim before Jan. 31, 2021, you will have 90 days from the time we notify you, to supply the required documents. If you file a claim on or after Jan. 31, 2021, you have 21 days from the date we notify you, to provide the required documentation.
- Proof of employment or self-employment at the time of the pandemic can include state agency wage records, paycheck stubs, bank receipts, business records, ledgers, contracts, invoices, billing statements, 1099s or W-2s, and tax returns for the most recent completed tax year. If you do not submit proof by your deadline, PUA benefits may be denied and an overpayment may result.

CONDITIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC

The following conditions of unemployment must have occurred as a direct result of the major pandemic to qualify for PUA:

Individuals 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 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 a 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.
- 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.
- Self-employed individuals (including independent contractors and gig workers) who have experienced a significant reduction of services because of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- The individual has been denied continued unemployment benefits because the individual refused to return to work or accept an offer of work at a worksite that, in either instance, is not in compliance with local, state, or national health and safety standards directly related to COVID-19. This includes, but is not limited to, those related to facial mask wearing, physical distancing measures, or the provision of personal protective equipment consistent with public health guidelines.
- Certain individuals providing services to educational institutions or educational service agencies; and
- The individual is experiencing a reduction of hours or a temporary or permanent lay-off

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS?

You can only be paid benefits if you meet all the federal requirements under the PUA program. The Alaska DOLWD will issue a Notice of Eligibility Determination advising you of your weekly benefit amount (WBA) if you meet the eligibility requirements of the PUA program. If you do not meet the eligibility requirements of the PUA program, the Notice of Eligibility Determination will explain why you are not eligible for PUA.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE?

If you disagree with the determination, you have the right to request a reconsideration of the determination and you may file an appeal. If you request a reconsideration of the determination, the Alaska DOLWD will review its prior determination and consider any new information you provide. You must submit a request for reconsideration within 30 calendar days from the date of the determination. If you disagree with the reconsideration determination you may file an appeal within 30 calendar days, and a telephone hearing will be scheduled with an appeal referee.

You may appeal any written determinations that deny or affect your eligibility for PUA benefits. The Alaska DOLWD will send you information on the hearings process.

COMPUTATION OF WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT (WBA)

In Alaska, the PUA WBA for an unemployed worker or an unemployed self-employed individual for a week of total unemployment is based on the average of the payments of regular compensation made under state unemployment compensation laws for weeks of total unemployment, and on income earned in the most recent completed tax year.

The "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act" (CARES Act) has determined that the minimum PUA WBA is \$133 and the maximum PUA WBA is based on state law. Alaska's maximum WBA is \$370.

WHAT IF I CANNOT PROVIDE THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION SHOWING I WAS EMPLOYED OR SELF-EMPLOYED AT THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC?

To receive PUA, individuals must supply all required documentation that substantiates their employment, or self-employment, or work that was to begin at the time of the pandemic. If you fail to substantiate your self-employment and income, your PUA claim may be re-determined to be invalid, and you will be liable for any overpaid benefits. If it is determined that you made false statements to collect PUA, you will be subject to administrative penalties and may be prosecuted for fraud.

WEEKLY PUA CLAIMS

You must file weekly PUA claims timely according to the instructions and forms provided to you by the Alaska DOLWD Division of Employment and Training Services.

PUA is paid on a calendar week basis in Alaska. You must file your weekly claim for benefits within seven days immediately following the Saturday of the week you are claiming. Alaska DOLWD must receive all weekly claims for assistance after the Saturday of the week you are claiming. Any request for benefits submitted before the Saturday of the week being claimed is considered untimely and payment for the week may be denied.

You must be able and available for work unless you are unable to work as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic or you are unable to reach your place of employment as a direct result of the pandemic. If you performed any work for any employer, you must report gross wages when earned (not when paid) for each week claimed. If you are a self-employed individual, you must report net income when paid (regardless of when earned) for each week claimed.

Visit <https://my.alaska.gov/> online to get to the PUA portal to file your weekly claims certifications. If you are unable to file your weekly claim online, you must contact your nearest claim center for assistance.

REDUCTION OF PUA BENEFITS

The weekly benefit amount payable to you will be reduced by wages or income that you have received for a week or will receive for a week based on the following criteria:

- Gross income over \$50 earned in an employer-employee relationship whether paid or not. For self-employed individuals, net income received over \$50 during the week for the performance of services in self-employment, regardless of whether or not any services were performed during the week.
- Any benefits or insurance from any source not defined as "compensation" under PUA regulation for the loss of wages due to illness or disability, such as private income protection insurance, etc.
- Workers compensation by the death of the head of household as a direct result of the pandemic if the individual has become the head of the household and is seeking suitable work.
- Supplemental unemployment benefits (SUB) under a collective bargaining agreement.
- Private income protection insurance, by the amount the individual has received, is receiving or would be receiving if an insurance claim was filed.
- Any public or private retirement pension or annuity.

If an individual in an employer-employee relationship reports gross earnings or a self-employed individual reports net earnings of less than the WBA for any week claimed, they are considered partially unemployed. The first \$50 of reported earnings will not reduce the PUA WBA. Any amount over \$50 of earnings reported will reduce the PUA WBA. If you have wages equal to or more than $1\frac{1}{3}$ times your weekly benefit amount plus \$50, you are considered fully employed and no PUA benefits will be paid.

ARE MY BENEFITS TAXABLE?

PUA benefits are subject to federal income taxes. Alaska DOLWD will provide you a 1099-G form by Jan. 31 for the prior tax year showing the amount of PUA payments you received.

WHAT IF I AM OVERPAID?

Occasionally an individual may receive benefits to which they are not entitled, causing an overpayment. You will be notified in writing if it is determined that you have been overpaid. If a PUA overpayment is established, you will be responsible to repay the PUA amount that was overpaid.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

You are responsible to read the information provided in this handbook.

You are responsible for any information you furnish to claim benefits under the PUA program. All information is subject to verification to ensure it is complete and correct. If you willingly make a false statement or conceal information to receive PUA, you may be subject to criminal prosecution and penalties under Alaska and/or Federal Law. Also, you will be liable for repayment of any PUA payments that are determined to be overpaid because of such concealed information or false statement(s).

WHY MUST I PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION AND PROOF OF MY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?

Information requested for use by the Alaska DOLWD, Employment and Training Services, is authorized under Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) (42 U.S.C. §5177). All information furnished will be kept confidential, except to the extent that release of such information is authorized in processing your claim and will not be released or used for any purpose other than for establishing your PUA eligibility and to ensure that benefits have been properly paid.

HOW AND WHERE CAN I APPLY FOR PUA?

Individuals whose employment was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic may apply for PUA by going online to <https://my.alaska.gov/>, or by

calling your claim center for assistance at one of the following numbers:

Juneau: (907) 465-5552

Fairbanks: (907) 451-2871

Anchorage: (907) 269-4700

All other areas: (888) 252-2557

To receive PUA, individuals must provide all requested documentation to prove their employment or self-employment, or work that was to begin at the time of the pandemic. You can upload documents online through your PUA profile, mail them to the address below, or fax them to the number below:

Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Employment and Training Services
ATTN: PUA/UI Support
P.O. Box 115509
Juneau, AK 99811-5509

Fax: (907) 465-2741, use "ATTN: PUA" on the cover sheet.

Documents should include your name and contact information.

WILL I RECEIVE THE \$300 SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENT FOR FEDERAL PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION?

If you are eligible to receive a week of PUA benefits you will also receive the additional \$300 supplemental payment under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. The \$300 FPUC payment is payable only for weeks of unemployment beginning on or after the week ending Jan. 2, 2021. FPUC is not payable for any week of unemployment ending after June 19, 2021.

References: 20 CFR 625; P.L. 116-136 (CARES Act); P.L. 116-260 (Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act of 2020)



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