

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Date: June 4, 2020

News Release No.: 20-23

More than \$22.2 billion in unemployment benefits paid in California

EDD launches new tools, including text message and chat bot services, to assist workers

Sacramento – Total unemployment benefits paid to California workers struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic now tops \$22.2 billion, including payments issued for the first few days of the new 13-week federal extension known as Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC). According to the latest data from the state Employment Development Department (EDD), more than 5.6 million unemployment claims were processed since the pandemic began, and a total of \$3.4 billion in benefits were paid last week alone.

In just the last three months, the EDD has paid just shy of the total unemployment benefits issued during the entire year at the peak of the Great Recession in 2010 (\$22.9 billion).

Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard				
		Current Week	Prior Weeks	Total
		May 30, 2020	W/E 3/14-5/23/20	W/E 3/14-5/30/20
Total Applications Submitted ¹ <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)</i>	Reg. UI	105,369	4,186,704	4,292,073
	PUA	85,747	797,013	882,760
	Total	191,116	4,983,717	5,174,833
Total Claims Processed ² <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD)</i>	Reg. UI	229,927	4,715,951	4,945,878
	PUA	72,785	639,556	712,341
	Total	302,712	5,355,507	5,658,219
Total Benefits Paid ³ <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)</i>	Reg. UI	\$2.5 billion	\$16.2 billion	\$18.7 billion
	PUA	\$825 million	\$2.6 billion	\$3.4 billion
	PEUC ⁴	\$124 million	\$0	\$124 million
	Total	\$3.4 billion	\$18.8 billion	\$22.2 billion
Individuals Claiming Benefits ^{5,6} <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	Reg. UI	3,442,152	3,393,529	
	PUA	573,352	517,375	
	Total	4,015,504 ⁷	3,910,904 ⁸	

1. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020.
2. Claims processed through UI Online, along with about 5% of claims that arrive via paper or phone. This accounts for claims received in the current week as well as past weeks. This total does not contain Work Share claims.
3. Includes \$600 federal stimulus payments EDD adds to each week of regular UI/PUA/PEUC benefits. Regular UI benefits are paid out of California's UI Trust Fund with contributions from employers, PUA, PEUC and the \$600 federal stimulus payments are paid for by the federal government.
4. For the week ending May 30, 2020, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) claims processed was 40 and the total weeks claimed was 324. These claims are an extension of a regular UI claim.
5. Counts include individuals claiming regular UI or PEUC benefits. If an individual claims a regular UI benefit and a PEUC benefit in a four-week rolling time period, they are only counted once.
6. Four-week rolling totals accommodate for numerous variables that dictate what claimants receive benefits in any given bi-weekly period. Data excludes claimants were who fully employed, disqualified or had excessive earnings that would disqualify them for a week of benefits.
7. Four-week rolling total between week-ending May 9 and week-ending May 30, 2020.
8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending May 2 and week-ending May 23, 2020.

EDD Introduces New Help Tools to Assist Workers

In recent weeks, EDD introduced a chat bot on Facebook (“Send Message”) as well as on the website (“EDD Help”) to answer claimants’ questions in English and Spanish, the EDD has also launched a new text message service. The EDD has also launched a new revised page of [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) featuring the most common questions we are hearing about each week from our customers. Here is a sampling of some of the most recent developments in serving California workers impacted by the pandemic.

What can I do if I have a question or want to know the status of my claim and I can’t get through on the call center lines?

In addition to a chat bot feature the EDD implemented on Facebook (“Send Message”) as well as website (“EDD Help”) to answer claimants’ questions in English and Spanish, the EDD has also launched a new text message service. These texts notify individuals about updates on their UI claim including when the claim is processed in our systems and when the first benefit payment is issued on the claim.

The EDD is also now expanding this service to notify individuals when a federal extension is filed on their behalf, when we need further documents from individuals to verify their identity, and when we have received those documents verifying the identity. This will help keep individuals posted on developments with their claim and reduce the need to call for assistance, freeing up access to agents for those who have more complex issues and need to talk to a representative.

Text alerts are sent from 51074 to the phone number the claimant indicates on their UI application. There is no cost to use this service, but standard carrier fees for text messaging may apply and the service can only send a message, not reply to messages from a claimant.

Is EDD getting more staff to help keep up with the demand for benefits?

Yes, when unemployment was at a record low in February, the EDD had low federal funding and low staff. But as the workload has spiked, the EDD has received more federal funding to support a mass expedited hiring effort. So far, the EDD has hired at least half of an initial 1,800 staff we are seeking to help process an unprecedented volume of unemployment claims, assist customers in our call centers, and review documents from claimants and employers to determine benefits. The EDD is now also hiring an additional 1,200 for a total of 3,000 new staff over the next few weeks to bolster the delivery of critical unemployment services to Californians in need. For more information about the positions being filled, visit the EDD [Careers webpage](#).

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If I've run out of my regular Unemployment Insurance benefits, how quickly can I get 13 weeks of extension benefits?

As of May 27, the EDD is regularly sweeping our system to identify claims that started on or after June 2, 2019 and all associated benefits are exhausted. If you do not have enough subsequent wages to make you eligible for a new regular UI claim, the EDD will automatically file a Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) extension on your last UI claim. You will receive a notice through the mail about 5-7 days later with more information. But for a faster process, check the Inbox of your UI Online account for an email about potential extension eligibility, and then a follow-up email within a few days about weeks available to certify for payment.

If my benefit year started before June 2, 2019, can I get extension benefits?

PEUC extension benefits are available on claims that started as early as July 2018 if you are fully or partially unemployed. Starting next month, the EDD will start mailing notices to those who used all their UI benefits sometime after July 2018 and before June 2, 2019, who were not included in Phase 1. If you are in this group, you should not delay in applying for a new UI claim if you haven't already done so since your benefit year has expired. If you are not eligible for a new regular UI claim, the EDD will automatically file a PEUC extension on your last UI claim.

Do I have to wait for an EDD Customer Account Number before I can certify my eligibility for payment?

The EDD will automatically complete your registration in UI Online for those who file their claim through UI Online and don't have any issues requiring identity or wage verification. That means you can move more quickly to certifying your eligibility for payment rather than waiting on a notice through the mail with your EDD Customer Account Number (EDDCAN). Look for an email that says "New Online Account Created".

For all other claimants, look for the notice with the EDDCAN mailed to your address which you can use to finish your registration in UI Online and move to certifying for benefit payments. If you have received an Award Notice but have not received your EDDCAN email or notice, call 1-833-978-2511 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week.

What can I do if my claim status shows "pending"?

A "pending" status means a potential eligibility issue is identified on either your initial application for benefits or your certification for your benefit payment and staff will have to follow up if it can't be automatically processed through our system. This can occur for a number of reasons including EDD needing to first verify your identity or your wages which don't match with our records.

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In some cases a payment can be made after such a review. In other cases, the EDD is required to schedule a determination interview. You will receive a notice in the mail with the date and time of your appointment to speak with an EDD staff who will ask you questions about the eligibility issue. The staff person may also have to follow up with your employer.

Reasons that necessitate further fact-finding include your ability and availability to work, reasons for separation from your employer, and other eligibility requirements defined by law. The EDD will send you a notice in the mail if you are found ineligible for benefits, or the pending weeks will be processed and you will receive an update in the Inbox of your UI Online account. The EDD recommends you continue to certify for any weeks that become available while your claim shows pending, in order to quicken the issuing of benefits if and when you are determined eligible.

I'm a full-time student who usually works part-time, but I am unemployed or have reduced hours due to COVID-19. Am I eligible for PUA benefits?

Yes, PUA benefits are available to people who work part-time, and who are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of one of the [COVID-19 related reasons](#) provided under the PUA program. In addition, based on your work history, you may qualify for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. The EDD will first determine whether you have sufficient work history to qualify for UI, and if you do not, you may qualify for PUA. If you qualify for either UI or PUA benefits, you will receive an additional \$600 in federal stimulus funds on top of your weekly benefit amount between March 29 and July 25, 2020.

I'm a full-time student who usually works during the summer months when school is not in session but I was not able to get a summer job this year due to COVID-19. Am I eligible for PUA benefits?

If you were scheduled to start or return to a summer job but the job offer fell through due to COVID-19, you may be eligible for PUA. However, PUA does not provide benefits to people who have been unable to search for or obtain a job due to COVID-19 unless they are unemployed due to another [COVID-19 related reason](#) provided under the PUA program.

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