



N E W S R E L E A S E

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**California workers struggling through pandemic receive \$41.3 billion in unemployment benefits**

***EDD provides customer service and hiring updates***

**Sacramento** – Unemployment benefits totaling \$41.3 billion have gone out to workers losing their jobs or working reduced hours in the wake of the economic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic - \$3.7 billion alone just last week. According to the latest data, the California Employment Development Department (EDD) has processed a total of 7.5 million claims since the pandemic began in mid-March. That surpasses the number of claims processed over the same time period of two of the next largest states, Texas and New York, combined. (7.2 million).

<b>Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard</b>				
		<i>Current Week</i>	<i>Prior Weeks</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<b>July 4, 2020</b>	<b>WE 3/14-6/27/20</b>	<b>WE 3/14-7/04/20</b>
<b>Total Applications Submitted</b> <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)<sup>1</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	106,645	4,678,933	4,785,578
	<b>PUA</b>	127,270	1,245,953	1,373,223
	<b>Total</b>	233,915	5,924,886	6,158,801
<b>Total Claims Processed</b> <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)<sup>2</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	267,123	6,040,477	6,307,600
	<b>PUA</b>	100,588	1,040,807	1,141,395
	<b>Total</b>	367,711	7,081,284	7,448,995
<b>Total Benefits Paid</b> <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)<sup>3</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	\$2.4 billion	\$29.0 billion	\$31.3 billion
	<b>PUA</b>	\$1.1 billion	\$7.3 billion	\$8.5 billion
	<b>PEUC<sup>4</sup></b>	\$209 million	\$1.2 billion	\$1.5 billion
	<b>Total</b>	\$3.7 billion	\$37.5 billion	\$41.3 billion
<b>Individuals Paid Benefits<sup>5,6</sup></b> <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	3,398,000	3,412,000	
	<b>PUA</b>	829,000	764,000	
	<b>Total</b>	4,227,000	4,176,000 <sup>8</sup>	

1. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020. This data includes new initial claims only.

2. Claims processed through UI Online, along with about 5% of claims that arrive via paper of phone. This accounts for claims received in the current week as well as past weeks. The data also includes claims that are re-opened when there is a break in certifying for benefits, for example when the claimant may return to work but then later come back to collect benefits on their initial claim.

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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. The total benefits paid may not add up due to rounding of data.

4. For the week ending June 27, 2020, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 251,012. PEUC 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 who were fully employed, disqualified or had excessive earnings that would disqualify them for a week of benefits.

7. Four-week rolling total between week-ending June 13 and week-ending July 4, 2020.

8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending June 6 and week-ending June 27, 2020.

## **EDD hiring 5,300 new staff to expand customer service and processing capacity**

The COVID-19 pandemic hit at a time when the state was seeing record low unemployment with correspondingly low federal administrative funding and therefore reduced staffing levels. Now that the EDD has received increased federal funding along with the record surge in demand for unemployment benefits, an expedited hiring effort is targeting a total of 5,300 new staff over a matter of weeks. Since May, the EDD has hired or made conditional job offers to more than 4,300 Californians out of a targeted total of 5,300 to assist with all aspects of the UI program, hundreds of whom have completed training and are on the phone lines or processing claims. This mass hiring effort will help the EDD expand customer service and processing capacity to ensure claimants are paid all of the benefits they are eligible to receive. For more information visit [EDD's Career Opportunities](#) webpage.

### **Recent customer service enhancements**

As the EDD works to quickly hire thousands of additional staff to meet demand, EDD is encouraging customers to utilize the self-serve options available. Many impacted workers can file a claim and certify their eligibility for benefits online, freeing up the phone lines for those with more complex cases.

- In the first several weeks of service, the EDD has sent more than **5 million SMS texts** to customers alerting them of key updates on their claim, including when a first payment is made and when requested identity verification documents have been processed and the claimant is able to move on to certifying for benefits.
- The new chat bot service is **answering more than 214,000 common questions** from customers each week. Available in Spanish and English, the virtual agent can be accessed through the "EDD Help" feature seen in the bottom right hand side of the EDD website, or through the "Send Message" feature on the department's Facebook channel.

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- New tips on the [Unemployment step-by-step webpage](#) help impacted workers with certifying for benefits after initiating a claim. Certifying is the process of answering basic questions every two weeks that tells the EDD you're still unemployed and otherwise eligible to continue receiving biweekly payments. The tips address how to avoid the common mistakes that can cause unnecessary delays in receiving payment.
- New [top FAQs](#) are added to the web each week which address the most commonly asked questions. Some recent common questions address how a claimant can get their EDD Customer Account Number (EDDCAN) or backdate a claim all through the [AskEDD](#) feature on the department's website rather than calling for assistance through the call center.

In addition to the mass hiring effort and customer communication developments, the EDD also continues to enhance our technology systems to increase efficiencies, including:

- More automation features on the largest manual staff work queues to speed up processing.
- Implementing online access for employers to apply for the lay-off aversion Work Sharing program and for their employees to certify for benefits.
- Building a new document uploading option to help streamline the Identity Verification process.
- Adding tips in our UI Online application to assist claimants in certifying their eligibility for benefits accurately and avoiding common mistakes that can unnecessarily delay payments.

### **Helping workers reopen their unemployment claims when needed**

As a normal part of the UI program, workers may initiate a regular UI claim which is good for one year, stop certifying for their benefits when they return to work for a while, and then later return to their claim for collecting any balance of benefits that remain. The same can be true for those on a separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claim good until the end of the year. This process is called [reopening a claim](#), also referred to as an additional claim which the EDD is required to report to the U.S. Department of Labor. As California and the nation continue to deal with the impacts of this pandemic, the EDD wants workers to know:

- Using [UI Online](#) is the fastest and most convenient way to reopen a claim. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provides an abbreviated process as compared to the initial application for benefits. This [video tutorial](#) explains how to easily reopen a claim.
- In most cases, the EDD can automatically reopen claims within a few days to a week. The exceptions are those in which claimants don't meet able and availability requirements and staff have to manually follow up to determine eligibility.

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Once reopened, the claimant must then return to certifying every two weeks to determine eligibility for their next bi-weekly payment.

- The number of reopened claims is incorporated in the Claims Processed category of the Data Dashboard above and has increased in proportion to the historic demand for benefits. Reopened claims are up from approximately 74,000 a week at the end of May to approximately 140,000 at the end of June as some people who stopped certifying for benefits for a while due to going back to work, may be experiencing reduced hours again and are returning to certifying for benefits.

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