



N E W S R E L E A S E

Contact: Loree Levy
Aubrey Henry
916-654-9029

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Nearly \$77 billion in unemployment benefits paid to workers impacted by pandemic

Updates on Lost Wages Assistance benefits and fraud claims

Sacramento – California workers struggling through this historic COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact have received a total of \$76.9 billion in benefits to help support their families as well as businesses in their communities. Over the last six months, the California Employment Development Department reports processing a total of approximately 11.9 million claims between the regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and extension claims, as well as the separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. The total of regular UI and PUA claims alone is two million more than the next two highest states of Texas and New York combined (9 million).

Unemployment Insurance (UI) • Data Dashboard				
		<i>Current Week</i> August 29, 2020	<i>Prior Weeks</i> WE 3/14 -8/22/20	<i>Total</i> WE 3/14 -8/29/20
Total Applications Submitted <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)¹</i>	Reg. UI	72,730	5,394,833	5,467,563
	PUA	530,193	3,035,048	3,565,241
	PEUC²	42,498	600,136	642,634
	FED-ED³	6,908	110,757	117,665
	Total	652,329	9,140,774	9,793,103
Total Claims Processed <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)⁴</i>	Reg. UI	236,874	7,990,180	8,227,054
	PUA	405,878	2,457,237	2,863,115
	PEUC²	47,210	656,203	703,413
	FED-ED³	7,171	74,027	81,198
	Total	697,133	11,177,647	11,874,780
Total Benefits Paid <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)⁵</i>	Reg. UI	\$848 million	\$45.0 billion	\$45.8 billion
	PUA	\$4.6 billion	\$23.5 billion	\$28.1 billion
	PEUC²	\$101 million	\$2.7 billion	\$2.8 billion
	FED-ED³	\$30.1 million	\$175 million	\$205 million
	Total	\$5.6 billion	\$71.4 billion	\$76.9 billion
Individuals Paid Benefits^{6,7} <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	Reg. UI	3,405,000	3,446,000	
	PUA	1,673,000	1,480,000	
	Total	5,078,000 ⁸	4,926,000 ⁹	

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1. The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020. This data includes new initial claims only.
2. The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) was implemented in California on May 27, 2020. PEUC claims are an extension of a regular UI claim. For the week ending August 22, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 344,378.
3. FED-ED was implemented in California on July 1, 2020. FED-ED claims are an extension of a regular UI claim.
4. 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 additional claims or 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. The total claims processed from 3/14 - 8/29/20 may include multiple claims from the same applicant.
5. Includes \$600 federal stimulus payments EDD adds to each week of regular UI, PUA, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. Regular UI benefits are paid out of California's UI Trust Fund with contributions from employers, PUA, PEUC, FED-ED and the \$600 federal stimulus payments are paid for by the federal government. The Total Benefits Paid may not add up due to the rounding data.
6. Counts include individuals claiming regular UI, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. If an individual claims a regular UI benefit, PEUC, or FED-ED benefit in a four-week rolling time period, they are only counted once.
7. 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.
8. Four-week rolling total between week-ending August 8th and week-ending August 29th, 2020.
9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending August 1st and week-ending August 22nd, 2020.

EDD set to begin issuing \$300 Lost Wages Assistance program payments

On September 7th, some claimants will begin receiving \$300 in additional benefit payments being provided through the federal Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program. California has federal approval for an initial \$4.5 billion in funding which will provide a minimum of three weeks of supplemental (\$300/week for 3 weeks totaling \$900) payments for eligible claimants. The payments will be in addition to what claimants are already receive in weekly benefits. In order to qualify for LWA payments, claimants must meet these federal requirements:

- Have a minimum weekly benefit award of \$100 or more on their initial claim and received a payment on that claim between July 26 and August 15. This means an individual may have received less than \$100 a week in benefits during that time due to reporting some work income, but would still qualify for the extra LWA payment.
- Have self-attested to EDD that they are unemployed or partially unemployed due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Payments to eligible claimants will be issued in two phases:

Phase 1: Starting September 7th and includes those claimants who have already informed EDD through their initial application that they are unemployed due to pandemic disruptions. Generally, claimants who applied for benefits in mid-March or later would have been presented that option when applying through UI Online.

- These individuals are estimated to total about 3.1 million claimants, and it will take a couple of weeks to get all of these retroactive payments issued among the current payment load.
- For those with an EDD Debit Card, any LWA payments they are eligible for will arrive in one lump sum. For those receiving benefits via check in the mail, LWA payments will be made in separate checks.

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Phase 2: For claimants who have not yet attested to their full or partial unemployment is related to the pandemic, the EDD will send them notifications by email, text message, or mail beginning on September 15.

- Claimants should log onto their UI Online account and complete the one-time self-attestation. Completing a self-attestation by paper is also available.
- This group includes approximately 1.2 million current claimants.

Improving Identity Verification

The EDD has launched a new Document Upload option within UI Online allowing claimants to more conveniently provide required documents for verifying their identity. Instances like when a claimant makes an error on their application can kick a claim out of auto processing and divert it through the identity verification process. Up until now, claimants provide their verifying documents through the mail. This upgrade will allow claimants to quickly and more securely respond to identity verification requests by accessing their UI Online account, or registering for one, and uploading the requested documents. This will help us speed up processing. The UI Online Document Upload option is being rolled out in two phases:

- **The first phase** applies to new claimants who applied recently and are required to verify their identity. They will receive notification by mail, email, or text message alerting them to fully register in UI Online and/or access their UI Online account to upload the requested documents. Claimants will find a Document Upload option noted on their UI Online homepage.
- **The second phase** coming within a few weeks includes enabling the uploading of documents from a mobile phone. In addition, the UI Online Document Upload capability will be expanded to allow claimants to provide wage information that may have not been reported by employers to the EDD. Again, this will help expedite a process that can delay the payment of benefits.

Preventing unemployment benefit fraud

Fraud attempts have increased during the pandemic, and individuals are exploiting the very efforts of California to issue unemployment benefit payments as quickly as possible to workers impacted by COVID-19. The EDD's investigation team is working closely with local, state, and federal partners to expose, stop, and hold offenders accountable. While specific details cannot be shared at this time at the risk of jeopardizing investigations, recent schemes have triggered multiple mail items with different names sent to addresses throughout the state.

Some of the latest information includes:

- Non-claimants may receive debit cards that have to be activated by the individual named on the card with personal identifying information before benefits can be accessed. The card items can be returned to EDD or Bank of America and will be destroyed.

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- A large number of the mail items are notices requiring additional identifying documents be provided to the EDD before the claim can be paid. Such notices are part of EDD's preventative Identity Verification process.
- While 60% of such notices requiring additional documents were responded to by legitimate claimants in January through June of this year, the response rate dropped significantly to 15% in July and 9% in August – indicating a strong suspicion of recent fraud that will go unpaid since the EDD will not receive the necessary documents on these claims to prove identity.

Fraud impacts everyone and the EDD asks for the help of the public in protecting the integrity of the UI program. We encourage people who have received multiple items through the mail that don't belong to them or witness other suspicious activity to take these steps:

- **Report it to EDD right away** – The EDD website features information about [fraud](#) and options on how to report it. The easiest way to report is through the [online Fraud Reporting Form](#). In order to protect the confidentiality and integrity of an investigation, the EDD cannot provide those who report fraud any updates unless ordered by a court or required by law.
- **Provide mail evidence to EDD if at all possible** - For the most direct route to investigators, those who received potentially fraudulent mail are encouraged to send it to EDD PO Box 826880, MIC 43, Sacramento, CA 94280-0225. OR, for a cheaper and more convenient option, people can write "Return to Sender" on the envelope and provide it to their mail carrier.
- **Watch out for scams** – Californians should be aware to not provide the multiple mail items they may have received to people who may show up at their door claiming to be collecting materials for EDD. EDD representatives will not come to your home.

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