

N E W S R E L E A S E

Contact: Loree Levy
Aubrey Henry
916-654-9029

Date: September 24, 2020

News Release No.: 20-50

Unemployment benefits top \$90 billion to support impacted workers in COVID-19 pandemic
New Backlog Data Dashboards released, update on LWA payments

Sacramento – California workers impacted by this historic COVID-19 pandemic have now received a total of \$90.6 billion in unemployment benefits - valuable financial support for families and businesses in each community. The California Employment Development Department (EDD) has processed approximately 13.6 million claims between the regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and extension claims, as well as the separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

The EDD also continues to develop further data reflecting the status of the unprecedented volume of unemployment claims that flooded the department over the last several months. With the help of the Governor-established Strike Team, EDD has created new metrics to track claims and define the claim backlog. The EDD is launching two new data dashboards:

- The [Unemployment Initial Claims Backlog Dashboard](#) refers to a subset of all applications for benefits that take more than 21 days to issue a *first* payment or to disqualify the individual, regardless of if the claimant or EDD need to take some kind of action.
- The [Unemployment Continued Claims Backlog Dashboard](#) refers to a subset of all individuals who received at least one payment and are now waiting more than 21 days for further processing of payment or disqualification.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard				
		Current Week September 19, 2020	Prior Weeks WE 3/7 -9/12/20	Total WE 3/7 -9/19/20
Total Applications Submitted <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)¹</i>	Reg. UI	41,870	5,606,503	5,648,373
	PUA	95,146	4,235,139	4,330,285
	PEUC²	187,623	747,697	935,320
	FED-ED³	7,292	129,837	137,129
	Total	331,931	10,719,176	11,051,107
Total Claims Processed <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)⁴</i>	Reg. UI	230,443	8,738,673	8,969,116
	PUA	99,824	3,500,825	3,600,649
	PEUC²	194,421	819,308	1,013,729
	FED-ED³	7,607	93,960	101,567
	Total	532,295	13,152,766	13,685,061
Total Benefits Paid <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)⁵</i>	Reg. UI	\$1.5 billion	\$48.8 billion	\$50.3 billion
	PUA	\$1.3 billion	\$32.8 billion	\$34.1 billion
	PEUC²	\$165 million	\$3.0 billion	\$3.2 billion
	FED-ED³	\$28.2 million	\$258 million	\$287 million
	LWA¹⁰	\$1.3 billion	\$1.4 billion	\$2.7 billion
	Total	\$4.3 billion	\$86.3 billion	\$90.6 billion
Individuals Paid Benefits^{6,7} <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	Reg. UI	3,326,000	3,357,000	
	PUA	1,690,000	1,768,000	
	Total	5,016,000 ⁸	5,125,000 ⁹	

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 29, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 355,514.

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 - 9/05/20 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 who were 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 15th and week-ending September 5th, 2020.

9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending August 8th and week-ending August 29th, 2020.

10. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program was implemented in California on September 5th, 2020 to provide eligible claimants with a Lost Wage Assistance payment of \$300 per week in addition to their weekly benefit amount beginning with weeks ending on or after August 1, 2020.

New overall UI Claims Trend Data

In addition to the overview UI Data Dashboard above that the EDD updates every week, the department is also compiling [UI claims trend data](#) for each major data category beginning with data over the last several weeks. Look for more extensive trend data to come in the next few weeks.

Further developments in issuing \$300 a week Lost Wages Assistance payments

The EDD has completed issuing additional \$300 payments under phase one of the roll-out of the federal Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program in California. Phase two payments are now being made for an estimated 800,000 claimants so far who were contacted by EDD to complete and submit a self-attestation that their full or partial unemployment is related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some self-attestations are still coming in and we will continue to process them as long as available federal funding remains.

All claimants receiving the first three weeks of LWA payments meet these federal requirements:

- Were previously paid either regular UI or PUA benefits for the weeks ending August 1, 8 and/or 15.
- Have a minimum weekly benefit award of \$100 or more on their initial claim, even if they received a lower payment during this time period because they reported wages.
- Attested that their unemployment is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The self-attestation is collected as a quick and easy yes or no question. As stated on the self-attestation form, if a claimant answers no, the EDD is required to disqualify the claimant from receiving LWA payments. To date, approximately 36,000 claimants have responded no.

(more)

Next week, the EDD will start issuing two more weeks of LWA payments to all individuals in both phases who previously received benefits for weeks ending August 22 and 29.

Payments will be posted to either an EDD Debit Card or arrive in mailed checks depending on the method claimants have used for prior payments. Since individuals have different bi-weekly certification cycles, those who meet eligibility requirements for both weeks in the same period will receive a payment of \$600 while those with the weeks spread across two bi-weekly periods will receive two \$300 payments close together.

The EDD has received federal approval for a potential sixth and final week of LWA payments associated with the week ending September 5. The EDD will be closely monitoring benefits paid for the first five weeks of the LWA program to ensure that sufficient federal funds remain before issuing a sixth week of \$300 payments. Details will be released as soon as they're available.

Anti-fraud efforts and developments

Suspicious Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claims in California continue to decline significantly in the wake of aggressive action taken by EDD to fight fraud. After spiking to more than 524,000 in the first week of September, total PUA claims dropped to 95,146 last week – a drop of 82% in just two weeks. The steep decline follows a move by EDD on September 4 to prevent automatic backdating in the PUA program to stop scammers from capitalizing on earlier stimulus payments.

This action puts California ahead of the guidance issued this week by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to put controls around backdating PUA claims. California has also already taken action on all of the other anti-fraud guidance provided as well including:

- **Verify identities at the front end of the claim** – EDD is updating the current ID Verification process, a new *ID.me* tool, that will require the upload of identifying documents that include a photo and then validating them through multiple data sources at the application point. This process will also help EDD avoid much of the time intensive manual verification process that can delay claims.
- **Monitor and mine data** – Allows EDD to quickly identify any unusual spike in claims.
- **Prevent bots at the front end** - EDD uses reCAPTCHA as a security tool for authenticating identity in Benefits Programs Online which is the portal for accessing UI Online.
- **Continue to work closely with banks/payment processors** – Bank of America continues to work with EDD to support the department's efforts to combat benefits fraud and freeze or close the associated EDD Debit Cards.
- **Stay connected with law enforcement** – EDD is working collaboratively with the Office of Inspector General and other federal, state, and local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute fraud and identity theft.
- **Use the UI Integrity Center's Tools, Services, and Resources** – EDD investigators are coordinating with DOL resources for assistance in data analytics, as well as learning about new and emerging fraud schemes.

(more)

Scammers are suspected of using extensive stolen personal identifying information most likely obtained from national and global data breaches to file multiple fraudulent claims. One of the ways EDD is stopping this type of fraud is by suspending or cancelling high volume, multiple claims filed using the same address. The EDD is working to minimize any interruption in payments for verified claimants who have the same address as those being used by scammers. Payments will be issued to claimants with verified identity documents in our system. If not, claimants should expect to receive a text message, email and a notice requesting documents and a recommendation to upload them electronically in our new Document Upload tool, available through UI Online, for fastest processing possible.

The EDD is very grateful for the public's partnership in fighting fraud and protecting the UI program for California workers in need. You can learn more about fraud and how to report suspicious activity on the [Fraud and Penalties: What you Need to Know page](#) of the EDD website.

#####