

N E W S R E L E A S E

Contact: Loree Levy
Aubrey Henry
916-654-9029

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Employment Development Department Announces Another Opportunity to Seek Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Benefits

SACRAMENTO – The California Employment Development Department today announced a retroactive opportunity for approximately 100,000 claimants who were previously denied one or more weeks of federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to potentially obtain those benefits under federal rules that expanded eligibility for the program.

The [Federal rules expanded eligibility for benefits](#) to workers who refused to work for an employer that violated COVID-19 safety standards, workers laid off or had hours reduced as a direct result of COVID-19, or school employees whose usual work schedule was affected by COVID-19.

EDD will send individual notices by email, text message, and UI Online to everyone who was previously denied. Most of these claimants had marked that none of the available COVID-specific reasons for unemployment applied to them. This program is limited to those who receive notification from EDD and no other applicants will be able to reassess under this program.

Claimants who meet PUA requirements under any of the new or existing federally-approved COVID-19 reasons will be paid benefits for the weeks that were previously denied, including:

- **Employees laid off or with reduced hours as a direct result of COVID-19**
The federal rules approve a COVID-19 related reason for an individual to self-certify for PUA eligibility if an individual was an employee and their hours were reduced or the individual was laid off as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. This new reason expands eligibility beyond the situations where the individual's place of employment was closed. Under this reason, if an individual was laid off because the place of employment was partially closed (either permanently or temporarily) or the individual had experienced a reduction in hours, the individual may now self-certify eligibility.

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- **Employees who refused to work at a worksite that was not compliant with COVID-19 safety standards**

The federal rules approve a COVID-19 related reason for PUA eligibility related to unsafe work conditions. This applies if a claimant was denied benefits for refusing to return to work or accept an offer of work at a worksite that was 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.

- **School employees whose usual work schedule was directly affected by COVID-19**

The federal rules approve a COVID-19 related reason for PUA eligibility related to individuals who were providing services to educational institutions. This applies if a school employee was unemployed or partially unemployed because of volatility in the work schedule that was directly caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in schedules and partial closures.

Those who were previously denied PUA benefits are encouraged to check their UI Online account to see if they may now be eligible under this expanded criteria. These claimants will be able to visit a “PUA Reassessment” section of the UI Online homepage to apply. They will need to confirm the date their business, employment, or self-employment was first interrupted as a direct result of the pandemic.

EDD will be sending emails and text messages to individuals starting November 19, 2021 who were previously denied PUA benefits for one or more weeks and may now qualify under the expanded eligibility. EDD will also be sending out printed notices in the future to those who do not use UI Online or who do not respond to the electronic notices.

The federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program was a new benefit program created by the federal government for the first time during the pandemic in 2020 to aid those who were not eligible for traditional state unemployment insurance, such as those who were self-employed or could not work because of COVID 19 or COVID 19-related impacts.

Further updates and information is available on the [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance webpage](#).

Proving Self-Employment or Employment Work History

EDD is also continuing to remind Pandemic Unemployment Assistance recipients of the federal requirement to prove self-employment or employment work history.

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EDD notified claimants about this upcoming requirement in August and [began sending individual notices to claimants this month](#) with instructions for how to document work history. About 30 percent of those who received a PUA payment during the pandemic have the requirement. The rest already provided proof through wage information, or the federal requirement does not apply.

The federal Continued Assistance Act required PUA claimants who received benefits on or after December 27, 2020 to submit documentation.

A person who planned to be employed must prove that employment plan, regardless of the reason the plan did not materialize (such as needing to quit a job to care for a child). EDD is looking for information about what the person was doing for employment or self-employment prior to filing the claim.

Proving work history can be done quickly by uploading a choice of documents through UI Online such as a tax return, business license, business receipt or invoice, or W-2 form or paystub for those who worked for an employer.

- **Documents that could be used to prove self-employment include, but are not limited to:** business licenses, tax returns, 1099s, business receipts or invoices, signed affidavits (need not be notarized) verifying self-employment, contracts or agreements, or bank statements from a business account that show self-employment. These examples are not comprehensive, and other records or documents may be used as proof. Providing more than one document is permitted and could assist in verifying employment status.
- **Documents that could be used to prove plans for self-employment include, but are not limited to:** business licenses, state or federal employer identification numbers, written business plans, or lease agreements. These examples are not comprehensive and other records or documents may be used as proof. Providing more than one document is permitted.
- **Documents that could be used to prove employment or plans for employment include, but are not limited to:** paycheck stubs, earnings and leave statements, W-2 forms, letters offering employment, or statements or affidavits (with the employer's name and contact information) verifying an employment offer. These examples are not comprehensive and other records or documents may be used as proof. Providing more than one document is permitted.

The notices being provided to claimants include individual deadlines for providing documentation or obtaining an extension of time. EDD will acknowledge receipt of the submitted information and follow up with a communication indicating whether the documentation was sufficient.

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If the claimant does not respond to the notice that will be provided by email, text message and through UI Online, a follow-up notice will also be mailed. Failure to respond to the notice could render the claimant ineligible for the federal benefits received and result in a determination of ineligibility, potentially requiring repayment of the benefits.

Further updates and information is available on the [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance webpage](#). The U.S. [Department of Labor FAQ](#) provides info about various scenarios and information about PUA.

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