

IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE CLAIM

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) provides additional unemployment compensation to individuals affected by COVID-19. PUA extends coverage to unemployed individuals who are self-employed, seeking part-time employment, do not have sufficient work history, or otherwise would not qualify for regular unemployment or extended benefits under State or Federal law or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation. PUA is also available to those individuals who become the breadwinner, or major support, due to the death of the head of household as a direct result of the pandemic. Individuals who were to commence employment at the time of the pandemic or after could also be entitled to benefits if their ability to begin employment was affected by the pandemic.

The following individuals are NOT eligible for PUA:

- individuals who have the ability to telework with pay; or
- individuals receiving paid sick leave or other paid benefits leave, regardless of whether they meet any of the other qualifications.

A covered individual is someone who:

1. is not eligible for regular compensation or extended benefits under State or Federal law or Pandemic Emergency Compensation, including an individual who has exhausted all rights to regular unemployment or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation;
2. provides self-certification that the individual:
 - a. is otherwise able to work and available to work, except is unemployed, partially employed, or unable or unavailable to work because the individual has been/is:
 - i. diagnosed with COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a diagnosis;
 - ii. member of individual's household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
 - iii. individual is providing care for a family member or member of household with COVID-19;
 - iv. child or other person in household who individual is primary caregiver is unable to attend school or other facility that is closed because of COVID-19 emergency causing individual the inability to work;
 - v. individual cannot reach place of employment because of quarantine imposed as a result of COVID-19 emergency;

- vi. individual was scheduled to begin work but now cannot as a direct result of COVID-19 emergency;
- vii. individual has become breadwinner or major support for household because head of household died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- viii. individual must quit job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- ix. individual's place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- x. individual meets additional criteria established by the Secretary of Labor under this section.

You are responsible for reading the enclosed mailer concerning your PUA Claim.

INTRODUCTION

You recently filed a claim for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) with the State of Louisiana. The information contained in this mailer is designed to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the Louisiana Employment Security Law. You must follow the instructions contained in this mailer in order to qualify for benefits. **Please read this information carefully.**

WHAT YOU MUST DO TO RECEIVE UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

1. You must make a weekly claim for benefits either online at www.louisianaworks.net/HiRE or by telephone at 1-866-783-5567. Failure to claim each week may result in a denial of benefits.
2. You must report all earnings during the week when earned even if you are not paid during that week or if self-employed, you must report gross income from self-employment when received regardless of when earned.
3. Report the amount before deductions. Include all wages, commissions, tips, and gratuities.
4. Louisiana has suspended the active work search requirements of La. R.S. 1600(3). Therefore, you will not be required to search for work through the end of this emergency proclamation.
5. If you move, you must report your new address as soon as possible. See details later in this mailer. In most cases, benefits will be paid through a debit card or through a direct deposit into your personal bank account. Activate the debit card as soon as you receive it. See details later in this mailer.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have questions concerning your claim, call the Benefit Analysis Team at **1-866-783-5567**.

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS

If you move, you must report your new address as soon as possible. You may change your address online through our HiRE website at www.louisianaworks.net/HiRE or by calling the Benefit Analysis Team at 1-866-783-5567. **DO NOT DELAY** in reporting these changes.

REPORTING AND FILING REQUIREMENTS

Your weekly claims must be filed either online at www.louisianaworks.net/HiRE or by telephone at 1-866-783-5567.

1. You must be able and available for work (see page one, number two), and
2. You must report gross wages earned for any employment. If you worked for someone and were paid, or if you are entitled to payment for the work, you must report the wages in the week earned. If you are self-employed and received income for services performed, you must report your gross income in the week in which you receive the pay even though you may have performed the service before the pandemic began.

WEEKLY BENEFIT AMOUNT

Your weekly benefit amount will be established based on gross wages for employment/net income for self-employment verified for the most recently completed calendar year and you will be issued a monetary determination. If you have low or no reportable wages and prove you were employed or were to begin full-time employment at the time of the pandemic, your claim will be established at the minimum PUA weekly benefit amount for the quarter the pandemic is established. If you disagree with your monetary determination, you may request a monetary reconsideration. If you are self-employed, a copy of your income tax return for the most recently completed calendar year will be required to increase your weekly benefit amount. See the "Monetary Reconsiderations" section of this mailer for more information.

DURATION OF BENEFITS

The pandemic assistance period begins with the first week following the date that the pandemic began. Your eligibility for PUA benefits will be determined on a week to week basis. For each week you file a PUA claim, your reason for being unemployed must be as a direct result of the pandemic. PUA benefits may not be paid for any week of unemployment that is more than 39 weeks after the declaration date of the pandemic.

REDUCTIONS IN PUA WEEKLY BENEFITS

PUA benefits may be denied or reduced if you begin to receive or are receiving one or more of the following:

1. Benefits or insurance for loss of wages due to illness or disability
2. Supplemental unemployment benefits paid pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement
3. Private income protection insurance
4. Worker's compensation or survivor's benefits if you become the major support of the family as a result of the death of the head of the household because of the pandemic
5. Retirement, pension or annuity
6. Earnings from employment or self-employment
7. Child support obligations based on a valid court order in compliance with agency policy

Note: You will not be eligible to receive any PUA benefits if you are entitled to any unemployment compensation under any state or federal law.

DISQUALIFICATION OR TERMINATION OF BENEFITS

You may be disqualified or your PUA benefits terminated, for the following:

1. You become employed in a suitable position, or
2. You refuse without good cause to accept suitable employment, or
3. You refuse without good cause to accept referral to suitable employment, or
4. You are not able or available for work (except as explained under "REPORTING AND FILING REQUIREMENTS"), or
5. It is determined that your unemployment is no longer as a direct result of the pandemic.

APPEALS

Any determination or reconsideration regarding your eligibility for PUA benefits, or the amount of the entitlement, may be appealed. You must file the appeal within 15 days of the date the determination was mailed to you. If the 15-day appeals period ends on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal state holiday, the appeals period is extended to the next workday that is not a holiday. You may file an appeal by following the instructions on the determination letter. When appealing, you should include a copy of the document you are appealing with the appeal form or letter. Be sure to always include your Social Security Number on any and all correspondence you send to this agency. If you file an appeal, you should continue to file your weekly claim until the issue is resolved or you obtain or resume employment.

MONETARY RECONSIDERATIONS

If you disagree with the amount of your monetary entitlement, you may present proof of earnings for the previous calendar year and request a reconsideration of your monetary award. If you are self-employed, you must submit a copy of your previous year income tax return and schedules as proof of net income for monetary reconsideration. This request must be made before the ending date of the pandemic assistance period, which is the 39-week period following the date the pandemic is declared.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is your responsibility to give correct answers to any questions asked in regards to your initial and weekly claims for PUA benefits. Failure to furnish requested documents or information may result in benefits being **delayed** or **denied**.

All information is subject to verification. PUA benefits are provided through federal funding. Criminal and/or civil penalties for violation of federal and/or state laws will be enforced for willfully making false statements or concealing information to obtain or increase your PUA benefits. Quitting work without good cause to obtain UI benefits is fraud under PUA.

TO FILE FOR WEEKLY BENEFITS

You may file a weekly claim for benefits either online at www.louisianaworks.net/HiRE or by telephone at 1-866-783-5567. You need to make only one claim each week. You will need to establish a 4 digit PIN when filing your first week by telephone. During online registration you will establish a username/password for HiRE services.

Do not forget your PIN or username/ password. You will need it each time you claim benefits by telephone or online. **Warning: Your PIN and username/password has the same legal authority as your signature. Protect these security measures. Do not give them to anyone. If you believe someone knows your user information, immediately call the Benefit Analysis Team at 1-866-783-5567 and reset your information. If you believe that someone has accessed your file, immediately call the Benefit Analysis Team at 1-866-783-5567.**

You may file your weekly claim on any day of the week following the Saturday of the week you are claiming. You cannot claim a week before it ends on Saturday at midnight. You will get confirmation when you finish filing a weekly certification. If filing online, keep a copy of the confirmation page. If filing by phone, keep a record of the confirmation number.

TELEPHONE INFORMATION:

Benefit Analysis Team:	1-866-783-5567
PUA Weekly Claims	1-866-783-5567
Debit Card Customer Service	1-855-282-6161 or 1-855-274-0354

DEBIT CARDS OR DIRECT DEPOSIT

Payments of benefits will be made through debit card or direct deposit. If you select debit card as the payment option, you will receive a debit card in the mail shortly after you file your claim. It will have instructions on how to activate the card.

You can manage and update your direct deposit information directly by logging into your HiRE account at www.louisianaworks.net/HiRE. On your dashboard, go to the "My Personal Profile" section, and select "Update Banking Information."

Once you have been found eligible for benefits, a deposit will be made to your either your debit card or banking account for the amount of benefits to which you are entitled for that week. It may be 3 or 4 days after you file your weekly claim before the benefits are available. You may inquire about the balance on the debit card, without charge, by contacting the customer service center listed on the card. If you use direct deposit, be sure to check your balance each week to determine when your benefits have been paid.

If you have problems with the debit card, contact US Bank at 1-855-282-6161. The Louisiana Workforce Commission does not have access to your debit card account balance and cannot answer questions concerning disputed charges. If you have questions concerning your statement, please contact US Bank.

KEEPING RECORDS

It is your responsibility to keep accurate records of the weeks you claim, payments you receive and wages you earn. When you inquire about your claim, we will be better able to assist you if you keep accurate records.

THE PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

Under authority of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (26 U.S.C. 85 6011 (a), 605B and 6109 (a)) this Agency requires that you enter your Social Security Number on the forms you submit when filing an unemployment insurance claim. Your Social Security Number will be used in reporting to the United States Internal Revenue Service the unemployment compensation that we paid to you during the year.

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT INCOME TAX

Unemployment insurance benefits are subject to federal income taxes. If federal income taxes are not withheld from the benefits that you receive, you are required to make quarterly estimated income tax payments to the Internal Revenue Service.

You can avoid making these quarterly payments by having ten percent (10%) of your gross weekly benefit amount deducted for this purpose. You were given this option at the time you filed your initial claim.

If you wish to change your original decision, complete and sign the form found in this mailer. Mail the completed form to the Louisiana Workforce Commission. You can also update your federal withholding election online in HiRE at www.louisianaworks.net/HiRE. After logging in, go to your left navigation and select Services for Individuals > Unemployment Services > Update Federal Tax Deduction. You may change your decision at any time during your benefit year. If you do not choose to have federal income taxes deducted from your benefits, you should consult an agent of the Internal Revenue Service or your tax preparer for information on making quarterly estimated tax payments.

You will be furnished a statement, Form 1099-G, at the end of the year, for benefits paid to you. The Internal Revenue Service will be given the same information. You must keep this agency informed of your correct address in order to receive your tax statement.

Notices of all overpayments, fraud assessments, credits against overpayments and reimbursements should be kept for tax purposes. This agency only reports the amount of benefits issued. It may not deduct credits or reimbursements.

FRAUDULENT CLAIMS

You are cautioned that you must report truthfully about conditions, which affect your right to benefits. Quitting work without good cause to obtain UI benefits is fraud under PUA.

You can be fined and/or imprisoned for knowingly making a false statement to obtain or increase your unemployment insurance benefits. An alien convicted of a felony for unemployment insurance fraud can lose his/her right to work in this country and/or be deported.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS? Call our Claim Center at **1-866-783-5567**.