

IDAHO LEGAL AID SERVICES INC.  
COVID-19 RESOURCES WEB SITE  
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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

**SPECIAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE  
UNDER THE 2020 CARES ACT**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020 contains some special provisions that amend or supplement existing Unemployment Insurance (UI) law.

The CARES Act created three new UI programs: Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.

**PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (PUC)**

**\$600 Supplement.** Under the CARES ACT all regular and Pandemic UA claimants will receive their usual calculated benefits plus an additional \$600 per week in compensation. This is supposed to start immediately and run through July 31, 2020. It is supposed to be paid retroactively.

This is a flat amount to everyone on UI, including those who are receiving a partial UIB check. PUC also goes to those receiving the new PUA benefits.

PUC is not income for purposes of eligibility to either Medicaid or CHIP.

**PANDEMIC EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (PEUC)**

13 week extension. The CARES Act also provides an additional 13 weeks of state UI benefits, which will become available after someone exhausts all their regular state UI benefits. Idaho is one of 8 states that offers less than 26 weeks of UI benefits.

To receive PEUC, workers must be actively engaged in searching for work. The bill explicitly provides that states are required to be flexible regarding work search requirements in case of individuals who are unable to search for work because of COVID-19, including being unable to search for work due to “illness, quarantine, or movement restrictions.” In other words, Idaho is supposed to relax the work search requirements for people who are impeded by the pandemic.

PUC, PEUC and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance are fully federal funded. The state is supposed to receive additional administrative funds to operate these programs.

**Non Reduction Rule** – During this time period, the state cannot do anything to decrease the maximum number of weeks of UI or the weekly benefit available under state law as of January 1, 2020.

**Waiting Week Eliminated.** UIB generally has a one week waiting period meaning a person

normally has to wait one week before getting benefits. The Cares Act encourages states to waive that week and the federal government will pay for it.

## **UI ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WHO NORMALLY WOULD NOT QUALIFY**

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PAU) is a new program. It is intended to cover workers who would not be covered in the past. This includes self-employed workers including independent contractors, freelancers, workers seeking part time work, workers who don't have a sufficient work history to qualify for state UI benefits.

PUA provides emergency unemployment assistance to workers who are left out of regular state UI or who have exhausted their state UI benefits. Up to 39 weeks of PUA are available to workers who are immediately eligible. This program expires December 31, 2020.

This program provides income support to many workers who are shut out of the state UI systems in this country. In fact workers who are eligible for normal UI are not eligible for PUA.

Verification. Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are either:

1. Partially or fully unemployed OR
2. Unable and unavailable to work because of one of the following circumstances:

They have been diagnosed with COVID-19;  
A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;  
They are providing care for someone diagnosed with COVID-19;  
They are providing care for a child or other household member who can't attend school or work because it is closed due to COVID-19;  
They are quarantined or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;  
They were scheduled to start employment and do not have a job or cannot reach their place of employer as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak;  
They have become the breadwinner for a household because the head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;  
They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;  
Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19;  
They meet other criteria established by the Secretary of Labor.

Workers are not eligible for PUA if they can either telework with pay or are receiving paid sick days or paid leave. Workers must be authorized to work to be eligible for PUA, meaning the undocumented workers will not qualify.

PUA will run to December 31, 2020. A worker will be eligible for retroactive benefits and can get benefits for a maximum of 29 weeks. Including weeks they received regular UIB.

PUA benefits are calculated the same way as they are for federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance program under the Stafford Act, which is the model for the PUA program. PUA will

have a minimum benefit that is equal to one-half the state average weekly UI benefit which is about \$190 per week.