

N E W S R E L E A S E

Contact: Loree Levy
Aubrey Henry
916-654-9029

Date: April 2, 2020

News Release No.: 20-09

Demand for unemployment benefits at historic levels as the EDD ramps up implementation of federal CARES Act benefits

***Important Note:** The EDD has [video available](#) of staff working in an Unemployment Insurance call center practicing social distancing while assisting Californians and processing claims.*

Sacramento – The demand for unemployment benefits has reached historic levels in California due to the impacts of the coronavirus on the state’s economy. According to new data from the state’s Employment Development Department (EDD), a total of 878,727 claims were processed during the week ending Saturday, March 28. That’s a 370% increase over just the week before when the EDD processed about 187,000 claims and the week ending March 14 when about 58,000 claims were processed.

“The massive around-the-clock staffing and IT efforts the EDD has undertaken is helping the department automatically push a large volume of claims through our system, allowing us to issue payments to Californians in need as quickly as possible,” said EDD Director Sharon Hilliard.

Those efforts include adjusting certain eligibility requirements to accommodate for the unique situation of this pandemic, and redirecting a total of at least 850 staff, many of whom have former UI experience from within EDD, state government, and recent retirees to processing UI claims from workers who have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced due to the coronavirus.

The EDD is also directing additional staff to help with claims that will always take more time and handling including those in which information provided doesn’t match our EDD wage records or we can’t verify the worker’s identity. This includes workers who have applied for benefits who may have been misclassified as independent contractors instead of employees. Such cases require the EDD to obtain further information from the worker as well as the employer to determine if the individual is an employee who could be eligible for benefits.

(more)

New Federal CARES Act Unemployment Assistance

The following information provides the latest available on EDD's efforts to implement the new unemployment provisions of the federal CARES Act. Since developments are occurring quickly, we encourage you to watch for updates on the [EDD Coronavirus 2020 webpage](#) as soon as more details become available.

1. Additional \$600 payments for workers with a UI claim.

The EDD is working on the programming needed to implement the extra \$600 per week benefit payment paid by the federal government to workers collecting regular UI benefits. That programming can't be finalized until states receive the details and final guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor. Barring any big surprises in that guidance when it arrives, it is EDD's hope that the extra benefit payments can begin next week and continue thereafter as bi-weekly payments come due for unemployed Californians.

It always takes about three (3) weeks for most Californians to receive their first benefit payment if found eligible, with the exception primarily of wage and identity issues. But after that first benefit payment, unemployed workers will have to answer basic certification questions every two weeks to receive bi-weekly payments as long as they remain eligible.

2. 13-week extension of UI benefits for those who exhaust their current benefits.

The EDD is also awaiting final details to be able to start programming to grant an additional 13 weeks of federally paid unemployment benefits when an unemployed worker runs out of all of the benefits associated with their regular state-administered unemployment claim. In California, regular state benefit payments can be made for up to 26 weeks within a one-year timeframe.

3. New Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program initiated for those who don't qualify for regular UI benefits, including the self-employed.

The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is a brand new program. The EDD is working quickly with the California Department of Technology (CDT)/Office of Digital Innovation to develop the application needed to stand up this new program to serve unemployed Californians who don't usually qualify for regular UI benefits, including the self-employed. It is the EDD's hope that this new program will closely mirror the Disaster Unemployment Assistance program benefits that Californians have received in the wake of recent disasters including the large wildfires.

(more)

Again, Californians should watch for updates on EDD's website that will include instructions for workers who may have already applied for benefits and were not found eligible for the regular state-administered UI program.

Additional Resources to Help Californians Applying for Unemployment Benefits

Since there are many impacted Californians who have never applied for unemployment benefits before, the EDD has created a new Step-by-Step [Chart](#) designed to help them through the process of initiating and then managing a UI claim for receiving ongoing benefit payments. In addition, the EDD has [video tutorials](#) in five different languages to help people use our UI Online system for applying for benefits. Those in need of further assistance with the application can also identify their nearest [America's Job Center of California](#) and contact the office to make an appointment with a representative.

Monitor the EDD's website for evolving details posted to the ["Latest News for Workers"](#) and ["Latest News for Employers"](#) sections of the Coronavirus 2020 webpage.

#####