



# Public Assistance During COVID19 Pandemic

5-18-2020 Update

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began to dramatically affect Connecticut residents and its business community, the CTDOL typically received 2,500 - 3,000 new claims a week with a peak of under 10,000 per week; since March 13, 2020 it has **processed\* almost 500,000 of the approximately 535,000 state unemployment insurance applications** received— **well over four years of applications activity in just over 2 months.**

The current time for most applications to reach processing\* is now 1-2 weeks, much reduced from a recent peak of 6 weeks. The processing wait variance is dependent upon the complexity of the individual claim.

The Agency had been issuing approximately \$15 million per week in state benefits payments. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, it has issued over **\$596 million in state unemployment benefit payments.**

On April 24<sup>th</sup> CTDOL began administering the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) **\$600** supplemental stimulus to eligible claimants with their weekly state benefit and it continues to be added to every payment. The Agency has since issued **\$957 million in FPUC payments.**

On May 7<sup>th</sup> CTDOL began administering the first phase of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. This includes individuals who are self-employed, 1099 and "gig" workers, and others. The Agency has since issued **\$26 million in PUA payments.**

CTDOL recommends individuals select the option of **direct deposit** into a **savings or checking account** for benefit payments which occur within two-three business days once a payment is issued. Due to a nationwide shortage of debit cards and postal service delays, it could take an additional 10 days to 3 weeks longer for debit card payment.

Claimants can access their online accounts by clicking on the **green button** on [www.filectui.com](http://www.filectui.com), which allows a claimant to manage their account, view the status of their account, **file weekly claims, and select direct deposit as their method of payment** for both state and federal benefits.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding state and federal programs are updated daily on CTDOL website <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/DOLCOVIDFAQ.PDF>

*\*Some processed claims require further research to determine eligibility prior to issuance of payment.*

## Helpful information for claimants

CTDOL's digital filing platform is open online 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

File state and federal applications here [www.filectui.com](http://www.filectui.com) (accessible by computer and mobile device)

Please advise individuals who are truly unable to file for unemployment benefits via the Internet to use a cell/smart phone or a family/friend's computer, if possible. If none of those are an option, please suggest they call **(860) 263-6975, (203) 455-2653, (860)-263-6974, or (203)-455-2650** for assistance. A customer service representative will gather the applicant's contact information including name, phone number, date of birth, and SS# and will assign staff to contact the customer within 5 business days to take the unemployment claim over the phone.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are updated daily on CTDOL website

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/DOLCOVIDFAQ.PDF>

General questions may be submitted to [www.dol.webhelp@ct.gov](mailto:www.dol.webhelp@ct.gov)

# Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, & Economic Security (CARES) Act

## Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

PUA is intended for those who are not eligible for, or have exhausted entitlement to, state and federal benefits. Federal guidelines require that applicants are determined ineligible for state benefits before applying for PUA.

Currently, applications are being accepted for individuals who are self-employed, 1099 and "gig" workers, Peace Corps volunteers, and workers who are not covered by regular unemployment benefits (i.e. some employees of religious institutions). Those who have exhausted benefits will be accepted in the next phase of development.

**Step 1** : File a regular state claim application with the CTDOL at [www.filectui.com](http://www.filectui.com), using the **blue button** to file for state benefits.

**Step 2** : Go to CTDOL [www.filectui.com](http://www.filectui.com) and click on the **red PUA button** for PUA and complete your federal application. The system will have a record of your ineligibility status to receive state benefits.



**Anytime** during this process, you may go to the **green button** on [www.filectui.com](http://www.filectui.com) and select your method of benefit payment. The Agency recommends **direct deposit** as the fastest method of payment.

PUA benefits for eligible claimants may be retroactive based upon the date one became un/underemployed due to COVID-19. The **retroactive period extends back to February 2, 2020** for a **maximum of 39 weeks** and includes the FPUC \$600 plus \$15 per dependent up to five. Individuals must be able and available to work unless they cannot work because of the specific circumstances that relate to COVID-19, including but not limited to:

- The individual, household member, or one under their care has been diagnosed
- A child or other under the individual's care is unable to attend school or another facility due to closure
- The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because of an official public quarantine, has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine, or their place of employment has been closed
- The individual must quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19
- The individual was scheduled to start work and the job is no longer available
- The individual has become "the breadwinner" or major support for a household because the head of the household has died

Under the federal guidelines, self-employed individuals (or those otherwise not covered by regular state unemployment insurance) can collect PUA even if they are only partially unemployed due to COVID-19.

### Benefit Rate

Based on earnings, self-employed individuals could qualify for between \$198 and \$649 in weekly PUA benefits. To expedite payment to all eligible claimants, CTDOL is releasing the minimum weekly benefit rate of \$198 upon a determination of eligibility. To be considered for payment above the minimum, claimants may upload their 2019 tax return to be verified by Department of Revenue Services or upload additional documentation of 2019 earnings for review by audit. If neither option is available, claimants will continue to receive the minimum weekly benefit of \$198, if otherwise eligible. If an increased PUA benefit is warranted, the claim will be re-determined at the higher weekly PUA rate and the PUA system will automatically issue adjustment payments and provide future benefit weeks at this higher amount.

## Filing for PUA

1. Click the **red** "Create PUA Account" button and answer the questions to create your account.
2. After submitting your account, you will be navigated back to the ReEmployCT login page.
3. Login to your PUA account by entering your newly created User ID and Password.
4. From your account Home Page:
  - o Click **Benefit Maintenance → Update Claimant Profile → Verify E-mail**.
    - Check your email account (including junk/spam) for an e-mail containing a verification number that will be used to validate your e-mail address.
    - If you never received an email, you can update your email address from the home page by accessing **Benefit Maintenance → Update Claimant Profile → Contact Details**.
5. To file your application, click **Unemployment Claim → Pandemic Assistance (PUA) → File PUA Claim**.
  - o Note: It's recommended that you have your 2019 wage and tax information available while filling out the PUA application.
  - o Fill out all questions to the best of your knowledge.
  - o **Entering wages and uploading proof of earnings**  
All claimants initially receive the minimum PUA weekly benefit rate (\$198, prior to qualified dependency allowance). **To be considered for a higher benefit rate**, you must enter your 2019 earnings by calendar quarter, and upload proof of earnings to your account. Although possible later\*, for the quickest evaluation we advise that you upload earnings during the initial application process.
    - **Uploading proof of earnings.**  
Acceptable formats are .PDF, .doc, .xls, .txt. Documents may include: W-2's, Schedule C, 1099's, Other tax and wage forms
6. Complete and submit the PUA application.

To continue benefits, claimants **must file weekly** through the PUA **red** button at [www.filectuj.com](http://www.filectuj.com), "proceed to ReEmployCT" click **Weekly Certification → File Weekly Certification**, and certify questions for the previous calendar week.

## Common Questions and Concerns

**Uploading Documentation:** \*We encourage individuals to upload tax and earnings documentation during the application process, but documents may also be uploaded post-application through a tab at the top of the account page. The maximum size per document is 2MB.

**Previous unemployment overpayment:** Federal law stipulates that unemployment overpayments be recouped/offset 100% against PUA and 50% against FPUC.

**Part-time employment while collecting PUA:** One may work part-time and file for partial benefits under PUA by reporting their earnings when filing weekly certifications. Two-thirds of reported earnings will be deducted from the PUA benefit rate for weeks earning and reporting part-time work and wages. If 2/3 of the wages earned is greater than the weekly benefit rate, no benefit will be received that week.

**PUA and FPUC (\$600):** All weekly PUA payments will include an additional \$600 per week between March 29 - July 25, 2020. However, if not eligible for PUA during any given week, nor will they receive an FPUC payment that week.

**Please note: CHECK AND DOUBLE CHECK the application before submission.** Errors are being made when individuals enter their bank routing information for both state benefits and PUA benefits. These mistakes prevent the agency from paying claims quickly and require us to send out a letter to the claimant directing them to access the Online Assistance Center and use the VOID 11 link to correct their banking information.

For more PUA guidance go to <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/PUA/index.htm> for table of contents and <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/PUA/filePUA.htm> for comprehensive filing instructions.

## Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation – FPUC

(3/29/20 – 7/25/20)

### Emergency Increase in Unemployment Compensation Benefits

- For any UI-eligible claimants (state and federal), PEUC recipients and PUA recipients, Shared Work UI and Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA)
- Additional \$600 per week for eligible claimants
- UI benefits in CT currently range from \$15 to \$649/wk.
- The additional FPUC will bring the range to \$615 to \$1,249/wk.

## Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation – PEUC

(13 weeks)

- Will extend the 26 weeks of regular state UI to 39 weeks.
- CTDOL is currently developing the system and expects to begin administering it in May.
- **Claimants must wait to receive filing instructions. Prior to the program's launch, a letter will be sent to all potentially eligible individuals with detailed instructions, specific to their applicant category.**
- Payments will be retro to the week of filing subsequent to April 4, 2020, if claimants exhausted all rights to regular unemployment compensation (UC) under state or Federal law for benefit year that ended after July 1, 2019
- Eligibility:
  - Have exhausted all rights to UI under state or federal law; and
  - Must be able to work, available to work, and actively seeking work.
  - The Department is exploring the application of the Commissioner's waiver to this program.



Our American Job Centers are closed to in-person visits due to COVID-19, but claimants may call the following numbers for **general information** concerning unemployment benefits.

860-263-6975, 203-455-2653, 860-263-6974 or 203-455-2650  
from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday – Friday (excluding holidays)

203-809-9847 \* 203-892-6036 \* 203-723-3817  
203-723-3818 \* 203-723-3820 \* 203-723-3821  
203-720-6971 \* 203-720-6905 \* 203-720-6931  
from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday - Friday (excluding holidays)

(Spanish) 203-548-7322 \* 203-723-3819 \* 203-450-9268  
from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday – Friday (excluding holidays)

**Claims cannot be processed or expedited by calling this telephone service.**



If you contact DOL with a constituent concern, please include the claimant's name as listed on their Social Security (SSN) documentation, the email address associated with their account, their date of birth, and the last four numbers of their SSN. If we do not receive this information, it will slow our reply to you.