



## Continued Assistance Act (CAA) Update 1/21/2021

Weekly certifications for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) programs under the Continued Assistance Act (CAA) will begin on February 7, 2021. On that date, the link to file an initial claim, reopen your claim, or file your weekly certification will appear on your Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant homepage.

We understand this delay is hard for many New Mexicans, and want you to know why it will take until February 7 for extended benefits to begin. The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) did not receive specific guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) for the PUA program or those who have exhausted all benefits until Friday, January 8, 2021. Since that time, conference calls have taken place between NMDWS and USDOL to request answers to questions regarding specific parts of the program. Answers to those questions were received on January 20, 2021.

Now that the department has this final guidance, our staff can develop and implement the system changes needed to allow the UI Tax & Claims System to issue payments to those eligible for the 11-week extension provided by CAA. These requirements include additional proof of employment and self-employment verification for PUA claimants, increased identification verification requirements, reporting capabilities for job refusal and failure to return to work, additional fraud detection tools, and additional changes to the PEUC and PUA programs.

Both PEUC and PUA are federal pandemic UI programs and the guidance provided by USDOL must be followed to properly program the UI Tax & Claims System including the date extension and program changes. Code development and testing must also take place to ensure the new extensions are integrated with both the previous CARES Act programs and the overall unemployment system and are implemented in a way that follows all rules and keeps everything functioning.

In short, if the department does not follow the rules and guidance provided, USDOL can withhold benefit funding. If these new details and program changes are not set up correctly in the system, it could stop payments for everybody. This process takes time and we appreciate your patience as our staff works as quickly as possible to prepare these program extensions to start distributing benefit payments.

Once CAA extended benefits are available, eligible claimants will be able to certify for retroactive payments starting with the week ending January 2, 2021. Each eligible week will also include the additional \$300 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) payment along with the weekly benefit amount received.

### *What unemployment benefit program are you on and what should you do next?*

- **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)**

If you have not reached 39 weeks of benefits and have a remaining benefit balance, you may continue certifying weekly. Each eligible certification week starting with the week of December 27 will also include the additional \$300 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) payment. If you have exhausted your PEUC benefits you may apply for Federal-State Extended Benefits (FDEB1) that provides an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits. Once PEUC benefits are exhausted you will



see a link appear on your claimant homepage that will say “Apply for Extended Benefits”. Please see the attached PEUC program progression for more information.

If you do not apply for FDEB1 you may wait for the PEUC 11-week extension to begin on February 7.

- **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**

If you have not reached 39 weeks of benefits and have a remaining benefit balance, you may continue certifying weekly. Each eligible certification week starting with the week of December 27 will also include the additional \$300 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) payment.

If you exhausted your benefits and have a \$0 balance, the department will open certifications for the 11-week extension on February 7, 2021.

All PUA claimants, current and exhausted, are required to complete a quarterly application for benefits. This is a federal requirement to review eligibility for regular standard unemployment benefits. If you have not already done so please log on to your claimant homepage and select the “Apply for benefits” link in the menu bar

- **Federal-State Extended Benefits (FDEB1)**

Continue certifying weekly as normal. Each eligible certification week starting with the week of December 27 will also include the additional \$300 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) payment. If you are currently on FDEB1 or will be on FDEB1 before the 11-week extended benefits are available on February 7, you will remain on FDEB1 until the 13-weeks are reached. Once 13-weeks of FDEB1 have completed, you will be able to start the 11-weeks of benefits until the 11-weeks are reached or the end of program date is met, whichever comes first.

Please remember to follow all the safety precautions to protect yourself, your family, your friends, and your community. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask or face covering when around others. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Stay 6 feet away from others and avoid crowds. Wash your hands often. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Please refer to <https://cv.nmhealth.org/> for up-to-date COVID-19 testing and vaccine information.

### **The Continued Assistance Act programs include:**

#### **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)**

- Will provide up to 11 weeks of an additional \$300 weekly benefit to eligible claimants.
- A claimant must be eligible to receive benefits under regular state Unemployment Insurance, PUA, PEUC, or FDEB1 (Federal Extended Benefits) to receive FPUC.
- FPUC will be available until week ending March 13, 2021.

#### **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**

- Will provide up to an additional 11 weeks of benefits, to a maximum of 50 weeks.
- Weekly certification will be required
- Claimants will be required to provide documentation of eligibility to qualify for PUA beginning January 31, 2021.



- PUA will be available until week ending March 13, 2021 (no new applications will be accepted after that date), with allowance for three additional weeks of benefits for those who have not reached the maximum number of weeks through week ending April 3, 2021.

**Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)**

- Will provide up to an additional 11 weeks of benefit, to a maximum of 24 weeks.
- PEUC will be available until week ending March 13, 2021 (no new applications will be accepted after that date), with allowance for three additional weeks of benefits for those who have not reached the maximum number of weeks through week ending April 3, 2021.