

Unemployment Info and FAQs

Friend—

Millions of Americans and tens of thousands of Virginians have been economically affected by COVID-19. I have heard from hundreds of folks in our region about the struggles they are facing through these difficult times. I have worked with my colleagues in Congress, as well as Governor Northam and officials at the state level, to get resources and relief to folks who need it most.

Below, I have provided information from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) on how you can file an initial or continued unemployment claim, what information you need and steps to take, and where to file. I have also provided unemployment information from the Department of Labor related to the CARES Act passed by Congress with my support in March.

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Information on Virginia Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment Insurance Relief During COVID-19 Outbreak

The U.S. Department of Labor provides information for individuals unemployment insurance relief during a COVID-19 outbreak here: <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus/unemployment-insurance>

How File an Initial or Weekly / Continued Claim

Visit the Virginia Employment Commission to apply for unemployment insurance: <https://www.vec.virginia.gov/unemployed/online-services/apply-for-unemployment-benefits>. In order to file for Unemployment Insurance (UI) you must have been separated from your employer or have had your hours

You will need the following information to file your claim:

- Your Social Security Number.
- The accurate employer names, addresses, telephone numbers and dates of employment within the last 18 months.
- The name and local number of your local union hall, if you obtain work through a union.
- Your Alien Registration Number if you are not a US citizen.
- If you have any non-Virginia employers you must have an accurate mailing address, phone number, and dates of employment for them.

You will be asked to select a method of payment: **VA Debit Card** or **Direct Deposit**. If you select Direct Deposit, you will need to have your Routing Number (First 9 digits located at the bottom of your checks) and your Account Number (5-17 digits, its exact location and number of digits varies from bank to bank).

If you do not have this information available, please gather it before you begin to file your claim. This site is available seven days a week. The filing process takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. Please allow enough time to complete this process.

Incomplete Applications Will Not Be Processed!

There are five sections to this application:

- **Personal Information:** This section includes things like your name and address and will help determine whether it is possible for you to file online.
- **Employment Information:** This section includes all of your employment information for the last 18 months, including the reason you are no longer employed by the company(s).
- **Eligibility Information:** This section includes information regarding your current availability for employment.
- **Unemployment Instructions:** This section details the information and instructions that keep your unemployment claim active. Please read this information.
- **Preferred method of payment:** This section will allow you to select your payment method. You must select either Debit card or Direct Deposit.

The information you provide when filing your claim is kept confidential. This confidential Unemployment Compensation (UC) information may be requested and utilized for other governmental purposes, including, but not limited to, verification of eligibility for other governmental programs. The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) will only contact you on matters that directly concern your unemployment insurance claim.

Auxiliary Aids and Services

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Virginia Relay Center (VRC)

The Virginia Relay Center (VRC) provides telecommunications relay services to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Text Telephone (TTY) or Telecommunications for the Deaf (TDD) users can access the VRC by calling 1-800-828-1120.

File your Initial or Weekly / Continued Claim

Online...

PLEASE NOTE: Your previous User ID and Password for Online claim filing is no longer valid. If you have a Virginia Workforce Connection account, you will use your current User ID and Password to file your claim. If you don't have an account, please select the link "Not Registered" to create one.

[English](#)

[Español](#)

By Phone...

To file a **new claim** by telephone, call toll free, Monday - Friday between 8:15am and 4:30pm and between 9am and 1pm on Saturday (closed state holidays) **1-866-832-2363**

To file a **weekly claim** by telephone, call toll free **1-800-897-5630**

CARES Act and Unemployment

Background

On March 18, 2020, President Trump signed into law the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which provided additional flexibility for state unemployment insurance agencies and additional administrative funding to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27 gives states the option of extending unemployment compensation to independent contractors and other workers who are ordinarily ineligible for unemployment benefits.

Frequently Asked Questions

I am an independent contractor. Am I eligible for unemployment benefits under the CARES Act?

You may be eligible for unemployment benefits, depending on your personal circumstances and how your state chooses to implement the CARES Act. States are permitted to provide Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to individuals who are self-employed, seeking part-time employment, or who otherwise would not qualify for regular unemployment compensation. To qualify for PUA benefits, you must not be eligible for regular unemployment benefits and be unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of certain health or economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PUA program provides up to 39 weeks of benefits, which are available retroactively starting with weeks of unemployment beginning on or after January 27, 2020 and ending on or before December 31, 2020. The amount of benefits paid out will vary by state and are calculated based on the weekly benefit amounts (WBA) provided under a state's unemployment insurance laws. Under the CARES Act, the WBA may be supplemented by the additional unemployment assistance provided under the Act.

I am about to exhaust my regular unemployment compensation benefits. What kinds of relief does the CARES Act provide for me?

Under the CARES Act states are permitted to extend unemployment benefits by up to 13 weeks under the new Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program. PEUC benefits are available for weeks of unemployment beginning after your state implements the new program and ending with weeks of unemployment ending on or before December 31, 2020. The program covers most individuals who have exhausted all rights to regular unemployment compensation under state or federal law and who are able to work, available for work, and actively seeking work as defined by state law. Importantly, the CARES Act gives states flexibility in determining whether you are "actively seeking work" if you are unable to search for work because of COVID-19, including because of illness, quarantine, or movement restrictions.

In addition, if you have exhausted the 13 weeks of additional benefits available under the PEUC program, you may be eligible to continue receiving benefits under the PUA program. PUA benefits are available for a period of unemployment of up to 39 weeks, meaning that if you have exhausted regular UC and PEUC benefits in fewer than 39 weeks, you may be eligible to receive assistance under PUA for the remaining weeks within PUA's 39 week period.

My regular unemployment compensation benefits do not provide adequate support given the unprecedented economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Can I expect to receive additional relief?

Yes, depending on how your state chooses to implement the CARES Act. The new law creates the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program (FPUC), which provides an additional \$600 per week to individuals who are collecting regular UC (including Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) and Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX), PEUC, PUA, Extended Benefits (EB), Short Time Compensation (STC), Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), and payments under the Self Employment Assistance (SEA) program). This benefit is available for weeks of unemployment beginning after the date on which your state entered into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor and ending with weeks of unemployment ending on or before July 31, 2020.

I run a nonprofit organization and am a reimbursing employer under my state's unemployment insurance program. Due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am worried that I may be unable to timely reimburse the

state for unemployment benefits it provides to my employees. What should I do?

Contact your state unemployment insurance office to learn what options may be available for delaying reimbursement payments. The CARES Act allows states to provide maximum flexibility to reimbursing employers as it relates to timely payments in lieu of contributions and assessment of penalties and interest. The U.S. Department of Labor will soon be issuing guidance on how states should implement this provision.

Am I Eligible for Regular Unemployment Compensation?

Each state sets its own unemployment insurance benefits eligibility guidelines, but you usually qualify if you:

- Are unemployed through no fault of your own. In most states, this means you have to have separated from your last job due to a lack of available work.
- Meet work and wage requirements. You must meet your state's requirements for wages earned or time worked during an established period of time referred to as a "base period." (In most states, this is usually the first four out of the last five completed calendar quarters before the time that your claim is filed.)
- Meet any additional state requirements. Find details of your [own state's program](#).

My employer has remained open because it is essential. I'm not sick, nor is anyone in my household sick. I do not have children or care for someone who cannot care for themselves. However, I'm afraid of getting coronavirus from customers coming to the store, so I quit and filed for unemployment. Can I obtain benefits under the CARES Act?

No. Under the CARES Act, you may be eligible for benefits if you meet one of the circumstances listed in the Act, but none include the scenario described. On these facts, you are not eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) because you do not meet any of the qualifying circumstances.

There are, however, circumstances under the CARES Act in which specific, credible health concerns could require an individual to quit his or her job and thereby make the individual eligible for PUA. For example, an individual may be eligible for PUA if he or she was diagnosed with COVID-19 by a qualified medical professional, and although the individual no longer has COVID-19, the illness caused health complications that render the individual objectively unable to perform his or her essential job functions, with or without a reasonable accommodation. However, voluntarily deciding to quit your job out of a general concern about exposure to COVID-19 does not make you eligible for PUA. If you believe your employer's response to the possible spread of COVID-19 creates a serious safety hazard or if you think your employer is not following OSHA standards, you can [file a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#).

As a general matter, you are likely to be eligible for PUA due to concerns about exposure to the coronavirus only if you have been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine as a result of such concerns. For instance, an individual whose immune system is compromised by virtue of a serious health condition, and who is therefore advised by a

healthcare provider to self-quarantine in order to avoid the greater-than-average health risks that the individual might face if he or she were to become infected by the coronavirus will be eligible for PUA if all other eligibility requirements are met.

My employer will let me work from home with pay. However, because my children are out of school and my spouse is working, I need to care for them and it is too difficult to work from home. Under Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I)(dd) of the CARES Act, I self-certify that I need my kids to be at school in order for me to be able to work. Do I qualify for PUA?

You may qualify. The CARES Act does provide PUA to an individual who is the “primary caregiver” of a child who is at home due to a forced school closure that directly results from the COVID-19 public health emergency. However, to qualify as a primary caregiver, your provision of care to the child must require such ongoing and constant attention that it is not possible for you to perform your customary work functions at home. For example, if your employer allows you to telework and you are caring for a more mature child who is able to care for him or herself for much of the day, you likely would not qualify for PUA because you are still able to work.

In addition, you should bear in mind that the CARES Act provides PUA only when a child is home because of a school closure that is a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. A school is not closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, for purposes of 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I)(dd), after the date the school year was originally scheduled to end. That means that, once the school year is over, parents should rely on their customary summer arrangements for caring for their children, and will not, absent some other qualifying circumstances, be eligible to receive PUA. If, however, the facility that they rely on to provide summer care for the child is also closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, they may continue to qualify for PUA. Similarly, if there is some other reason under which they qualify for PUA, they will continue to be eligible to receive benefits.

I’m partially employed because I’m a student and work part time doing ride-sharing. Can I certify that I cannot work and get PUA under the CARES Act?

You may be eligible for PUA, depending on your personal circumstances. A gig economy worker, such as a driver for a ride-sharing service, is eligible for PUA provided that he or she is unemployed, partially employed, or unable or unavailable to work for one or more of the qualifying reasons provided for by the CARES Act. For example, a driver for a ride-sharing service may be forced to quit his or her job if he or she was diagnosed with COVID-19 by a qualified medical professional, and although the driver no longer has COVID-19, the illness caused health complications that render the driver objectively unable to perform his or her essential job functions, with or without a reasonable accommodation. Similarly, under an additional eligibility criterion established by the Secretary of Labor pursuant to 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I)(kk), a driver who receives an IRS Form 1099 from the ride-sharing service may qualify for PUA benefits if he or she has been forced to suspend operations as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, such as if an emergency state or municipal order restricting movement makes continued operations unsustainable. Relatedly, widespread social distancing undertaken in response to guidance from federal, state, or

local governments may so severely reduce customer demand for a driver's services as to force him or her to suspend operations, and thus make the driver eligible for PUA.

I was furloughed by my employer, but they have now reopened and asked me to return to my job. Can I remain on unemployment?

No. As a general matter, individuals receiving regular unemployment compensation must act upon any referral to suitable employment and must accept any offer of suitable employment. Barring unusual circumstances, a request that a furloughed employee return to his or her job very likely constitutes an offer of suitable employment that the employee must accept.

While eligibility for PUA does not turn on whether an individual is actively seeking work, it does require that the individual be unemployed, partially employed, or unable or unavailable to work due to certain circumstances that are a direct result of COVID-19 or the COVID-19 public health emergency. In the situation outlined here, an employee who had been furloughed because his or her employer has closed the place of employment would potentially be eligible for PUA while the employer remained closed, assuming the closure was a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and other qualifying conditions are satisfied. However, as soon as the business reopens and the employee is recalled for work, as in the example above, eligibility for PUA would cease unless the individual could identify some other qualifying circumstance outlined in the CARES Act.

One of my workers quit because he said he would prefer to receive the unemployment compensation benefits under the CARES Act. Is he eligible for unemployment? If not, what can I do?

No, typically that employee would not be eligible for regular unemployment compensation or PUA. Eligibility for regular unemployment compensation varies by state but generally does not include those who voluntarily leave employment. Similarly, to receive PUA, an individual must be ineligible for regular unemployment compensation or extended benefits under state or federal law, or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation, and satisfy one of the eligibility criteria enumerated in the CARES Act, as explained in [Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 16-20](#). There are multiple qualifying circumstances related to COVID-19 that can make an individual eligible for PUA, including if the individual quits his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19. Quitting to access unemployment benefits is not one of them. Individuals who quit their jobs to access higher benefits and are untruthful in their UI application about their reason for quitting, will be considered to have committed fraud.

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Please know that my office and I stand ready to assist you and our region during this time of need. Together, we will come through these times stronger. For comprehensive information and resources to help you, your family, and your community during these difficult times, [click here to visit my Coronavirus homepage](#).

Sincerely,

Rob



"To keep up to date with my thoughts on the issues you care most about, sign up [here](#)."