

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

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## Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

### Information for Claimants *[Please click on a question to see the answer.]*

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3. Is the federal unemployment (\$600) retroactive?
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25. If an employee is in mandatory quarantine because of suspicion of having the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?
26. If an employee is ill because of the coronavirus and unable to work, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?

### 1. Where is my \$600 from the CARES Act?

The Louisiana Workforce Commission has received funding from the federal CARES Act. We are expected to begin payments on April 13, 2020. We are programming our systems to accommodate the changes.

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## **2. Who qualifies for the federal \$600 benefit?**

Anyone who is qualified for at least \$1 of State Unemployment Insurance Benefits or the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefits will be eligible to receive the additional \$600 benefit from the federal CARES Act. This includes self-employed and 1099 workers, who are normally excluded from receiving state benefits.

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## **3. Is the federal unemployment (\$600) retroactive?**

Yes, it is retroactive for weeks filed back to the week-ending 4/4/2020.

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## **4. What are the dates for the current quarters (base period)?**

Regular Unemployment Base Period for claims filed in March is October 1, 2018 – September 31, 2019.

Regular Unemployment Base Period for claims filed 4/5/2020 or after is calendar year 2019 (January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019).

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## **5. I am ineligible for state unemployment benefits. Can I still receive the \$600 federal benefit?**

If you qualify for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), you will receive the \$600.

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## **6. Is there still a "waiting week" for those applying for unemployment insurance?**

No, there is not a waiting week. Governor John Bel Edwards signed JBE Executive Order 2020-27 to waive the waiting week, which would permit a claimant to receive UI benefits beginning with his or her first week of eligibility. Claimants can now receive benefits the first week they become unemployed.

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## **7. I filed an application for regular unemployment and need to talk to someone but can't get through. What do I do?**

If you cannot get through immediately, it is ok. You do not need to talk to us today. You have until Saturday to file your claim. If you have filed a claim and still need to speak to a representative, you will need to reach the Call Center at 1-866-783-5567. We understand that the Call Center is hard to reach, please keep trying. DO NOT SELECT file an unemployment claim. These calls are being handled by additional Call Centers that are trained to take new claims only. They CANNOT answer your questions. You can also check the status of your claim by logging onto louisianaworks.net/HiRE and from your dashboard, selecting Unemployment Services, then Claim Summary.

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## **8. What is expected of me after filing a claim?**

You are expected to file your Weekly Certification each week to let us know if you remain unemployed, so that you can receive weekly benefits. If you do not complete your Weekly Certification you will not be paid for that week. (Weekly filing starts on Sunday and ends on Saturday for each week)

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## **9. Am I required to search for work during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

As a result of Governor John Bel Edwards Executive Order 2020-27, you do not need to do a work search during the Governor's declared emergency. No action is needed on your part regarding the work search.

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## 10. My employer is currently closed, and I don't have an exact return to work date, but I am going back to work for my employer. Why am I required to register on HiRE?

Registration is a requirement of Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and must be completed in order to maintain eligibility for benefits. You are considered to be temporarily laid off.

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## 11. I'm self-employed. Can I receive unemployment benefits?

Not regular (state) unemployment benefits. However, you may be eligible under the **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**.

When you file your claim application, a determination of monetary eligibility (did you earn enough wages during a specified period of time) will be issued for a Regular (State) Unemployment claim. If you are not eligible for a Regular Unemployment claim, we WILL make a determination for the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. All you have to do is continue to file for your weekly benefits currently. We will ask additional questions once the program is fully implemented. This is expected the week of April 13, 2020.

**The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance will pay a minimum of \$107 and a maximum of \$247 depending on wage verifications.**

**The following are conditions that will be considered for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance if you are not eligible for a Regular Unemployment Insurance claim.**

This emergency benefit provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits to qualifying individuals who are otherwise able to work and available for work within the meaning of applicable state UC law, except that they are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work due to one of the COVID-19 related reasons. These includes those people not otherwise eligible for regular unemployment, including the self-employed and those who have exhausted their regular and extended benefits.

Eligibility Requirements:

- You have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis;
- A member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- You are providing care for a family member or a member of your household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- You have a child or other person in the household for which you have primary caregiving responsibility who is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and such school or facility care is required for you to work;
- You are unable to reach your place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- You are unable to reach the place of employment because you have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;
- You were scheduled to commence employment and do not have a job or are unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- You have become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- You had to quit your job as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- Your place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Note: PUA is also generally not payable to individuals who have the ability to telework with pay or who are receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave benefits. However, individuals receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave benefits for less than their customary work week may still be eligible for PUA.

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## 12. Will I qualify for unemployment benefits if the coronavirus (COVID-19) causes my employer to shut down operations?

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**13. My employer has not told me that I am laid off, but my workplace is closed and I don't have hours. Am I still eligible?**

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**14. My hours have been reduced, am I still eligible to apply for UI benefits even though I still have a job?**

Individuals who are facing a reduction in hours and/or a being mandated to stay home by their employer, a healthcare professional or the government could also be eligible. Individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits if they meet the monetary criteria and the weekly eligibility criteria. You will be required to report your weekly gross wages to determine eligibility each week you submit your weekly certification. If your gross wages are more than your weekly benefit amount, you will not be eligible for benefits.

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**15. If I impose a self-quarantine because of the coronavirus, will I be eligible for state unemployment benefits?**

You may be eligible to receive benefits. A determination will be made based on your reason for self-quarantine. See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**16. If I am in mandatory quarantine because of suspicion of having the coronavirus, will I be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**17. If I am ill because of the coronavirus and unable to work, will I be eligible for state unemployment benefits?**

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**18. Is the coronavirus considered to be a disaster, and can I receive Disaster Unemployment Assistance?**

Disaster Unemployment Assistance is not available. However, if you are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits, you may be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

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**19. What happens if the school I work at shuts down for coronavirus? Will I be eligible?**

If this closure is not during a customary break period, or extends longer than the customary break period, individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits if they meet the monetary and weekly eligibility criteria.

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**20. My child is off from school, and I have to stay home to care for them. May I receive unemployment?**

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**21. Will there be a UI extension for those already on unemployment and near the end of their benefit but unable to find work due to COVID-19?**

Yes, the Federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) extends benefits 13 weeks. As of April 9, 2020, we are still awaiting guidance from USDOL.

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**22. Will workers qualify for unemployment benefits if the coronavirus (COVID-19) causes an employer to shut down operations?**

Louisiana unemployment benefits are available to individuals who are unemployed through no fault of their own. If an employer must shut down operations and no work is available, individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits if they meet the monetary criteria and the weekly eligibility criteria.

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**23. If an employee receives unemployment benefits as a result of a coronavirus-related business shutdown, can the benefits be charged to my UI tax account?**

No. We understand your concerns about future UI cost. Employers are usually responsible for the cost of unemployment benefits paid to their workers. Given the unprecedented situation with COVID-19, the Governor's Proclamation relieved employers of benefit charges associated with COVID-19. This means that any benefits your workers collect as a result of the pandemic will not be charged to your UI tax account.

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**24. If an employee imposes a self-quarantine because of the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**25. If an employee is in mandatory quarantine because of suspicion of having the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

Yes. See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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**26. If an employee is ill because of the coronavirus and unable to work, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

See Question/Answer #11 for more information.

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