

N E W S R E L E A S E

Contact: Loree Levy
Aubrey Henry
916-654-9029

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Unemployment benefits during pandemic nearing \$60 billion in California

EDD helps customers with new service enhancements and alert about fraud

Sacramento – Unemployment benefits for out-of-work Californians since this historic pandemic began now total **\$59.8 billion** to support families and communities struggling during this economic crisis. Over the same timeframe, the Employment Development Department (EDD) has processed more than **9.7 million claims** for benefits between the regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, extensions, and separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. Just last week, the EDD paid an average of \$792 million a day in unemployment benefits. That amount is a 1,033% increase over the \$70 million in average daily benefits paid during a similar week at the height of the Great Recession (week ending July 31, 2010).

| Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| | | <i>Current Week</i> August 1, 2020 | <i>Prior Weeks</i> WE 3/14 -7/25/20 | <i>Total</i> WE 3/14 -8/1/20 |
| Total Applications Submitted <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)¹</i> | Reg. UI | 85,328 | 5,106,018 | 5,191,346 |
| | PUA | 261,192 | 2,009,055 | 2,270,247 |
| | PEUC² | 46,757 | 423,722 | 470,479 |
| | FED-ED³ | 6,058 | 86,140 | 92,198 |
| | Total | 399,335 | 7,624,935 | 8,024,270 |
| Total Claims Processed <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)⁴</i> | Reg. UI | 228,530 | 7,137,012 | 7,365,542 |
| | PUA | 203,894 | 1,656,379 | 1,860,273 |
| | PEUC² | 50,412 | 463,100 | 513,512 |
| | FED-ED³ | 6,171 | 48,892 | 55,063 |
| | Total | 489,007 | 9,305,383 | 9,794,390 |
| Total Benefits Paid <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)⁵</i> | Reg. UI | \$2.5 billion | \$38.7 billion | \$41.1 billion |
| | PUA | \$2.0 billion | \$14.3 billion | \$16.3 billion |
| | PEUC² | \$234 million | \$2.0 billion | \$2.3 billion |
| | FED-ED³ | \$59.1 million | \$57.6 million | \$117 million |
| | Total | \$4.8 billion | \$55.1 billion | \$59.8 billion |
| Individuals Paid Benefits^{6,7} <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i> | Reg. UI | 3,447,000 | 3,429,000 | |
| | PUA | 1,201,000 | 1,110,000 | |
| | Total | 4,648,000 ⁸ | 4,539,000 ⁹ | |

1. *The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) was implemented in California on April 28, 2020. This data includes new initial claims only.*
2. *The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) was implemented in California on May 27, 2020. PEUC claims are an extension of a regular UI claim. For the week ending July 25, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 248,098.*
3. *FED-ED was implemented in California on July 1, 2020. FED-ED claims are an extension of a regular UI claim.*
4. *Claims processed through UI Online, along with about 5% of claims that arrive via paper or phone. This accounts for claims received in the current week as well as past weeks. The data also includes additional claims or claims that are re-opened when there is a break in certifying for benefits, for example when the claimant may return to work but then later come back to collect benefits on their initial claim.*
5. *Includes \$600 federal stimulus payments EDD adds to each week of regular UI, PUA, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. Regular UI benefits are paid out of California's UI Trust Fund with contributions from employers, PUA, PEUC, FED-ED and the \$600 federal stimulus payments are paid for by the federal government. The Total Benefits Paid may not add up due to the rounding data.*
6. *Counts include individuals claiming regular UI, PEUC, and FED-ED benefits. If an individual claims a regular UI benefit, PEUC, or FED-ED benefit in a four-week rolling time period, they are only counted once.*
7. *Four-week rolling totals accommodate for numerous variables that dictate what claimants receive benefits in any given bi-weekly period. Data excludes claimants who were fully employed, disqualified or had excessive earnings that would disqualify them for a week of benefits.*
8. *Four-week rolling total between week-ending July 11th and week-ending August 1st, 2020.*
9. *Four-week rolling total between week-ending July 4th and week-ending July 25th, 2020.*

Status of federal \$600 stimulus payment for unemployment benefits

The EDD is closely monitoring federal proposals about regular UI, federal extensions, and PUA benefits. The extra \$600 federal stimulus payment authorized in the CARES Act earlier this year can no longer be paid for any weeks of unemployment from July 26 forward, unless the federal government takes further action. Any weeks of benefits a claimant is eligible for between March 29 and July 25 can still get the extra \$600 added, even if those payments are processed later.

- Without the stimulus payments, claimants will still receive the weekly benefit amount they qualify for on their regular UI, extension, or PUA claim. Those weekly amounts range from \$40 - \$450 a week for regular UI and from \$167 - \$450 for PUA, depending on income earned previously.
- The EDD will keep all of our customers posted on any developments that may lead to the return of additional federal stimulus payments.

Helping customers understand Unemployment Insurance requirements

Every two weeks claimants must certify their claim by answering a series of basic questions. This is a legal requirement which tells EDD that a claimant remains unemployed or is working reduced hours and meets eligibility requirements. During this pandemic, there are hundreds of thousands of claimants who have not submitted a required bi-weekly certification for a benefit payment.

The EDD is now sending an email reminder on a weekly basis to remind claimants to

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certify for benefits. The emails will be sent to those who have an active claim opened during the pandemic, have an available balance of weeks to certify, and who have not completed a bi-weekly certification for benefits.

In addition, reminders are sent by e-mail notifying customers when it is time to certify for their continued benefits and they also appear on customers' UI Online accounts, as well as these valuable tools provided by EDD to help guide claimants through the certification process:

- The [Understanding the Continued Claims Certification Questions](#) on the EDD website helps claimants understand the questions on the continued claim form and what the answers to these questions tells the EDD.
- Video tutorials on how to [Certify for Continued Benefits](#) are offered in four different languages.
- The EDD has developed a helpful [step-by-step Unemployment Insurance Claims guide](#) for completing the continued claim form with tips included for how to avoid some common mistakes made during this historic pandemic and avoid unnecessary delays in payments.

Enhancements in customer service via phone

The EDD continues to develop enhancements in serving unemployed Californians via phone. To create a more seamless customer experience through a unified call center, the EDD launched a new upgrade that will allow staff to more quickly assess the customer's needs. When UI customers call Technical Support line, they will now have an option menu to select and identify the intent of their call prior to getting into the call queue. The new options include:

- UI questions including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance questions
- UI Online account assistance
- EDD Customer Account Number
- UI payment issues

EDD Calling - The EDD also launched an upgrade to help claimants know it's the EDD calling and to answer the phone. Either the text "St of CA EDD" or the UI call center number of 1-833-978-2511 will be displayed on customers' phones instead of coming up blocked or unknown. This will help EDD representatives in their efforts to reach customers when returning a customer's call or connecting via phone for a scheduled eligibility determination interview.

Reimbursable employers get financial break from federal government

New enacted federal legislation (S. 4209) is changing the way reimbursable
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employers, including non-profit organizations, will be charged for the unemployment benefits paid to their employees who are separated or working reduced hours during this pandemic. The federal CARES Act had required these employers to pay 100% of those costs and then get reimbursed for half of the bill later, which was resulting in a heavy financial burden. Now the federal government will pick up half of those costs and reimbursable employers will be charged for the remainder of the bill. The EDD is awaiting guidance from the US Department of Labor to implement the provisions of the new bill, and updates will be provided to reimbursable employers and on the EDD website once this guidance is received.

Alerting Californians about UI Fraud

Fraudsters tend to become more active during emergency situations like the current pandemic. Because of suspicious claim activity spotted in UI programs in California and across the country, the EDD is actively involved in a nationwide investigation in conjunction with our federal law enforcement partners. Specific details about the criminal investigation are confidential in order to protect the integrity of an ongoing investigation. The EDD takes protecting the integrity of the UI program very seriously and has a strong ID Verification process which requires additional documentation from claimants if we are unable to verify their identity through the DMV and Social Security Administration.

Just last month, the EDD sent out 200,000 more notices requiring documentation than were sent out in July 2019. But if identity thieves have a significant amount of personally identifiable information, claims can still be processed and initial payment made before additional information can be obtained to shut down the claim.

The EDD urges the public to be extra diligent and be on the lookout for the following suspicious activities:

- Receiving communications regarding unemployment insurance forms when you have not applied for unemployment benefits.
- Any fees involved in filing or qualifying for unemployment insurance as the EDD does not charge for services associated with unemployment benefits.
- Unsolicited inquiries related to unemployment benefits.
- Fictitious websites and social media pages mimicking those of government agencies.
- People approaching you and claiming to be EDD representatives – the department will not send staff to your home asking for your personal identifying information.

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We also encourage employers to be vigilant in reviewing notices they receive about false claims filed on behalf of their employees. The EDD urges Californians to report suspicious activity right away. The best way to do so is online through [AskEDD](#). You can also fax fraud-related information to EDD using this number: 916-227-2772.

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