



N E W S R E L E A S E

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**Unemployment benefits paid to workers impacted by pandemic top \$81 billion**

**Updates on Lost Wages Assistance benefits and fraud claims**

**Sacramento** – To help support California workers, their families, and their local communities struggling through this historic COVID-19 pandemic, the California Employment Development Department has now issued \$81.8 billion in unemployment benefits since mid-March. Last week alone, the EDD paid an average of \$678 million a day in benefits – a 962% increase over benefits paid during the same week of the Great Recession in 2010 (an average of \$64 million a day). So far in this pandemic, the EDD has processed 12.6 million claims between the regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and extension claims, as well as the separate Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

<b>Unemployment Insurance (UI) • Data Dashboard</b>				
		<i>Current Week</i>	<i>Prior Weeks</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<b>September 5, 2020</b>	<b>WE 3/14 -8/29/20</b>	<b>WE 3/14 -9/05/20</b>
<b>Total Applications Submitted</b> <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)<sup>1</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	71,574	5,467,563	5,539,137
	<b>PUA</b>	524,108	3,565,241	4,089,349
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	45,481	642,634	688,115
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	5,848	117,665	123,513
	<b>Total</b>	<b>647,011</b>	<b>9,793,103</b>	<b>10,440,114</b>
<b>Total Claims Processed</b> <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)<sup>4</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	237,516	8,227,054	8,464,570
	<b>PUA</b>	433,020	2,863,115	3,296,135
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	50,437	703,413	753,850
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	6,050	81,198	87,248
	<b>Total</b>	<b>727,023</b>	<b>11,874,780</b>	<b>12,601,803</b>
<b>Total Benefits Paid</b> <i>(Approx. combination of first benefit payments and continued claim bi-weekly payments)<sup>5</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	\$1.2 billion	\$45.8 billion	\$47.1 billion
	<b>PUA</b>	\$3.4 billion	\$28.1 billion	\$31.5 billion
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	\$109 million	\$2.8 billion	\$2.9 billion
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	\$18.6 million	\$205 million	\$224 million
	<b>LWA<sup>10</sup></b>	\$150 million	\$0	\$150 million
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4.9 billion</b>	<b>\$76.9 billion</b>	<b>\$81.8 billion</b>
<b>Individuals Paid Benefits<sup>6,7</sup></b> <i>(Expressed as four-week rolling totals to account for different bi-weekly payment cycles)</i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	3,382,000	3,405,000	
	<b>PUA</b>	1,767,000	1,673,000	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5,149,000<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>5,078,000<sup>9</sup></b>	

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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 August 29, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 355,514.

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 of 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. The total claims processed from 3/14 - 9/05/20 may include multiple claims from the same applicant.

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 August 15th and week-ending September 5th, 2020.

9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending August 8th and week-ending August 29th, 2020.

10. The Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program was implemented in California on September 5th, 2020 to provide eligible claimants with a Lost Wage Assistance payment of \$300 per week in addition to their weekly benefit amount beginning with weeks ending on or after August 1, 2020.

## **EDD issues \$300 a week payments under Lost Wages Assistance program**

The EDD had more than 1,000 staff working over the long Labor Day holiday weekend to process claims and initiate new \$300 a week payments under the federal Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program. EDD is paying LWA benefits based on the order in which the EDD received the claimant's certification for regular UI or PUA benefits for the three weeks between July 26 and August 15. Those who have already certified for benefits for these weeks and verified to the EDD that their full or partial unemployment is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a federal government requirement, will receive LWA payments first.

The federal government also requires claimants to have a minimum weekly benefit award of \$100 or more on their initial claim. Those who received a payment on that claim for the weeks between July 26 and August 15 should expect one of these scenarios for additional LWA payments:

- Claimants who submitted their certification for all three of those weeks at the same time will receive one lump sum of \$900 (\$300/week x 3 weeks).
- Claimants who did not submit their certification for all three of those weeks at the same time, the payments will be split in two due to normal bi-weekly payment cycles based on when you provided your certifications for the three weeks of benefits.
  - Those with the weeks ending August 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in the same two-week cycle will receive a \$600 payment first followed a few days later by the remaining \$300 for August 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - Those with the week ending date of August 1<sup>st</sup> on the second half of their two-week cycle will receive \$300 first and the other \$600 should arrive a few days later for the weeks ending August 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

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- Claimants that were not paid for one or two weeks of the initial three week period due to excessive earnings, fully employed, or disqualified will only receive LWA payments for weeks paid.
- All first phase of LWA payments are scheduled to be completed in the next couple of weeks. Starting September 15, the EDD will start accepting self-attestations from phase 2 claimants who had not yet verified to the EDD that there's a COVID-19 related reason for their full or partial unemployment. Throughout the week, EDD will be sending emails, texts, or mailed notices advising them to complete the self-attestation online through their UI Online account or to send in a paper form through the mail.

After these Phase One and Phase Two payments of the \$300/week are made, EDD will distribute the two additional weeks of LWA payments recently approved by the federal government.

More information will be coming about when to expect these additional two weeks of LWA benefits. California is currently applying for a 6th week of LWA payments for claimants contingent upon the availability of federal funds. If this is approved, more information will also be provided about when to expect such payments.

### **New bi-weekly certification question for PUA claimants**

The EDD just launched a new revised bi-weekly certification for claimants collecting Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. Per a requirement of the U.S. Department of Labor under the federal CARES Act of 2020, PUA claimants must attest each week they collect benefits to being fully or partially unemployed as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this requirement, PUA claimants will now see a new question on their certification through their UI Online account and on a paper certification, if the claimant elects paper certification. If claimants do not select that they are impacted by one of the federal COVID-19 reasons presented, they will not be paid PUA benefits for that week.

Additionally, if someone is receiving PUA benefits by a paper check, the check will no longer be attached to the newly revised paper certification form. The check will come in a separate envelope.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is one of the [federal CARES Act programs](#) that helps unemployed Californians who are not eligible for regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. This includes business owners, self-employed workers, independent contractors, and those with a limited work history who are out of business or have significantly reduced their services as a direct result of the pandemic. PUA benefits are available through December 26, 2020.

### **Preventing unemployment benefit fraud**

The EDD is aggressively fighting fraud in the wake of unscrupulous attacks on the unemployment program here in California and across the country.

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These perpetrators are often using stolen identity information from national and global data breaches, as well as exploiting expedited payment efforts in the federal PUA program. Claims identified as suspected fraud have been suspended or closed while EDD investigators partner with local, state, and federal law enforcement to expose and prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law.

Customers should be aware of two other actions taken in the face of such fraud:

- **No Automatic Backdating of PUA Claims**

The EDD is no longer automatically backdating new PUA claims in order to stop perpetrators from targeting earlier months when federal stimulus payments were available. Legitimate PUA claimants who believe their claim should be backdated are encouraged to contact the department in one of two ways:

- Submit an online inquiry through [AskEDD](#). Select Unemployment Insurance, the “Claims Questions” sub-category, and then the topic, “Backdate the Effective Date of my Claim Due to COVID-19”.
- Speak to a representative by calling one of the two EDD UI Call Centers at 1-833- 978-2511 or other numbers listed on our [Contact EDD](#) page.

- **Limiting Multiple Claims at Same Addresses**

While there are legitimate reasons for several workers using a single address, the EDD has shut down multiple claim situations following key identified patterns. These situations are believed to be fraud and scammers will often try to intercept, redirect, or gather mail associated with these claims. The EDD warns Californians that the department will not send representatives to your home and encourages you to help the department combat fraud by reporting it and taking one of these actions with any mail you may receive that does not pertain to you:

- Send any fraudulent documents or mail directly to EDD investigators through EDD PO Box 826880, MIC 43, Sacramento, CA 94280-0225.
- Or you can write “Return to Sender” on the envelope and provide it to your mail carrier. Envelopes that may contain debit cards that have yet to be activated can also be returned to sender. The cards are sent on behalf of the Bank of America from an address in Tennessee.

The EDD greatly appreciates the partnership of the public in fighting fraud and protecting the UI program for California workers in need. You can learn more about fraud and how to report suspicious activity on the [Fraud and Penalties: What you Need to Know page](#) of the EDD website.

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