

N E W S R E L E A S E

Contact: Loree Levy  
Aubrey Henry  
916-654-9029

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## **\$105 billion in unemployment benefits paid to pandemic impacted workers**

### ***New developments to reduce backlog, assist callers, and fight identity fraud***

**Sacramento** – After more than seven months of historic pandemic impact on California’s workers, families, and communities, unemployment benefits providing some wage replacement relief now total \$105 billion paid since March. The benefits stem from a total of 15.2 million claims that have been processed by the state Employment Development Department (EDD) – about four times the number of claims processed in the worst year of the Great Recession (3.8 million in 2010).

In addition to the latest UI claims data available in the [online newsroom](#) as well as the dashboard further below, the EDD reports continuing progress on driving down the backlog of claimants awaiting resolution. The latest data posted on the EDD’s [facts and stats/dashboard webpage](#) illustrates progress made since September 19 and the onset of a two-week reset period in the UI program:

- The backlog has declined 44% for Initial Claims that take more than 21 days to issue first payment or disqualification – dropping from 593,087 to 331,492 claims in backlog.
- The backlog has declined 26% for Continued Claims for those who have received at least one payment and are waiting more than 21 days for further payment or disqualification – dropping from 1,051,521 to 773,928 claims in backlog.

### **New enhancements to UI Call Center operation**

Workers seeking assistance with their unemployment claims will benefit from new enhancements to EDD’s UI Call Center operation launching tomorrow morning. This phase of a major modernization project moves all call center agents to one virtual platform, eliminating the confusion about what call center line provides what service. A call to any of the three current UI call center numbers between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., seven days a week, will be routed to the new collective call center. This includes calls in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese languages, along with the TTY service. Other benefits include:

- Based on the reason for the call that the claimant selects, the call will be directed to a specific representative with the most applicable skill set to assist.
- Self-service options will still be available for callers that seek payment details, tax form information, or to certify for benefits via Tele-Cert.
- The new call center platform also supports a tele-work environment, allowing EDD to quickly adapt with available agents based on current demand.

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These changes will increase the EDD's ability to serve Californians during this unprecedented pandemic, as the department continues to also bring new staff online after training.

### **New online access for Work Sharing program**

The EDD's separate Work Sharing program, which is designed to provide a temporary alternative to layoffs, is now available online for new workers seeking work sharing benefits. Up until now, prior enhancements did provide an online option for employers to request a Work Sharing plan, but employees at the workplace still had to complete a paper certification form to confirm eligibility for payment every two weeks.

That leads to a heavy manual workload that can delay payments. The new enhancements make the program more accessible and more efficient. Work Sharing helps employers and employees avoid a layoff situation. When an employer faces a temporary setback and must cut back hours and wages, employees can collect some unemployment benefits to help fill in the gap. That spares employees the hardship of full unemployment, while assisting employers in retaining their employees - sparing employers the expense of recruiting, hiring and training new employees when business picks back up. Visit the [Work Sharing program webpage](#) to learn more about the program and how it operates.

### **Anti-fraud efforts and developments**

The EDD continues to partner with investigators, law enforcement, and the Bank of America in fighting identity fraud prevalent in the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program across the country. EDD currently knows of 350,000 debit cards that have been frozen due to various fraud indicators, including a high number of claims at a single address. The Department's top priority is to quickly verify the identity of any claimants in this group that may have been impacted by scammer attacks, while we work to shut down the potentially fraudulent claims.

Impacted claimants are advised to take the following action as quickly as possible:

- Claimants who receive an email, text message, or mailed notice from EDD requesting them to provide identity verification documents should visit EDD's website to login or register for a UI Online account and upload the documents through the Document Upload feature. The EDD has implemented various methods to help expedite the verification process. Payments will be re-established for claimants verified to be legitimate and accounting will be done to clear them from any connection to a possible fraudulent claim initiated in their name or involving their address.

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- For claimants who receive an email, text message, or mailed notice and need assistance in providing the identity documents, a new [AskEDD](#) dropdown menu has been implemented for them to provide contact information following these steps:
  - Select the category “Unemployment Insurance Benefits”
  - Select the sub-category of “Payments”
  - Select the topic “Frozen EDD Debit Card” and press Continue to provide contact and claim information.
- For claimants who can’t access funds on their EDD Debit Card and **have not received any messages from the EDD**, it’s likely that Bank of America has frozen the card because of a suspected transaction, and EDD does not need to verify their identity. In these cases, claimants are advised to contact B of A at the number on the back of their card (1.866.692.9374). The EDD does not remove funds from a card and has no access to the transactions on the card for privacy reasons.

For those who don’t respond to the EDD’s communications or don’t pass verification checks, notices of disqualification and appeal rights will be sent as part of the claim shut down process. The EDD continues to ask the public to be on the look-out for any mail that may not belong to you, mark it return to sender, and hand it to your mail carrier if possible. 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.

At the same time, EDD investigators are busy working with national, state, and local partners to expose, identify, and prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law. Among the more than 40 arrests made for fraud since August, a rapper who boasted in a music video about committing unemployment benefits fraud is in custody in Los Angeles. As noted in this [news release](#) from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the individual faces federal charges for exploiting the PUA provisions of the federal CARES Act using stolen identities. If convicted on the felony offenses, he faces a maximum sentence of 22 years in federal prison.

### **Updated UI Data Dashboard on claim activity**

**NOTE:** The EDD has resumed the reporting of actual unemployment claim activity following the two-week reset period on new claims. The Total Claims Processed category reflects the actual claim counts for the week ending October 17. Reporting amendments have been made to the prior week ending reports of 9/26/20, 10/3/20, and 10/10/20. Prior totals for these three weeks were revised downward slightly from the weekly estimated average of 326,000 in regular UI and PUA claims. The Total Claims Processed row has been updated to include these revisions in initial claim counts.

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<b>Unemployment Insurance (UI) - Data Dashboard</b>				
		<b>Current Week</b>	<b>Prior Weeks</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<b>October 17, 2020</b>	<b>WE 3/7 -10/10/20</b>	<b>WE 3/7 -10/17/20</b>
<b>Total Applications Submitted**</b> <i>(Approx. UI Online applications received from unemployed workers)<sup>1</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	25,011	5,702,518	5,727,529
	<b>PUA</b>	14,976	4,355,981	4,370,957
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	139,169	1,506,055	1,645,224
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	8,475	156,776	165,251
	<b>Total</b>	<b>187,631</b>	<b>11,721,330</b>	<b>11,908,961</b>
<b>Total Claims Processed**</b> <i>(Approx. applications processed by the EDD including reopened claims)<sup>4</sup></i>	<b>Reg. UI</b>	158,877	9,466,613	9,625,490
	<b>PUA</b>	25,168	3,682,696	3,707,864
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	153,544	1,612,092	1,765,636
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	9,057	122,642	131,699
	<b>Total</b>	<b>346,646</b>	<b>14,884,043</b>	<b>15,230,689</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>	\$1.1 billion	\$54.2 billion	\$55.3 billion
	<b>PUA</b>	\$923 million	\$36.5 billion	\$37.4 billion
	<b>PEUC<sup>2</sup></b>	\$376 million	\$4.1 billion	\$4.4 billion
	<b>FED-ED<sup>3</sup></b>	\$37.6 million	\$454 million	\$492 million
	<b>LWA<sup>10</sup></b>	\$1.1 billion	\$6.0 billion	\$7.1 billion
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3.5 billion</b>	<b>\$101 billion</b>	<b>\$105 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>	3,144,000	3,202,000	
	<b>PUA</b>	1,359,000	1,414,000	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,503,000<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>4,616,000<sup>9</sup></b>	

**\*\*California has resumed the reporting of actual unemployment insurance claim activity. The Total Claims Processed reflects the actual claim counts for the week ending 10/17/2020. Reporting amendments have been made to the prior week ending reports of 9/26/20, 10/3/20, and 10/10/20. The Total Claims Processed row has been updated to include these initial claim counts.**

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 October 10, 2020, (PEUC) total weeks claimed was 854,119.
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 3/7- 10/17/20 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 September 26th and week-ending October 17th, 2020.
9. Four-week rolling total between week-ending September 19th and week-ending October 10th, 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.

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