



Pandemic Unemployment Insurance

NYIC Explainer (Updated April 7, 2020)

As a part of the federal relief package passed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress greatly expanded Unemployment Insurance (UI). Many immigrant workers WILL be eligible for this special pandemic Unemployment Insurance. Here's what you need to know.

If you have valid work authorization and are unemployed or underemployed that is related to COVID-19 you should apply for Unemployment Insurance or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance with the [NYS Department of Labor](#).

On March 27, 2020, Congress made three main expansions to Unemployment Insurance as it relates to COVID-19:

- **Expanded eligibility for UI benefits** to include self-employed workers, independent contractors, freelancers, workers seeking part-time work, and workers who do not have long-enough work history to qualify for regular UI benefits through Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) until the end of 2020.
- **Increased weekly check amounts** through the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC) which increases weekly UI payouts by \$600 through July 31, 2020. New Yorkers can estimate their weekly benefit on the NYS DOL [website](#). Anyone receiving regular UI or PUA will automatically receive the additional \$600 weekly benefit.
- **Extended maximum amount of time a person can claim UI by 13 weeks** (New Yorkers can now claim UI up to 39 weeks) through the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) until the end of 2020. Anyone already receiving regular UI or PUA is automatically eligible to receive benefits for the additional 13 weeks.

In order to qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, your unemployment must be related to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- You are infected with Covid-19,
- you are under doctor's orders to self quarantine,
- someone in your household has Covid-19,
- you felt you had to quit because of Covid-19 risk,
- you're employer let you go or reduced your hours because of Covid-19, or

- your employer has temporarily shut down or you are furloughed (temporarily not working) with reduced or no pay.

Many immigrants are eligible for regular and pandemic Unemployment Insurance.

Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants are not eligible for UI under State law.

In order to receive UI, *you must have valid work-authorization* at the time you file for the benefits and for the entire time you are receiving the benefits. This means that green card holders, DACA and TPS recipients, and most other visa holders who have valid work authorization *are eligible* to receive regular and pandemic UI benefits.

If you are on a nonimmigrant visa with valid work authorization tied to a specific employer (e.g. H-2A, H-1B, F1, etc...), you *might* qualify for UI. If you are still employed by the employer and can't work or your hours are reduced because of COVID-19, then you may be eligible to collect UI. As we wait for clarity from the NY Department of Labor on exactly who is eligible, we *encourage anyone who is unemployed or partially unemployed due to COVID-19 and has valid work authorization to file a claim.*

Other things to know about Unemployment Insurance during the pandemic:

- If your regular UI ran out between July 1, 2019 and now, you are eligible to receive an additional 13 weeks of UI, including the additional \$600 per week.
- New York State has temporarily waived its seven day waiting period.
- If you are not eligible for regular UI, but may be eligible for PUA, you must submit a claim for regular UI. Once you are denied regular UI, you can then apply for PUA.
- Find out more from the [NYS Department of Labor CARES Act eligibility website](#).

How to file for Unemployment Insurance

The easiest way to file is online through the [NYS Dept of Labor website](#) (must use Internet Explorer, Edge or Netscape internet browsers--the site is *not* compatible with Firefox or Chrome). *Language assistance is available if you file by phone, the online application is only available in English and Spanish.*

You can also apply over the phone by calling 1-888-209-8124. Hours:

- Monday through Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.
- Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday: 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

The day you should apply is based on the first letter of your last name (If you miss your day, file on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday):

- A - F file on Monday
- G - N file on Tuesday
- O - Z file on Wednesday

Remember, you must certify you are unemployed *every week* to continue receiving benefits. **If you can't get through on the website or the phone keep trying.** A large number of New Yorkers are trying to submit claims at this time and this is causing significant delays.