

**Our dashboard is updated weekly, on Thursday, in conjunction with the weekly UI numbers. The full dashboard can be found [here](#). Here are some highlights:**

- \$9.51B to 996,048 individuals (76% of total applicants)
- 70.3% Paid within 1 week (between March 8 and August 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Average time to resolve claims – 4 weeks
- Total claimants not currently receiving payment and need resolution by ESD – 24,351 (1.86% of total applicants)

#### Weekly Unemployment Numbers

Thursday, we announced our weekly unemployment numbers. You can find the full press release [here](#). Highlights include:

- During the week of August 2 through August 8, there were 22,140 initial regular unemployment claims (down 11.4% from the prior week)
- 571,410 total claims were filed for all unemployment benefit categories (down 13.0% from the prior week)
- ESD paid out over \$273.8 million for 391,025 individual claims – a decrease of \$301.3 million and 53,583 less individuals compared to the prior week

Since the week ending March 7 when COVID-19 job losses began:

- A total of 2,338,445 initial claims have been filed during the pandemic (1,475,571 regular unemployment insurance, 461,251 PUA and 401,251 PEUC)
- A total of 1,295,080 distinct individuals have filed for unemployment benefits

#### Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program

On August 8, the President issued a memorandum authorizing a "Lost Wages Assistance Program." The complete memo can be found [here](#).

While we received formal guidance from DOL and FEMA, there are many questions remaining. We are still assessing our participation and have assembled a team to review and plan for potential implementation, should Washington decide to implement.

Based on current information the main points include:

- This memo directs FEMA to fund up to \$44B of financial assistance for a new program, administered by states, for eligible claimants who have lost employment as a result of the pandemic.
- It provides for a maximum additional payment of \$400 per week, with \$300 coming from federal contribution (FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund). The remaining \$100 would come from states and be paid from existing sources of funds, such as state funds or the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF).
- Trust fund monies cannot be used. Any funding from the states must come from CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) or other state funds.
- Although this appears to replace the previous Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program (FPUC) and appears to be a simple flat amount, **it is not**. This

memorandum, in fact, creates a new benefit program. With FPUC, any recipient of unemployment compensation received the additional \$600. To receive the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) funds, a claimant must self-certify that they have lost employment as a result of the pandemic. While this is a prerequisite for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) recipients, it is not for UI claimants. And, while there are probably many UI claimants who could attest to that, we cannot make that assumption. The guidance will require us to include a step in the UI application for this self-certification.

- Unlike UI, funds for this FEMA program are finite. If all jurisdictions were to participate, given national unemployment claims, it is expected the LWA would provide approximately 5 to 6 weeks of benefits.
- Once the federal funding is depleted, states are encouraged, but not required to continue payment of the \$300 federal portion of the benefits.
- Seven states have applied, but, as of today, a vast majority of states have not announced a decision to participate yet. [Here is the AP News story](#) about the program.
- FEMA has a 30-day application window and states must apply no later than Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>.
- We just learned that states whose applications have been approved will receive, at a minimum, three weeks' worth of benefits
- The federal funding will be available until one of the following occurs:
  - FEMA expends the \$44 billion
  - FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) balance reaches a floor of \$25B (this is the fund into which anything declared as a disaster taps)
  - Congress enacts a similar unemployment benefit program
  - We reach 12/27/2020

### **Tips and Tricks – and the new PUA weekly claim questions**

Below are tips and tricks to share that address some of the top issues or questions we're seeing from our customers. These include tips for the new PUA weekly claim questions, which are required by the US Department of Labor. We sent information to legislative staff prior to the new questions launching, but in a nutshell:

- The US DOL is requiring that we certify each week that someone is eligible for PUA benefits.
- To meet these requirements, we have added **new questions** to the weekly claim (that are the same as the questions we initially ask when they apply for PUA).
- These questions must be answered honestly to confirm they are unemployed, partially unemployed, unable to work, or unavailable to work for approved COVID-19 reasons.
- Answering "No" to all the questions will make someone ineligible for PUA benefits that week.

### **Weekly claims**

- **The most important thing to remember is to submit a weekly claim every week, even if you have not yet been approved for benefits.** Submitting weekly claims is how you get paid – and submitting them while you are waiting for your application to be processed will mean your payments come faster if/when you are approved.
- **Top tips on the new PUA weekly claim questions:**
  - Check out [the updated guide to pandemic unemployment benefits](#). This guide is full of great tips and information for first time filers and those submitting weekly claims.
  - On the new PUA weekly claim questions, you **can** answer "Yes" to the first question if your place of employment closed permanently, partly or temporarily, and you were laid off or had your hours reduced because your employer had to comply with social distancing requirements or with a COVID-19 emergency declaration. *For example: Your hours were reduced because you work as a waiter in a county that required restaurants to limit the number of customers, reducing the need for waiters.*
  - You **cannot** answer "Yes" to the first question if your place of employment closed permanently, partly or temporarily, and you were laid off or had your hours reduced due to a **business slow-down** (even if the decrease in business can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic). *For example: You work in a grocery store that closed or laid off workers because store traffic decreased substantially. If you're not sure why your employer closed permanently, partly or temporarily, please ask your employer.*
- **You may select "No" to the question about job search until this requirement is reinstated, no sooner than Sept. 1, 2020.** If you have been looking for work and wish to report it, you can answer "Yes" but it is very important to report all three job search activities or it will likely delay your weekly payment. Go to our website [for more information on the job search requirement](#).

### **Self-employed individuals and independent contractors**

1. Be sure to submit your 2019 earnings information to receive your full benefit amount (we'll pay you the minimum until you submit your earnings from 2019).
  - **Detailed instructions are found on pages 22-25 in [the guide to pandemic unemployment benefits](#).**

### **Not eligible for regular unemployment benefits and unemployed due to COVID-19**

1. **Be sure to submit your application for PUA if you were denied regular unemployment.**
  - Click the "Apply for a COVID-19 PUA Claim" link in the Alerts section of your eServices homepage.
  - Be sure to read [the guide to pandemic unemployment benefits](#) before applying to learn more and avoid common issues that cause delays.