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## Common Questions and Answers for Workers Unemployment Insurance & the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

### **Q: How do I file an initial claim for unemployment benefits?**

A: You have options. Visit [www.ARunemployment.com](http://www.ARunemployment.com) for more information!

1. Click here [www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov](http://www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov) to file your initial claim for benefits.
2. Call the UI Claims Processing Hotline at **1-844-908-2178**.
3. **While in-person visits are not recommended due to the COVID-19 pandemic**, you may pick up a paper form at your Arkansas Workforce Center office.

### **Q: How do I file a weekly claim for unemployment benefits?**

A: You will need to claim your benefits every week to receive payments. Keep the confirmation page from your completed initial claim application. There are two ways to claim your benefits each week:

1. ArkNet - Click here [www.arknet.arkansas.gov](http://www.arknet.arkansas.gov) to file your weekly claim online.
2. ArkLine - Call **501-907-2590** to file by phone.

### **Q: How much will I receive in weekly benefits?**

A: Generally, an individual will receive a weekly benefit amount ranging from \$81 to \$451 each week. This will be determined by the average of all wages in a worker's base period. Once a claim is filed, monetary eligibility will be established through the claim filing process. Generally, this information will not be known until that time.

### **Q: How many weeks of benefits may I receive?**

A: Arkansans may receive unemployment insurance benefits for 16 weeks.

### **Q: The business where I work has temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Can I file a claim for unemployment insurance benefits?**

A: Yes. Learn more at [www.ARunemployment.com](http://www.ARunemployment.com).

### **Q: If an employer sends a person home on furlough until further notice, are they eligible under state or federal programs?**

A: If otherwise eligible, furloughed individuals would be entitled to receive their full weekly benefit amount.

### **Q: I work at a local church. Am I eligible for benefits?**

A: Religious organizations are exempt from paying into the unemployment insurance program and, as a result, their employees are not covered under the unemployment insurance program. However, if those employees have wages from working for other employers that are covered, (if they had a part-time job, previous employer, etc.) then they may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

**Q: I filed a claim for regular unemployment but cannot receive benefits because I have do not have a long enough work history or I only worked for a religious organization, is there any other program that I might be eligible for?**

A: Yes. Individuals who are not eligible because of an insufficient work history or who only worked for an exempt religious institution may apply for benefits through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. Qualified benefit payments will be retroactive. Click [here](#) to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance or visit ARunemployment.com.

**Q: Workers being impacted by COVID-19 who cannot qualify for UI or are under a disqualification:**

A: Claimants who are under a disqualification from receiving unemployment insurance benefits must satisfy any disqualification prior to receiving unemployment insurance benefits through the regular state unemployment insurance program. However, you may be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Click [here](#) to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance or visit ARunemployment.com.

**Q: I am self-employed (electrician, plumber, construction, etc.) Can I still file a claim for unemployment insurance benefits?**

A: This is the first time that unemployment benefits are being made available for self-employed workers and independent contractors. Self-employed workers and independent contractors will be required to apply in the new system. Qualified benefit payments will be retroactive. Click [here](#) to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance or visit ARunemployment.com.

**Q: My employer is still open for business but I am not able to work at this time because I am in quarantine or am providing care for someone as a result of COVID-19, can I file for unemployment benefits?**

A: Yes, once you have received a separation notice from your employer an affected worker may file for unemployment insurance benefits due to COVID-19 related quarantine. DWS will have to investigate the reasons for your temporary separation and determine whether or not you are eligible. This investigation may result in a slight delay in receiving benefits.

**Q: The CARES Act provides for an additional \$600 to be paid in addition to my regular unemployment insurance benefits, when will I receive this money?**

A: If you qualify for regular state or federal unemployment benefits, the additional \$600 per week will be added to your weekly claim benefit. You do not need to call or complete a different application.

**Q: Do I need to apply separately for the PFUC program in order to receive the additional \$600?**

A: No, there is no separate application process. These payments will be issued simultaneously with your weekly unemployment insurance benefits.

**Q: I received all my regular unemployment insurance benefits, are there any extensions?**

A: The CARES Act creates the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program to provide additional unemployment insurance benefits to individuals who have exhausted their unemployment insurance claims. The PEUC program will provide an additional 13 weeks of benefits for individuals who have exhausted their regular unemployment insurance claims. To apply for PEUC, visit an Arkansas Workforce Center near you. Click [here](#) for a list of Centers.

**Q: Do I need to apply separately for the PFUC program in order to receive the additional \$600 along with my PEUC payments?**

A: No, there is no separate application process. These payments will be issued at the simultaneously with your weekly unemployment insurance benefits paid through the PEUC program. Please note, the FPUC program expires on July 31, 2020.

**Q: I received all of my benefits under the PEUC program, are there any extensions?**

A: It is possible that you will qualify for an extended benefit claim through the regular unemployment insurance program. The EB program began with the week ending June 6 and will continue for at least 13 weeks. The program is different from the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program that began in April 2020. Generally, individuals must exhaust all of their regular unemployment insurance benefits and then exhaust their Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation benefits claim based on an unemployment claim filed on or after July 1, 2019 during the extended benefit period in order to be eligible for the extended benefits. Individuals who do not qualify for Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation benefits will not qualify for extended benefits.

**Q: Do I need to apply separately for the PFUC program in order to receive the additional \$600 along with my PEUC, PUA or EB payments?**

A: No, there is no separate application process. These payments will be issued at the simultaneously with your weekly unemployment insurance benefits paid through the PEUC, PUA and EB programs.

**Q: How will I know what my weekly benefit amount and maximum benefit amounts are?**

A: A Notice of Monetary Determination will be mailed to the address on file. This reflects your weekly benefit amount and maximum benefit amount. It is important to review this document and report any discrepancies to DWS as promptly as possible.

**Q: How do I set up a PIN on my account?**

A: You will set up a PIN the first time you access [ArkNet](#) or [ArkLine \(501-907-2590\)](#). You can call ArkLine and follow the voice prompts or you can follow the instructions on the ArkNet homepage. Pay careful attention to these instructions. The instructions for setting your PIN are also on the confirmation page from your completed initial claim and your Benefit Rights Information sheet.

If you had a previous benefit year, your PIN will be cleared and will need to be reset for this benefit year. Please wait 2 business days to attempt to set your PIN. If you have problems with your PIN, please send an email to [ADWS.UI.Technical.Services@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWS.UI.Technical.Services@arkansas.gov) to have your PIN reset.

**Q: I filed my initial claim for unemployment benefits. What do I do next?**

A: You will need to file weekly claims to receive benefits, either by ArkNet or ArkLine. You will need to begin filing your weekly claims on the Sunday following the day that you filed your initial claim for unemployment benefits.

1. To file your claim using ArkNet, go to [www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov](http://www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov). Follow the prompts and enter your answers for the questions that pertain to the dates outlined.
2. To file your claim using ArkLine, call **501-907-2590**. ArkLine is available for use, Sunday 12:01 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. Follow the prompts and enter your answers for the questions that pertain to the dates indicated.

***Remember to file your claim each week that you are unemployed to claim benefits!***

**Q: Will I need to search for work after filing my claim for unemployment benefits?**

A: Yes. Work search requirements have been reinstated beginning June 28, 2020. All individuals receiving regular unemployment insurance, PEUC, EB and PUA benefits will be required to seek employment each week in order to maintain eligibility for benefits.

**Q: My employer has recalled me to work. Do I have to return to work?**

A: In most cases, an employee that has been directed to return to work by their employer must return to work or risk being disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits. The failure to return to work must be reported when filing your weekly claim.

**Q: How many job contacts must I make each week in order to remain eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits, PEUC and PUA benefits?**

A: The number of contacts required is based on geographic location. Individuals receiving regular unemployment benefits or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) who live in larger metropolitan areas must make three (3) contacts a week. The larger metropolitan statistical areas include Benton, Cleveland, Craighead, Crittenden, Faulkner, Garland, Grant, Jefferson, Lincoln, Lonoke, Madison, Miller, Perry, Poinsett, Pulaski, Saline, Sebastian, and Washington counties. Individuals residing in rural areas must make two (2) job contacts each week.

**Q: Are the work search requirements different for individuals who are receiving extended benefits through the state unemployment insurance program?**

A: Yes. Individuals who are receiving EB benefits must make a sustained and systemic work search effort. This work search effort requires that additional job search contacts be made, be written on the weekly claim form and returned to the local office in order for benefits to be paid. Those claiming Extended Benefits will have enhanced work search requirements and must provide a written log of job contacts each week in order to receive benefits. Individuals receiving EB who live in larger metropolitan statistical areas (as listed above) must make four (4) job contacts a week while those in rural areas must make three (3).

**Q: I've claimed my first week of unemployment. How long will I have to wait to receive my benefits?**

A: Since the valid waiting period requirement has been waived, most individuals will receive their unemployment insurance benefits within 5-7 business days of filing their **weekly claim**.

1. If your claim requires adjudication, it will require investigation and a written determination will be issued to you regarding your eligibility for unemployment benefits.
2. If you have out of state wages, there may be a slight delay in receiving benefits if you file a combined wage claim, which is where you combine your wages from all states.
3. There may also be a slight delay for those whose claim is based on federal wages.

**Q: What types of income do I need to report when filing my weekly claims?**

A: Gross earnings (before any deductions) for all work performed for the week being claimed must be reported when filing your weekly claim for benefits. Also:

1. Report gross income earned by participating in military drill during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
2. Report gross Holiday Pay if you were off work for a holiday during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
3. Report gross Vacation Pay if you were off work on vacation during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.

*(cont'd on next page)*

4. Report gross Sick Pay if you were off work on sick leave during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
5. Report Paid Time Off (PTO) if you were off work on PTO during the week being claimed – whether you have received the PTO pay or not.
6. Report gross Bonus Pay for any bonus payment received during the week being claimed.

*Also report any receipt of retirement pay or separation pay to your local office – as this may affect your eligibility for unemployment benefits.*

**Q: I am working while filing a partial claim for unemployment insurance benefits based on reduced work. Why am I receiving a message that I cannot receive benefits because my earnings are excessive?**

**A:** Individuals who are working while receiving unemployment insurance benefits must report all work and wages earned during the week. Generally, individuals may earn up to 40% of their weekly benefit amount without it impacting their unemployment insurance claim. After earning 140% of an individual's weekly benefit amount, benefits are reduced to zero for the week.

**Q: How will I receive my unemployment benefits?**

**A:** Benefits are issued by direct deposit or by debit card. You may select your preference.

- UI debit cards are issued to anyone who does not elect to receive benefits via direct deposit. These cards must be issued by a bank and mailed to you. Benefits will be deposited into your card account based upon your current eligibility and the weekly information you certify when you file your weekly claim. UI debit cards are convenient and easy and may be used wherever Visa is accepted.
- Direct deposit requires you to have a personal checking or savings account. To select direct deposit, you must enter your account and routing numbers after logging into your account on [www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov](http://www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov). **ADWS CAN NOT ENTER YOUR BANKING INFORMATION.** You can change your bank information any time. Just access the "Change Your Payment Option" section on ArkNet. Benefits will be deposited into your account when due, based upon your current eligibility and the weekly information you certify. Payment via direct deposit takes about 2-3 days from the date the payment is processed. For more information on direct deposit, [click here](#).

**Q: I want to sign up for direct deposit, can you enter my banking information for me?**

**A:** No. To register for Direct Deposit, you must enter your account and routing numbers after logging into your account on [www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov](http://www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov). No DWS employee may receive your banking information to register you for direct deposit.

**Q: I have questions regarding my unemployment insurance claim, must I contact my local office to obtain more information?**

**A:** It depends. Answers to the most common unemployment insurance questions may be found at [www.DWS.arkansas.gov](http://www.DWS.arkansas.gov) or [www.ARunemployment.com](http://www.ARunemployment.com). The full [informational handbook for claimants](#) is also available on our website. If you are unable to find an answer to your question, you may call your local Arkansas Workforce Center office or the UI Hotline **1-844-908-2178** and select Option 1.

**Q: I have a pending appeal, what is the status of my appeal?**

**A:** We do not have access to the Board of Review or the Appeal Tribunal's docketing system. You may contact the Board of Review at 501.683.4300 or the Arkansas Appeal Tribunal at 501-682-1063.