

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 for more information!

1. Click here www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov to file your initial claim for benefits. EZARC is open Monday – Friday, 6:00AM - 6:00PM, Sunday, 7:00AM – 6:00PM.
2. If you are unable to access the online application, go to <https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/unemployment/ui-claimant-forms/> and print off the DWS-ARK-501 Application for Unemployment Benefits form. You may drop off a paper form at your Arkansas Workforce Center office.
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:

- A. ArkNet - Click here www.arknet.arkansas.gov to file your weekly claim online.
- B. 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 regular unemployment insurance benefits for 16 weeks. Additional weeks may be available through new federal programs. Click [here](#) to view the 2021 Guide to Unemployment Programs. Find more information at www.ARunemployment.com.

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

A. Yes. Learn more at 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 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 to December 1, 2020 only. Click [here](#) to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) or visit www.ARUnemployment.com.

Q. Can Workers being impacted by COVID-19 who cannot qualify for UI or are under a disqualification be eligible for unemployment insurance?

- 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 (PUA) or visit www.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 PUA system. Qualified benefit payments will be retroactive to December 1, 2020 only. Click [here](#) to apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) or visit www.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 federal legislation provides for an additional \$300 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 \$300 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 FPUC program in order to receive the additional \$300?

- 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, and extended through the Continued Assistance Act, created the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program to provide additional unemployment insurance benefits to individuals who have exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits. The PEUC program will provide additional weeks of benefits through week ending March 13, 2021 for individuals who have exhausted their regular unemployment insurance and 13 weeks of PEUC benefits. To apply or extend PEUC, complete the 501 PEUC paper form found at <https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/unemployment/ui-claimant-forms/> and pick up a form and drop off at the Arkansas Workforce Center near you. [Click here](#) for a list of Centers.

Q. Do I need to apply separately for the FPUC program in order to receive the additional \$300 along with my PEUC payments?

- A. No, there is no separate application process. These payments will be issued at the same time as your weekly unemployment insurance benefits paid through the PEUC program.

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 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. 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. 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 and your employer must report your failure to return to work.

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, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), or PUA 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. I've claimed my first week of unemployment. How long will I have to wait to receive my benefits?

- A. Eligible individuals will receive their unemployment insurance benefits after the waiting week has been completed; within 2-7 business days of filing a 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.
 4. There may also be a slight delay for benefits issued to a debit card rather than direct deposit.

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.
 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. 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.

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. 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 or 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.

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.