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ARKANSAS LAUNCHES PUA UNEMPLOYMENT WEBSITE

The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (“PUA”) program enacted in the CARES Act provides unemployment benefits for self-employed individuals and independent contractors who are not ordinarily eligible. The Division of Workforce Services has launched a portal to begin processing these claims. The application is available [here](#).

Individuals can self-certify their eligibility and provide proof of income for PUA through [this website](#). The website will be available for applications daily between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The application is estimated to take 20-25 minutes. You will be required to upload documents to support proof of earnings from the last year. Until the proof of earnings documents are received, the minimum benefit will be applied. Documents may be uploaded online, submitted via fax, email, or mail.

Eligible individuals will receive:

- Minimum payment of \$133 per week.
- Maximum payment of \$451 per week.
- Up to 39 weeks of benefits.
- First week payable—no waiting period.
- Retroactive to **February 2, 2020**, or the first week the individual is out of work due to COVID-19, whichever is later.
- Last payable week is week ending December 26, 2020.
- Individuals receiving PUA will also be eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) of an additional \$600 per week for the week ending April 4, 2020 through the week ending July 25, 2020. Note that this payment is on top of the minimum and maximum payments listed above.

Eligible Individuals include those who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance and cannot work because they:

- Are diagnosed with COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms and are seeking diagnosis;
- Have a member of the household who is diagnosed with COVID-19;
- Are providing care for a family or household member diagnosed with COVID-19;
- Are the primary caregiver for a child whose school or daycare closed, due to COVID-19;
- Are unable to reach their place of employment due to an imposed quarantine, or because advised by medical provider to self-quarantine due to COVID-19;
- Became the major breadwinner because the head of household died from COVID-19;
- Quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Had their place of employment closed as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Were scheduled to start new employment and cannot reach the workplace as direct result of COVID-19; or
- Are a Gig worker who had wages before and during the pandemic that were diminished as a result of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

Individuals are not eligible if they:

- Have the ability to telework with pay and would still be working substantially the same number of hours and be receiving the same pay;
- Are receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave benefits and those benefits would exceed their weekly amount of PUA; or
- Are eligible for another state or federal unemployment program [including unemployment insurance (UI), Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE), Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Extended Benefits (EB), Short-Time Compensation/Voluntary Shared Work (STC/VSW)], Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), and Training Extension Benefits (TEB).

Commerce Secretary Mike Preston has stated that he anticipates more than 125,000 initial claims, which could cause an initial delay of processing claims. Persons making claims under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program can backdate their claims to as early as February 2, 2020. Secretary Preston has also repeatedly stated that eligible individuals can submit backdated claims to recoup benefits for time they spent out of work, even if they have now returned to work.

For more information on this program, and other COVID-19 related topics, please review our COVID-19 Resources page here: <https://www.gill-law.com/covid-19-resources/#>