

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance: Allowable COVID-19 Eligibility Reasons

To be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), individuals must NOT be eligible for regular unemployment benefits. Additionally, they must meet one of the following COVID-19-related eligibility circumstances:

- The individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or is experiencing symptoms and is seeking medical diagnosis;
- A member of the individual's household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- The individual is providing care for a family member or member of the household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- A child or other person in the household for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility is unable to attend school or another facility is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 emergency, and the school or care is required for the individual to work;
- The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because of a COVID-19 quarantine;
- The individual is unable to reach the place of employment because a healthcare professional has advised him or her to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns;
- The individual was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- The individual has become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- The individual has quit his/her job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- The individual was laid off as a direct result of COVID-19;
- The individual's place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19

In addition, on February 21, 2021, the U.S. Department of Labor issued guidance expanding PUA eligibility to the following three groups:

- Those previously receiving traditional unemployment benefits who refuse to return to work or refuse an offer of work because the workplace is not in compliance with local, state, or national health and safety standards directly related to COVID-19.
- Those who provide services to an educational institution or educational service agency and are fully or partially unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19.
- Those who are laid off or had their work hours reduced as a direct result of COVID-19.

Individuals not eligible for traditional unemployment benefits may be eligible for PUA. This includes those whose earnings in their previous wages averaged less than \$280 per week.

There is no minimum income requirement for PUA. However, the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 requires claimants to submit documentation of prior employment or self-employment for weeks of benefits they claim on or after January 31, 2021. It also requires a heightened level of identity verification at the outset of new claims filed on or after January 26, 2021.