

# Frequently Asked Questions

## COVID 19

Office of Julian Alvarez, Commissioner  
Representing Labor

### **Can I file a claim for unemployment benefits?**

If your employment has been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19), and you are not receiving paid time off from your employer, you may apply for benefits and TWC will investigate why you lost your job and mail a decision explaining whether you are eligible for unemployment benefits.

TWC evaluates your unemployment benefits claim on a case-by-case basis based on you meeting three (3) requirements:

- **Past Wages:** Your past wages are one of the eligibility requirements and the basis of your potential unemployment benefit amounts.
- **Job Separation:** To be eligible for benefits based on your job separation, you must be either unemployed or working reduced hours through no fault of your own. Special considerations on a case-by-case basis are being applied relative to coronavirus depending on the circumstances. You will not be considered unemployed if you are receiving paid time off.
- **Ongoing Eligibility Requirements:** In addition to the past wages and job separation eligibility requirements, there are requirements you must continue to meet to stay eligible and you may find those online under “See Ongoing Eligibility Requirements for Receiving Unemployment Benefits” at <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/ongoing-eligibility-requirements-receiving-unemployment-benefits>

## **Why is my claim for regular unemployment benefits, when I should be receiving disaster benefits?**

If you qualify for regular unemployment benefits, then you will receive regular unemployment benefits. Several additional unemployment programs were available through the CARES Act-PUA, PEUC, and FPUC—but Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation were only available to those who do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits. Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) provided an additional \$600 per week to each week that a claimant is entitled to unemployment compensation. FPUC begins with benefit week ending April 4, 2020 and runs through benefit week ending July 25, 2020. No additional application is necessary for FPUC.

## **Why is my benefit amount so low? Why isn't my self-employment considered?**

Weekly benefit amount is based upon wages paid in employment during your base period. Self-employed and 1099 wages would not be used. Your base period will consist of the first four quarters in the five quarters preceding the quarter in which you file for benefits. For example, if you filed in March of 2020, the base period is October 2018 through the end of September 2019. Wages earned in the last six months, will often not be in your base period. A new base period would be used as of April 5, 2020; the new base period would be all of 2019. If you qualify for regular unemployment benefits, even with low benefit amount, then you will receive regular unemployment benefits. There are several additional unemployment programs that were available in the CARES Act-PUA, PEUC, and FPUC—but Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation were only available to those who did not qualify for regular unemployment benefits.

## Why am I entitled to \$0 in benefits?

Weekly benefit amount is based upon wages paid in employment during your base period. Self-employed and 1099 wages would not be used, but there are also other types of work that may also be excluded including work as a student for a college or university, and work for certain non-profits and for churches. If you received a determination that you are entitled to \$0 in benefits, but you have been working in some capacity, it is possible you could be qualified for backdated Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), but you will need to provide proof of income to increase any benefit amount to which you might be entitled. The instructions for submitting proof of income are provided with the next question. If you received W-2, as you would if worked for church, non-profit, or student employment, then you can submit your W-2 as proof of income.

If you have been in regular employment but did not have enough wages to qualify when you filed, it is possible that you could qualify with a new claim. For example, if you filed in March, the base period is October 2018 through the end of September 2019. If you recently, as in the last six months, received a new job or a promotion, then it will not be in your base period for a March 2020 claim. If you file a claim April 5, 2020, the base period will consist of the four quarters of 2019.

Another reason that claimants have low or \$0 WBA is that they worked in another state. If all of your base period wages are in another state, then you will need file in that state. If some of your wages are in Texas and some are in another state, then you can combine those wages with your Texas claim to qualify for a higher weekly benefit amount. You can read more about the options available if you have wages in more than one state here: <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/if-you-earned-wages-more-one-state>. Complete the [External Contact Request Form](#) to ask about receiving wages from another state. Make sure to include: your name, the last 4 digits of your Social Security number, a phone number where you can be reached, and a brief description of the issue.

Even if you have an insufficient work history because you only recently became employed, you may still qualify for PUA benefits. The first notice regarding eligibility will be for regular unemployment benefits.

## **What do I do if I'm self-employed, an independent contractor, gig worker, or otherwise, not an "employee"?**

Those who are not "employees", which includes self-employed, independent contractors, gig workers and those paid via 1099, may be eligible for funds under Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

All independent contractors/gig workers or 1099 workers who apply for unemployment insurance will need to send in proof of income to increase any benefit amount to which they might be entitled. Below is the information that they would need to provide and where.

Send income tax return and copy of Schedule C, F, and SE to increase your benefit amount to one of the following:

Fax: 512-936-3250 (If you fax proof of income, please keep a copy of the confirmation page.)

Mail: Texas Workforce Commission, P.O. Box 149137, Austin, TX 78714

Email: San Antonio UI Mail [sanantonio.uimail@twc.texas.gov](mailto:sanantonio.uimail@twc.texas.gov).

## **How do I get the additional \$600 per week?**

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) will increase unemployment benefit amounts by \$600. If you qualify for unemployment benefits during a benefit week, then you should get the additional \$600. The \$600 payments began with benefit week ending April 4, 2020 and ended July 25, 2020.

## **Can I file if I haven't been told that I've been laid off?**

You can file a claim for unemployment benefits if you are not working and not earning any wages. If you are currently receiving full paid leave—such as sick time or vacation time—from your employer for your time off, then you are considered employed, and your claim will be considered invalid.

## **What can I do if my hours have been reduced?**

You can also file a claim for unemployment benefits if you are partially unemployed, which means working part-time and receiving less than 125% of your weekly benefit amount. The amount of unemployment benefits that you will receive in a week will be prorated based on your earnings for that benefit week.

## **How do I apply for unemployment benefits?**

You may apply for unemployment benefits or check the status of your claim online at [ui.texasworkforce.org](https://ui.texasworkforce.org) any time 24/7 using [Unemployment Benefits Services](#) and this will allow TWC to more quickly handle your claim needs. Due to high call volumes, everyone who can file online is encouraged to do so. If you do not have internet access then you may call TWC's Tele-Center at 800-939-6631 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time, seven days a week.

**Best Time to Apply Online or Access Unemployment Benefits Services (UBS):** Our Unemployment Benefit System online portal is available 24 hours a day but is experiencing a high volume of visitors. We are seeing lower volume on the online portal between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m. Try back during those hours to apply for benefits, check the status of your claim, or request benefit payment.

# How do I reset my password?

How to Reset Your Unemployment Benefits Password

1. Visit <https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/UBS/security/logon.do>
2. Click "Forgot Password?"
3. Enter your User-ID, First+Last Name.
4. Answer Security Question.
5. Enter your new password+retype it. Click submit.

## COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements

On October 11, 2021, Governor Abbott issued an executive order providing that no entity in Texas can compel receipt of a COVID-19 vaccination by any individual, including an employee or consumer, who objects to such vaccination for any reason of personal conscience, based on a religious belief, or for medical reasons, including prior recovery from COVID-19.

On September 9, 2021, President Biden issued executive orders related to federal employees and contractors. Further, at the President's request, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is soon expected to issue emergency rules requiring any employer with 100 or more employees to either be vaccinated for COVID-19 or produce a negative COVID-19 test at least once per week.

It is unclear at this time how the conflict in these rules will be resolved. This is an area of rapidly changing regulation. TWC is monitoring federal and state announcements, orders, and legislative action and will provide further information when it is available.

## **If you have more questions about unemployment benefits:**

Additional information can be found at <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/unemployment-benefits> and in our [Unemployment Benefits Handbook](#).

If you email for assistance, please include:

- your name
- the last 4 digits of your Social Security number,
- a phone number where you can be reached, and
- a brief description of the issue.

If you are having trouble filing a claim or trouble with a PIN or password, please complete the [Contact Request Intake form](#). You can also find the link to the form on the home page of our website [twc.texas.gov](http://twc.texas.gov).

If you have other questions, please email [laborinfo@twc.texas.gov](mailto:laborinfo@twc.texas.gov).

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