

# **William E. Morris Institute for Justice**

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## **If You Lost Your Job, Were Furloughed or Your Earnings Were Reduced, You May Be Eligible for Unemployment Insurance Benefits**

(Updated on April 29, 2020)

Unemployment insurance (“UI”) is a program that provides money to persons who are unemployed through no fault of their own. The Arizona Department of Economic Security (“DES”) runs the program. We prepared this handout to explain the UI program. This is general information and does not discuss all situations. The facts of your case are important. We will update this handout as more information is available during the COVID-19 crisis.

**In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been many changes to Arizona’s unemployment insurance program.**

- **More persons are eligible** for benefits,
- Persons will receive **more money each week**, and
- Persons will receive benefits for a **longer period of time**.

Even if you applied for UI in the past and were denied, you may be eligible now.

### **Who is eligible for unemployment insurance benefits?**

The UI program gives benefits to persons who lose their job or have a reduction of wages through no fault of their own. Because of the changes in the law, many persons who were not eligible for state UI benefits in Arizona are now eligible. State UI benefits are often referred to as “regular” benefits.

**You may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits under the additional eligibility groups under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) if:**

- You previously did not qualify for state UI benefits because you are self-employed, an independent contractor or freelancer, or work in the gig economy.
- You previously exhausted (got 26 weeks) your state UI benefits.
- You are not eligible for state UI and are partially or fully unemployed or unable to work because of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. There is a long list of who may qualify, including persons who are diagnosed with COVID-19; are taking care of a child or other household member; or their place of employment is closed.
- You do not have sufficient earnings to get state UI benefits.

Because so many more persons now are eligible for UI benefits under the additional eligibility groups, DES encourages you to apply.

### **What if I applied for UI in the past and was denied?**

You should apply right away. You may now be eligible even though you were not eligible in the past. DES is encouraging everyone who may be eligible to apply.

### **How much can I get in unemployment insurance benefits?**

UI benefits are paid weekly. Depending on your earnings, you can get **up to \$240 per week in state benefits.**

You can get an additional **\$600 per week in benefits paid for by the federal government** through July 2020. You do not have to apply separately for the federal benefits.

Both state and federal benefits will be paid by DES.

### **How long can I get unemployment insurance benefits?**

You can get regular state UI benefits for up to 26 weeks. After you receive state benefits for 26 weeks, the federal government will give you an additional 13 weeks of benefits for a total of 39 weeks.

## **Can a DACA recipient (Dreamers) or another person with a work authorization get UI benefits?**

**Yes.** DACA recipients and other immigrants are eligible for UI benefits if they: (1) had a valid work authorization when they earned the wages and (2) have a valid work authorization when they apply for UI benefits.

## **What if I am not eligible for regular state UI benefits?**

DES first will look and see if you are eligible for regular state UI benefits. If you are not eligible for state UI benefits, DES should send you a notice that you are not eligible for state UI benefits. Many persons will get a notice that they are “monetarily ineligible.”

DES also should tell you that DES will review your case to see if you are eligible because of the new eligibility groups under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). Because these are new eligibility groups, DES had to make changes to its computer systems to process these claims. DES will start processing these claims in mid-May. Be sure to keep filing your weekly claims while DES reviews your application.

If DES finds you eligible for the PUA it will give you benefits back to your date of application. After you start receiving UI benefits, be sure to keep filing your weekly claims.

If you are eligible for PUA, you will also get the additional \$600 per week in federal benefits through July 2020.

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

- Online at [www.azui.com](http://www.azui.com) and click the button “Apply for UI Benefits.” You can apply any time between 12:00 am on Sunday through 6:00 pm on Friday.
- By phone at 1-877- 600 -2722.
- A paper application is available in the documents center (UB-105 Arizona Initial Claim for Unemployment Insurance) at [www.azdes.gov](http://www.azdes.gov). The application will tell you where to mail or fax the application.
- DES one-stop centers and employment services centers may remain open. If you want to go a DES office, please call ahead to find out if the office is open and if the office is seeing persons who walk-in.

- If you need a language interpreter or a reasonable accommodation or auxiliary aids and services, call 1-877- 600 -2722.

### **When should I apply for UI benefits?**

You should apply as soon as possible after your last day of work. You cannot start to get UI benefits until you apply. Another change because of the COVID-19 crisis is that once you apply, you can get UI benefits without waiting a week.

### **Do I have to look for work during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**No.** As of March 8, 2020, the requirement to look for work has been suspended because of the COVID-19 crisis. Even though you are not required to look for work during this time, **you must submit a weekly claim for benefits to be able to get UI benefits.**

### **What do I need to do to get UI benefits every week?**

After you apply for UI benefits, you must file a weekly claim with DES. Even if you have not started to get benefits, you must file a weekly claim. After DES finds you eligible, DES will pay you for the previous weeks back to when you filed a claim.

If you are confused about one of the questions in the claim form, hover your mouse over the question mark picture that is next to the question and DES guidance will pop up. DES has tried to provide guidance and examples that will explain the new rules during the COVID-19 crisis. DES will continually update these forms. If you make a mistake on the claim form, you can call 1-877-600-2722 and let DES know.

### **How will I get my UI benefits?**

You can get your benefits by direct deposit or you can get your benefits on an Electronic Payment Card, often called an “EPC.”

### **What if I disagree with DES’ decision on my UI application?**

If you disagree with DES’ decision, you first can ask DES to reconsider its decision. If you still disagree, you can ask for a hearing before an impartial administrative law judge. Your notice will explain your appeal rights.

## **Where can I find more information if I have other questions about unemployment insurance benefits?**

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Unemployment Insurance Benefits homepage: [www.azdes.gov/services/employment/unemployment-individual](http://www.azdes.gov/services/employment/unemployment-individual).

National Employment Law Project website: [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org).

[AZLawHelp.org](http://AZLawHelp.org).

## **What if I need help buying food or medical help?**

There are other programs available to help you through these difficult times. You can apply for Medicaid benefits and food stamps in one application in the following ways:

- Submit an application online at [www.healtharizonaplus.gov](http://www.healtharizonaplus.gov).
- Print an application from the Department of Economic Security's website ([https://des.az.gov/documents-center?cshs\\_field\\_dl\\_category\\_tid\\_forms=175](https://des.az.gov/documents-center?cshs_field_dl_category_tid_forms=175)). Fill it out and fax it to the telephone number on the application or mail it to:

Arizona Department of Economic Security  
Family Assistance Administration  
P.O. Box 19009  
Phoenix, Arizona 85005-9009

- If you need help with the application or have questions, call 1-855-432-7587.
- If you need a language interpreter or a reasonable accommodation or auxiliary aids and services, go online at [www.healtharizonaplus.gov](http://www.healtharizonaplus.gov), or call 1-855-432-7587

**Food banks:** The Arizona Association of Food Banks offers an online directory of food banks at <http://www.azfoodbanks.org/index.php/foodbank/index>. Enter your zip code to locate the nearest emergency food bank near you.

**Free Legal Assistance:** If you have questions about your claim or want someone to represent you, the following programs provide free legal services to eligible persons:

**Community Legal Services** assists persons in Maricopa, Mohave, La Paz, Yuma and Yavapai Counties. You can call 602-258-3434, Monday –Friday, 8 am -3 pm. to apply for services.

**Southern Arizona Legal Aid.** You can apply for services online at:

[www.sazlegalaid.org](http://www.sazlegalaid.org)

To apply for services by telephone, call:

For Pima County & Santa Cruz County, call 520-623-9461

For Pinal County, call 520-316-8076.

For Four Rivers Indian Legal Services, call 520-562-3369.

For Navajo, Apache and Gila Counties, call 928-537-8383.

For White Mountain Apache Legal Aid, call 928-338-4845.

For Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee Counties. call 520-423-1639

**DNA-People’s Legal Services.** You can apply for services by calling each office at the telephone number below.

Flagstaff DNA Office, call (928) 774-0653.

Chinle DNA Office, call (928) 674-5242

Fort Defiance DNA Office, call (928) 871-4151 in Window Rock

Hopi DNA Office, call (928) 738-2251 (5345) in Keams Canyon

Tuba City DNA Office, call (928) 283-5265

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