

Kentucky Unemployment Insurance Q&A Conference Call

April 8, 2020

The Paducah Chamber hosted a conference call with speakers, Josh Benton, Deputy Secretary of the KY Workforce Development Cabinet, and Jonathon Pendergrass of the Kentucky Career Center. Below are some of the highlights of our notes taken from the call:

- Processed about 300,000 unemployment claims since March 16.
- Paid \$100 million in claims in the last 10 days.
- Been upwards of 80,000 claims from independent contractors.
- Increasing the number of employees who are answering the phone lines by 1,000 in the next week.
- Stopped all denial letters from being mailed to those who previously did not qualify for traditional Unemployment Insurance.

Who is eligible? – An individual is eligible if they lost their job through no fault of their own or experience reduced hours due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The state has lifted many restrictions which previously disqualified claims. If a person is denied traditional Unemployment Insurance, they can be approved for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) approved by the federal government.

“There are very few people who do not qualify,” said Benton.

Employers can dispute a claim if an employee has filed without “Good Cause,” a provision which defines an individual with a diagnosis of COVID-19 or recommendation by their health care provider to quarantine due to a suspected diagnosis of COVID-19, someone caring for someone with COVID-19, or someone who is caring for a child who is out of school or daycare due to COVID-19 and is the only adult able to care for the child.

If your business receives notice that an Unemployment Insurance claim has been filed, please respond to the notice immediately. If you suspect a claim has been filed in error, please promptly contact the Kentucky Office of Unemployment Insurance (OUI) at (502) 564-2387.

Mass layoffs – Employers with more than 50 employees, who are laying off more than 15, can file on behalf of their employees by going to uieclaims@ky.gov or by calling 502-564-2369. Employees will then follow instructions provided by their employers. This eases the burden on the state’s UI system.

Traditional UI – A claim is first run through the traditional UI system, which looks at the person’s last six quarters of work history and pay. The minimum benefit is \$36/week and the maximum benefit is \$552/week.

The first payment is automatic, delivered in about 13 to 16 days after the initial filing. Payments thereafter need to be requested on the Dashboard, and will be paid out every two weeks. The Dashboard show each claimant the next date of when to file.

Individuals who previously exhausted their UI benefits (between July 1, 2019 and now) will get an email extending their benefits for 13 weeks under the CARES Act.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) – Anyone who does not qualify for traditional UI can be approved under the federal guidelines for PUA, for up to 39 weeks of unemployment. The maximum PUA benefit is \$180/week.

Examples of individuals who would receive PUA are independent contractors or self-employed. 1099s should list themselves as the employer.

Work Share – An individual who has had their hours or wages reduced due to the impact of the pandemic can file for a partial UI benefit, even if they are receiving reduced compensation from their employer. Employers are encouraged to keep paying an employee’s health insurance.

Federal Stimulus Extra Payment – Everyone on UI or PUA will receive \$600 per week on top of the state’s benefit under the CARES Act. Kentucky has just received the funding. Payments will be retroactive starting from March 29. The sunset for this federal benefit is July 31.

How do I file? – Visit uiclaims.des.ky.gov. Unemployment Insurance claims must be filed on a specific day of the week based on the first letter of your last name. On your assigned day of the week, go to the “File My Claim” button. Waiting until your assigned day in no way affects your payment.

Claim on these days:



Sunday	A-D
Monday	E-H
Tuesday	I-L
Wednesday	M-P
Thursday	Q-U
Friday	V-Z
Friday	If You Missed Your Day

If you are an individual that typically did not qualify for traditional Unemployment Insurance and applied prior to March 31, 2020, you may receive a denial notice by mail. You may disregard that notice. Within a day or two you will also receive a follow-up approval letter for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance with instructions on benefit payments.

For more information, visit kcc.ky.gov.

If you have questions, email workforce@ky.gov or call the UI Helpline at 502-564-2900 or the Paducah Career Center at 270-575-7000.

These are notes taken from the call but should not be interpreted as an all inclusive guide to UI. Please refer to the State UI office for answers to your specific questions.