

Questions for Unemployment Claimants Town Hall (6/5/20)

Opening statement:

UI is currently testing the PEUC system, and those UI representatives we have with us today have had to step away from testing the program to answer questions. They are working as quickly as they can, and though we do not yet have an estimated date for when it will be available, we are working hard to get it up and running as quickly as possible.

1. Can you tell us when PEUC will be available?

UI is currently testing the PEUC system, and those UI representatives we have with us today have had to step away from testing the program to answer questions. They are working as quickly as they can, and though we do not yet have an estimated date for when it will be available, we are working hard to get it up and running as quickly as possible.

2. Who qualifies for the 13 week extension?

Anyone who has exhausted all rights to regular unemployment. Claimants do not need to be unemployed due to COVID-19. Claimants must have run out of all the benefits of regular employment. Claimants also must have been eligible for regular unemployment in Wyoming and have had a claim between July 2018 until now.

3. How do you file for PEUC claim under The 2020 Cares Act?

We don't have the specific steps available yet; but watch our website for an announcement of when it is ready and available. In general, claimants will go online to wyui.wyo.gov; click on "File Additional Claim" and answer the questions. The process will be very similar to filing an initial unemployment claim.

4. My benefits for regular unemployment expired the week of March 29. When I can apply for PEUC and will my benefits will be backdated to March 29?

March 29 is the start of the PEUC program; claimants may be eligible going back to March 29, 2020. Each claim is reviewed on an individual basis to determine eligibility dates.

5. Currently I am unemployed but am due to return to work on 5/30/2020. Am I still eligible to receive benefits if I am not full time? Also, will the benefits be retroactive and if so to what date?

The PEUC program starts 3/29 and claimants may be eligible. The individual must be less than 35 hours and earn less than their regular unemployment weekly benefit amount to collect any payment.

6. I was just informed that my claim was exhausted and I'm no longer receiving benefits. If there is a large gap between now and the time that the extension period begins, what will the process look like to receive those extended benefits if I am still unemployed?

Claimants can file for the PEUC extension when it is available. Unemployment staff will review the claim to determine if it can be backdated. For backdated claims, claimants will receive paper weekly certifications that need to be filled out and turned in via fax or US Mail.

7. Once the system is in place how long will it take to apply and receive your first payment? Will returning to work affect the eligibility of past weeks?

The last date worked determines the effective date of the claim. Claims may end up not being for any weeks going forward and only for the back dates.

8. Can you please let me know about my status of UI Benefits I have not received my benefits from the week filing on 5/21

Unemployment issued payments 5/22/2020 and then payments again on 5/29/2020. We did experience some system issues that affected payments; however, all issues have been resolved. Once your claim indicates "paid" in your WYUI account, it can take about 48 hours, not including weekends, to arrive in the bank or on the debit card. Delays can also happen on the receiving bank's (claimant) end.

9. I am curious to know if we hire a part-time employee, and we have a starting date in June and an ending date determined in September--all known upfront, are they still able to collect unemployment when done?

Yes, they can file for unemployment. If an individual is laid off due to lack of work the employer is chargeable.

10. If an individual is already collecting unemployment and they work for a short amount of time and are laid off again they can keep the claim active and just not file each week?

Yes, when they separate from their employer they go onto the WYUI website, reactivate the claim and file an additional claim.

11. Can you please outline the process to apply for an extension for our employees with a 'Job Attached' status?

As soon as the PEUC extension is ready individuals can file through the Additional Claim tab. Job attachment only lasts for 12 weeks from the initial date of the unemployment claim. Individuals must have employment in between to qualify for job attached status again. Individuals can still file for the extension; if they are not job attached they must meet all of the requirements of regular unemployment.

12. I recently applied for Unemployment for New York because I was going to school there but got sent back to Wyoming due to COVID-19. I got a letter stating I had to start looking for jobs here in Wyoming or else I wouldn't receive my benefits. I was told that if we got laid off due to COVID-19 but would be getting hours back once everything can open again, that we didn't have to job search and such?

Our system sends a letter at the start of every claim letting each claimant know the Wyoming requirements to remain on unemployment. Some individuals may be exempt for work search for 12 weeks if they were unemployed due to COVID. For questions about New York unemployment, individuals should contact the Unemployment office in New York. Refusal of work can be like a voluntary quit and we take those situations on a case-by-case basis.

13. What do self employed people need to do? What do we file for?

Individuals that are not eligible for regular unemployment can file for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). PUA has been available since 5/1/2020. Individuals can file online or call. They must start by filing a regular unemployment claim so we can determine if they are eligible for regular unemployment first. This is a federal requirement. Individuals would go down the path of: File Unemployment claim and answer Yes to UI due to COVID. The WYUI system asks questions for both regular UI and PUA at the same time. The unemployment staff will then use the information provided by the individual to determine which program they qualify for.

14. Is any of this [unemployment payments] going on our taxes? Will I have to pay back or pay taxes on it?

Yes, UI is taxable income at the Federal level. Unemployment will withhold 10%, if the claimant chooses. This can be set up and/or changed in the claimant profile in the individual's WYUI account.

15. How do we get pin or password help?

Send an email to dwsjspui.benefits@wyo.gov or call 888-674-7699 or 307-473-3789. When sending the email message include the individual's full name + last 4 only of the social security number and a good call back phone number. Unemployment staff will call the claimant back to reset the password/pin/unlock the account. This email address is only for password/pin/account unlock requests.

16. Are payments retroactive to the time your regular unemployment ran out? Are PUEC, PUA, and FPUC retroactive?

On a nationwide level, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) goes back to February 2, 2020, however, Wyoming Governor Gordon gave us orders to shut down on March 13, 2020 so March 13 is as far back as PUA claims can go. Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC - the \$600 additional payment) and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) (the 13 week extension) began on March 29, 2020. Backdating of claims is based on the last date the individual worked. Backdated claims may differ for various individuals. PUA ends on 12/26/2020; FPUC ends on July 25, 2020; and PEUC ends on 12/26/2020.

17. I am part time self-employed and part time employed. My hours have been reduced due to Covid-19 & childcare. I tried to file for unemployment as self-employment (PUA) and was told to file on my employer also. I was accepted under my employer, but not on my business. What is the next step for what I can do to get compensation?

We have discussed this type of situation with our regional U.S. Department of Labor federal oversight to make sure we are correctly following the Unemployment rules for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). If an individual is eligible for regular unemployment they must file for regular unemployment. This applies even if the weekly benefit amount is for less money. PUA is only available for individuals that have exhausted all rights to regular unemployment. While on regular unemployment (or PUA) individuals will still receive Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC). Individuals will not collect anything including FPUC if they make more than the weekly benefit amount during the week in which they file a claim.

18. Do you know what else I need to do in the system when the program is implemented in order to get benefits?

Recommend to be able, available and looking for work. Regular unemployment rules apply including being registered for work in Wyoming at Work, keeping a record of a minimum of two weekly job searches and being able and available for work.

19. My UI funds ended the week of March 14th, I have continued to file continued claims entering my job searches. How do I know if I am going to receive funds?

We will announce when the 13-week Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) extension is available on our website, via social media and press releases. Once it is available, in your WYUI account on the homepage/claim inquiry individuals can view the type of claim, weekly benefit amount and balance. When the screen is updated with EUC and a dollar amount next to it, individuals will know it has been processed. Unemployment will reprocess the claims if the back date is approved.

20. Is the reprocessing of PEUC claims automatic for those that have filed continued claims after their unemployment was exhausted?

No, individuals must file for a PEUC first, then the continued claims will be processed.

21. Are there any resources available to help claimants with working with landlords and creditors while waiting for the extension?

Individuals can contact 2-1-1 (call 211 on your phone) and request information and referrals to local organizations that may be able to assist with various bills and other needs. Local workforce centers may also be able to offer assistance with job searches, resumes, training and other related needs. In addition, local Workforce Centers may have information about local resources that can assist.

22. I have had an "Issue on File" status for the last 3 weeks. I have contacted via "Request for Assistance" 3 times already with no communication back. What is my next step to get this resolved?

It is recommended for individuals to go into the local Workforce Center and call us via the direct phone line in the Workforce Center or try to reach us by phone at 307-473-3789. We need to look at the individual's specific claim to determine what is going on. It means there is something on the claim that needs to be addressed before we can send payment out. If your WYUI account shows an issue on file for more than 10 days please call us.

23. Will my claim affect my employer's EMR?

There is possible legislation to allow us to non-charge employers. The U.S. Department of Labor is also looking at tax rates for employers.

24. If I registered and started my claim today, when is my next filing day? Would that be Sunday coming up or should I wait until the next Sunday?

Individuals can file every Sunday and may want to get in the habit of filing on Sundays. Individuals have 14 days after the week to be considered timely.

25. My main income comes from a summer tourist season job. I have been working it for the past two decades and have been rehired each summer. This summer they are not hiring due to COVID closures. I was denied PUA because I was not working first and let go, versus not hired to begin with. Is an appeal worthwhile?

Individuals in this type of situation can reach out to us to investigate and we recommend appealing the decision.

26. Is there any way to go in and correct information after submitting a claim or does that have to be corrected by a specialist?

After submission, the only way to change the answer on a claim is to contact the Claim Center. The way the WYUI system works, staff in Unemployment must make any needed corrections.

27. My benefits were exhausted in April but I have still been looking for jobs each week. When I called the center they told me to just keep track and not put in WYUI. How will I enter these once the PEUC is up and running?

Individuals will be able to enter claims on WYUI for anything that is LESS than 6 weeks old from the time of filing. If claims are MORE than 6 weeks old from the time of filing, Unemployment will send individuals a paper claim form. Individuals will need to complete the forms and mail or fax them back.

28. I think I have been filing a continuing claim. Do I need to put all that information in for each week as an additional claim?

If an individual has been filing weekly certifications all along even after exhausting regular unemployment; those will be kept in the system; they won't need to file again. The start of PEUC does not include the weekly certs; it sets it up to file weekly certs.

29. Can you explain the paper process you just alluded to concerning your program does not go back 2 months for claims? Next week I will need to file for 11 weeks. Is there a form that we can copy or download now to be prepared?

Paper weekly certifications are sent to individuals that need to file claims that are more than 6 weeks old. Individuals will need to wait until Unemployment sends these out; they are not available ahead of time. The paper process is slower than online and we try to avoid it as much as possible; in some cases we must use the paper process.

30. I can't get any of the sites to load on to my phone; I'm not sure what is up here?

We recommend using a standard computer to file claims. Individuals that do not have a computer or do not have internet access at home can use the Resource Computers located in every local Workforce Center. A list of local Workforce Centers is located here: <http://www.wyomingworkforce.org/contact/employment/> There is no charge to use these computers. Additionally many county libraries offer computers for public use.

31. When the extended benefits for otherwise exhausted claims are available, will they be retroactive to the last week that was qualified? Will the extra \$600 be added onto the extended benefits as well?

Claims may be retroactive depending on the last date worked. The extra \$600 (FPUC) is also retroactive, again depending on the last date worked.