

COVID-19: UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR NEVADANS

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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to restrictions on nonessential business, causing many Nevadans to seek unemployment assistance. The [Employment Security Division \(ESD\)](#) of the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation is responsible for administering unemployment assistance programs in Nevada. During the pandemic, the ESD has adjusted certain eligibility requirements for unemployment benefits to help more affected workers receive benefits.

ELIGIBILITY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

USUAL REQUIREMENTS

Generally, to qualify for unemployment benefits in Nevada, a person must be fully or partially unemployed, must have earned enough wages to qualify, and must be unemployed through no fault of his or her own. A claimant must file each week and must be able to work, be available for work, and actively be seeking work.

Eligible applicants receive payment of benefits approximately seven days after filing their first weekly claim. The maximum benefit is set at \$469 per week for up to 26 weeks, unless extended by law. Further eligibility information can be found in the [Nevada Unemployment Insurance Facts for Claimants](#) handbook (available in English and [Spanish](#)).

REQUIREMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, Nevada has waived certain requirements and enacted legislation to make it easier for eligible applicants to access unemployment benefits. Some of these changes include¹:

- Waiving work search requirements for all claimants; and
- Enacting [Senate Bill 3](#) of the 32nd Special Session, which:
 - Streamlines procedures and expands eligibility;
 - Under certain circumstances, allows the ESD administrator to waive or modify the period during which a person is generally prohibited from receiving unemployment benefits due to receipt of certain compensation, such as severance pay or vacation pay; and
 - Requires the administrator to define the reasons that constitute good cause for a person to refuse suitable work because of COVID-19. These may include, among other reasons:
 - Being sick or in isolation due to the disease;
 - Needing to care for a family member who is suffering from COVID-19;
 - Caring for a child who cannot attend school or child care because of COVID-19;
 - Being 65 years of age or older; or
 - For people who are deemed high risk, facing an unreasonable risk of exposure to the virus at the place of employment.

¹ In addition to those listed, another change involved suspending the seven-day waiting period between applying for and receiving unemployment benefits. However, this waiting period was reinstated as of August 8, 2020.

Among other items, revised eligibility guidelines include:

- Employees may be eligible for unemployment insurance if an employer temporarily ceases operations due to COVID-19, preventing employees from coming to work;
- Employees may be eligible for unemployment insurance if they are quarantined with the expectation of returning to work after the quarantine is over;
- Employees may be eligible for unemployment insurance if they perform less than full-time work and earn less than 1.5 times the amount they would otherwise receive in unemployment benefits;
- Employees are not eligible for unemployment insurance if they are not working and still receiving pay, including pay for accrued sick leave or vacation hours; and
- Claimants who have exhausted benefits from their regular state unemployment insurance and federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (see below) may be eligible for [State Extended Benefits](#) (SEB).

For more details about unemployment benefits in Nevada during the COVID-19 outbreak, please refer to the ESD's [COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Information for Claimants and Employers](#) webpage.

FEDERAL RESPONSE

The CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ([Public Law 116-136](#)) was signed into law on March 27, 2020. Among other items, benefits in the CARES Act include:

- [Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation](#) (FPUC), which—until its expiration on July 25, 2020—provided eligible applicants with an extra \$600 per week;
- [Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation](#) (PEUC), which—until its expiration on December 26, 2020—provides an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits; and
- [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#) (PUA), which—until its expiration on December 26, 2020—provides unemployment insurance compensation for independent contractors, freelancers, gig workers, and others not covered by standard unemployment insurance.

A more detailed summary of the CARES Act is available from the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#).

The Lost Wage Assistance (LWA) Program

In a [Presidential Memorandum](#) issued on August 8, 2020, President Donald J. Trump authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency to use disaster relief funds to provide grants to states to supplement benefits for those receiving unemployment insurance compensation. As of September 11, 2020, Nevada's application for the LWA program has been approved, meaning state residents whose employment is affected by COVID-19 and who received at least \$100 per week in unemployment benefits during the first three weeks of August will be eligible for an additional \$300 per week in LWA funds.

APPLYING FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS, PUA, AND SEB DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

APPLYING FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

There are no in-person claim filing methods at this time. Claims for unemployment insurance may be filed online through the [Claimant Self Service portal](#). The ESD provides a [guide for applicants](#), as well as [step-by-step videos](#) on how to file a claim. The telephone claim center is available only if a person does not have the ability to file online.

To provide faster results for persons making claims, the ESD is asking claimants to initiate or renew their claims online based on the first letter of their last name:

- A to K file on Sundays;
- L to R file on Mondays; and
- S to Z file on Tuesdays.

Any claimant, regardless of the first letter of his or her last name, may initiate or renew a claim online Wednesday through Saturday.

Contacts for Assistance With Unemployment Insurance Claims

The ESD has established a call center to assist with general questions related to the unemployment claim process. To reach the call center, toll free, dial: (800) 603-9671.

For specific questions or to file a claim by phone, contact the ESD:

- Northern Nevada: (775) 684-0350
- Southern Nevada: (702) 486-0350
- Rural Areas and Out-of-State Callers, Toll Free: (888) 890-8211

APPLYING FOR PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

As of May 16, 2020, Nevada workers eligible for PUA may apply for up to 39 weeks of benefits through this program. Applying for PUA is separate from applying for unemployment insurance; individuals applying for PUA must file a claim through the state's [PUA application portal](#). The Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation offers a [guide for PUA applicants](#), and PUA benefits are retroactive to February 2, 2020.

Contact for Assistance With PUA Claims

For questions related to PUA, applicants can contact the PUA call center, toll free, at (800) 603-9681.

APPLYING FOR STATE EXTENDED BENEFITS

Nevada workers who have exhausted their regular state unemployment and PEUC benefits can apply for SEB benefits through the [Claimant Self Service portal](#) by logging into their accounts and selecting the "Apply for State Extended Benefits" link. For specific questions or to file a claim by phone, contact ESD.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR WORKERS

The Office of Labor Commissioner in the Department of Business and Industry has released several guides addressing worker concerns related to COVID-19.

- [*Employer & Employee Information on COVID-19*](#) contains information concerning worker protections and employer responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The [*Telework Guide*](#) has information related to state labor laws as they apply to remote working arrangements.
- [*COVID-19 Release\(s\) of Liability as a Condition of Employment: Information for Employers and Employees*](#) provides information concerning releases of liability as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic.