

## UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

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**NOTE: As the COVID-19 public health situation changes and evolves, new laws and regulations are being continually issued. This information may not include the most recent information. For up-to-date issuances, check out The Nebraska Department of Labor's website at <https://www.dol.nebraska.gov/> and the U.S. Department of Labor's website at <https://www.dol.gov/>. The information provided is for informational purposes only, and not to be relied upon by you for your unique circumstances. You should always consult with an attorney regarding the laws and your rights.**

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If you are denied unemployment insurance benefits, you can apply for legal help by contacting Legal Aid of Nebraska by calling our COVID-19 Legal Assistance Hotline at 1-844-268-5627.

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I am not sure if I qualify for unemployment, what should I do?

If you are not sure if you qualify for unemployment, if you have not qualified for unemployment in the past or if you have used up all your weeks of coverage, you should APPLY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT. There have been changes in unemployment laws. You may now be eligible. Apply for unemployment benefits at this [link](#).

I have lost my job, been laid off, had my hours reduced, or need to miss work due to COVID-19 related issues, can I apply for unemployment benefits?

Yes. You may be eligible for unemployment benefits. File for unemployment insurance benefits online at <https://networks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. In order to qualify for a COVID-19 related unemployment program, you must have lost your job or had a reduction in income on or after January 27, 2020.

**You may be entitled to receive unemployment benefits if you:**

- Lost your job
- Have been laid off
- Had your hours reduced
- Are in unpaid status due to your work being shut down
- Are in quarantine
- Are sick and need to miss work
- Are caring for a family member who is ill
- Are caring for a family member due to a facility closure (e.g. school closure, daycare closure)
- Also applies to those who are self-employed, independent contractors, part-time workers, gig-workers (e.g. Uber or Lyft driver), and those with short-work histories

The American Rescue Plan, passed by Congress on March 10, 2021, extends the federal unemployment programs, originally passed under the CARES Act and extended under the

Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), through September 6, 2021. These unemployment programs include:

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA): PUA is an unemployment benefit for people who would not otherwise qualify for state unemployment benefits and who lost work due to COVID related reasons (see more information on COVID related reasons below). Under the CAA, PUA was available through March 14, 2021. Under the American Rescue Plan, PUA benefits are extended to September 6, 2021, and the maximum duration of PUA benefits is increased from 50 to 79 weeks.

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PUEC): PUEC extends the amount of time you can receive unemployment benefits. Under the CAA, PUEC provided up to 24 weeks of additionally unemployment eligibility through March 14, 2021. The American Rescue Plan extends PEUC by providing up to 53 weeks of additional unemployment benefits to eligible individuals who have exhausted the unemployment benefits available under state law. Typically eligibility for state unemployment benefits is 26 weeks. Under the American Rescue Plan, PUEC extends eligibility to up to a total of 79 weeks of unemployment benefits ending September 6, 2021.

Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC): PUC adds \$300 a week to unemployment benefits. Under the CAA, the additional \$300 weekly benefit was available between December 26, 2020 and March 14, 2021. Under the American Recovery Act, the additional \$300 weekly benefit is available between March 14, 2021 and September 6, 2021.

In order to qualify for a COVID-19 related unemployment program, you must have lost your job or had a reduction in income on or after January 27, 2020.

I do not have a long work history, can I apply for unemployment benefits?

Yes. You may be eligible to receive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). File for unemployment insurance benefits online at <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.

I am self-employed, an independent contractor, a part-time work or a gig worker (e.g. driver for Uber), can I apply for unemployment benefits?

Yes. You may be eligible to receive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

File for unemployment insurance benefits online at <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.

I heard I can get an extra \$300 a week in unemployment benefits, is this true?

Yes, under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC) program, you may get an extra \$300 a week in unemployment benefits through September 6, 2021.

I was receiving unemployment benefits, but I have run out of benefits (exhausted my benefits), can I still apply for unemployment benefits?

Yes. You may be eligible for unemployment benefits under the federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) Program. File for unemployment insurance benefits online at <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.

#### How do I file for unemployment insurance benefits?

File for unemployment benefits as soon as your job ends, your hours are reduced, you have to miss work for a COVID-19 related reason, including caring for a family member or child whose school or daycare is closed.

- Unemployment claims in Nebraska are filed online at [NEworks.nebraska.gov](http://NEworks.nebraska.gov)
- Step by step instructions to apply for unemployment insurance found at: <https://www.dol.nebraska.gov/webdocs/getfile/d9c15f48-1d09-4f82-9839-1ceaaa388159>
- The Nebraska Unemployment Benefit call center phone number is (402) 458-2500. However, the Nebraska Department of Labor is recommending individuals do as much as possible online.
- Local Job Centers may have limited computers and limited staff to assist you in applying for unemployment benefits. Local Job Center contact information can be found at this link: <https://www.dol.nebraska.gov/Home/AboutUs>
- After filing a new initial claim, applicants must certify their eligibility every week that they continue to be unemployed by logging into their NEworks account. These weekly certifications must be completed even while a new claim is still being processed.
- Any worker in a non-paid status due to COVID-19 may file a claim for unemployment insurance benefits.

#### Do I have to search for work to receive unemployment benefits?

Yes.

#### **Apply for unemployment insurance benefits at this [link](#).**

The Nebraska Department of Labor has COVID-19 Resources and Information and frequently asked questions for employees at this [link](#).

The United States Department of Labor has COVID-19 Resources and Information at <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus>.

#### I do not qualify or have not in the past qualified for regular unemployment benefits, is there a way to get benefits now?

Yes, if you do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits, you may qualify if you are unable to continue working as a result of COVID-19. Under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program (PUA), the government is providing unemployment benefits to workers who are:

- Self-employed
- Independent contractors
- Freelancers
- Part-time workers

- Gig workers (including drivers for companies like Uber and Lyft)
- Workers with short work histories

### How do I qualify for PUA?

You must **not be** eligible for regular unemployment benefits, extended unemployment benefits, or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (or you have exhausted all rights to such benefits)

### **AND**

You must self-certify you are partly or totally unemployed or not able to work because of one of the following COVID-19 related reasons:

- a. You have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking diagnosis;
- b. A member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- c. You are caring for someone diagnosed with COVID-19;
- d. You are caring for a child or other household member that can't attend school or work because it's closed due to COVID-19;
- e. You were supposed to start a job, but could not start your job because of COVID-19;
- f. Your primary breadwinner died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- g. You had to quit your job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- h. Your work place closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- i. You meet other criteria established by the Secretary of Labor.

### If my employer will let me telework with pay, am I eligible for PUA?

No.

### If I am receiving paid sick days or other paid leave, am I eligible for PUA?

No.

### I am not authorized to work in the US, am I eligible for PUA?

No, if you are not eligible to work in the US, or are undocumented, you are not eligible for PUA.

### How many weeks of PUA benefits can I receive?

Under PUA, you can receive up to 79 weeks including all regular unemployment insurance benefits and extended benefits under any federal or state law.

### How much will the weekly benefit be?

PUA will be the amount of your unemployment insurance benefit, but will have a minimum benefit that is equal to one-half the state's average weekly unemployment insurance benefits – about \$190 a week.

How do I apply for unemployment benefits, including PUA?

**Apply for unemployment insurance benefits through the Nebraska Department of Labor at this [link](#).**

The Nebraska Department of Labor has COVID-19 Resources and Information and frequently asked questions for employees at this [link](#).

The United States Department of Labor has COVID-19 Resources and Information at <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus>.

I will exhaust or have exhausted my state unemployment benefits, can my unemployment benefits be extended?

Yes. You can get 53 additional weeks, up to 79 total weeks, unemployment benefits under the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program, if:

- You have exhausted all rights to unemployment benefits under Nebraska or federal law: and
- You are able to work, available to work, and actively searching for work. However, states need to be flexible in the requirement that workers be able and available for work, if you are unable to search for work because of COVID-19, including because you are sick, quarantined or subject to restrictions on movement.

How long do I get extended payments?

You can get extended payments for up to 79 total weeks under PEUC. Payments under the American Recovery Act can be made between March 14, 2021 to September 6, 2021.

How do I apply for unemployment benefits, including PEUC?

**Apply for unemployment insurance benefits at this [link](#).**

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The United States Department of Labor has COVID-19 Resources and Information at <https://www.dol.gov/coronavirus>.