



CARES Act Unemployment Benefits Expansion Package

April 15, 2020

The federal government recently passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, legislation that will address the dramatic economic crisis brought on by COVID-19, which includes the following federally funded unemployment benefits expansions:

- **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)**

FPUC provides an additional \$600 per week for individuals receiving regular unemployment benefits, PUA, PEUC, or extended benefits if they are triggered under Illinois law, beginning March 29, 2020 and concluding the week ending July 25.

FPUC has been fully implemented and disbursement has begun.

- **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)**

PEUC provides up to 13 additional weeks of federally funded unemployment benefits for individuals who have exhausted regular unemployment benefits.

IDES received USDOL guidelines on April 10 and expects the program can be implemented through the current IDES computer system the week of April 20, 2020.

- **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**

PUA provides up to 39 weeks of federally funded unemployment benefits to individuals not typically eligible for unemployment benefits, including independent contractors and sole-proprietors who have become unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19.

In Illinois, every individual who is unemployed or underemployed should file a claim for unemployment benefits, even if they believe they are not covered by the unemployment system. There are two reasons Illinoisans currently unemployed through no fault of their own should still file a claim for regular unemployment benefits with IDES, even if they have been told they're not covered by the state's regular unemployment insurance program - because they're an independent contractor, part of the "gig economy," or for some other reason.

First, it's possible that whoever told them they were not covered was wrong. Workers who are employees covered by the unemployment insurance system are sometimes told they're not. Even if an individual's employer does not consider the worker to be covered and doesn't pay unemployment taxes on the



individual's wages, the individual can qualify for benefits if IDES determines he or she is covered under state law. An employer's failure to contribute to the unemployment system will not impact a claimant's eligibility for benefits. Although eligibility for benefits cannot be guaranteed, nothing prohibits people from filing a claim for regular benefits, as long as they truthfully complete the application.

Second, the PUA program has been established for individuals who are unemployed for reasons attributable to COVID-19 and not covered by the state's regular unemployment insurance program. To establish eligibility under the new program, the claimant will have to demonstrate he/she is not eligible under the regular program. Applying for and being denied benefits under the regular program can help establish eligibility under the new temporary program.

How will this affect Illinois unemployment benefits?

Individuals receiving unemployment benefits beginning the week of March 29, 2020, will receive an additional \$600 each week above what they would receive in regular unemployment benefits until the week ending on July 25, 2022. Pursuant to the federal legislation, this \$600 will not be retroactively applied to unemployment claims that arose prior to March 29, 2020. In many cases, individuals will also be eligible for more weeks of unemployment above the 26 weeks provided under regular unemployment rules. Both of these benefits will be applied automatically if you qualify.

What do I do if I have already received my maximum benefits?

Some individuals who have received their entire 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits may be eligible for more weeks of benefits under the stimulus package. If you have exhausted your benefits, or you are close to exhausting your benefits, we are finalizing the process to continue benefits under the stimulus package. Details will be available as soon as we have received further guidance from the US Department of Labor.