

Unemployment Assistance During the COVID-19 Health Emergency

The CARES Act was signed into law on Friday, March 27, 2020. This \$2 Trillion Bill provides benefit to individuals, small businesses, big corporations, hospitals and public health organizations, federal safety net, state and local governments, and education. A component of this Act is the expansion of unemployment benefits to during the COVID-19 health emergency. The portion of the CARES Act that impacts unemployment consist of three components. The State of Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS) will be that State agency that administers these programs.

- **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)** – This program is separate from the regular unemployment insurance program. The PUA program is designed for individuals who are not eligible for regular and extended benefits, or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC). This could include independent contractors, self-employed, agricultural workers, etc. **NOTE:** Additional guidance from USDOL is required before DWS can properly implementation this program.
- **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)** – This program is a federal emergency unemployment compensation program is designed to provide up to 13 weeks of benefits to individuals who have exhausted their regular unemployment compensation.
- **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)** – This program allocates an additional \$600 of weekly unemployment benefits through the week ending July 25, 2020. The funding source is the Federal government. To receive the \$600 FPUC, workers must be eligible for regular unemployment insurance or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

IMPORTANT NOTE: The regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) program continues to be in effect. In Arkansas, most people who are currently employed and quit are not eligible for unemployment benefits. If an employer offers sick leave and/or other leave options to address COVID-19 in lieu of layoffs, then a person who quits on his/her own volition would probably not qualify for UI benefits. At this point, no federal legislation changes this part of Arkansas's program eligibility for unemployment benefits.

To apply (4 ways to apply):

1. Apply on-line at www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov
2. Apply on the phone by calling 1 (855) 225-4440
3. Effective Monday, March 23, 2020, a Temporary Claims Processing Hotline will be available for affected workers who require assistance in filing their unemployment claims. The Temporary Claims Processing Hotline can be reached at 1-844-908-2178 or 501-534-6304
4. Apply in person at your local DWS office – **NOTE: This is NOT recommended during this health emergency**

Important notes to consider:

- Do **not** rely on advice from friends or relatives. If you do not understand something or have a problem with your claim contact the Department of Workforce Services Local Office. **You can also receive**

general information about unemployment insurance by calling ArkLine, our interactive voice response line. (See page 16) or accessing ArkNet @ www.arknet.arkansas.gov.

- Arkadelphia, 502 S. 6th St. – (870) 246-2481
 - Batesville, 396 Barnette Dr. – (870) 793-4156
 - Benton, 400 Edison Avenue – (501) 776-2974
 - Blytheville, 2825 S. Division – (870) 762-2035
 - Camden, 237 Jackson Street SW – (870) 836-5024
 - Conway, 1500 No. Museum Rd., #111 – (501) 730-9894
 - El Dorado, 523 East Sixth St. – (870) 862-6456
 - Fayetteville, 2143 West Martin Luther King Blvd. – (479) 521-5730
 - Forrest City, 300 Eldridge Road, Ste. 2 – (870) 633-2900
 - Fort Smith 616 Garrison Ave., Rm 101 – (479) 783-0231
 - Harrison, 818 N. Hwy. 62-65 – (870) 741-8236
 - Helena, 819 Newman Drive – (870) 338-7415
 - Hope, 205 Smith Road, Suite A – (870) 777-3421
 - Hot Springs, 2254 Albert Pike Suite A – (501) 525-3450
 - Jacksonville, #2 Crestview Plaza – (501) 982-3835
 - Jonesboro, 2311 East Nettleton Ave. – (870) 935-5594
 - Little Rock, 5401 South University – (501) 682-8030
 - Magnolia, 104 Harvey Couch Blvd. – (870) 234-3440
 - Malvern, 1735 E. Sullenberger St. – (501) 332-5461
 - Mena, 1100 College Drive Abernathy Building – (479) 394-3060
 - Monticello, 477 S. Main St. – (870) 367-2476
 - Mtn. Home, 1058 Highland Circle #20 – (870) 425-2386
 - Newport, 7648 Victory Blvd, Ste. B – (870) 523-3641
 - Paragould, 1015 Linwood Dr Ste #4 – (870) 236-8512
 - Pine Bluff, 1001 S. Tennessee St. – (870) 534-1920
 - Rogers, 100 N Dixieland Road – (479) 6364755
 - Russellville, 104 S. Rochester St. – (479) 968-2784
 - Searcy, 501 W. Arch Ave. – (501) 268-8601
 - Texarkana, TX, 1702 Hampton Road – (870) 216-4011
 - West Memphis, MSCC 2003 W. Broadway – (870) 400-2269
 - Department of Workforce Services Interstate Office – (501) 683-2760
- Unemployment insurance is not a welfare program. It is an insurance program. Unemployment insurance is temporary income to help workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own.
 - Unemployment insurance is taxable income and must be reported on your federal income tax return. The option to withhold federal taxes is offered. If you choose to have federal income tax withheld, federal income tax will be withheld at 10 percent. You will be permitted to change your withholding status one time during your benefit year, should you desire.

Sources:

U. S. Department of Labor:

[Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employee Paid Leave Rights](#)

[Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Questions and Answers](#)

Arkansas Department of Workforce Services:

[Common Questions and Answers for Workers Regarding the Unemployment Insurance](#)

[\(Update\) Notice to Individuals Inquiring About the Availability of Unemployment Insurance Benefits As A Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Information – Federal Legislation](#)

As additional information becomes available, particularly on how to take advantage of these programs the Chamber will publish that material to its members. In the meantime, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,



Zane Chenault

Chief Economic Development Officer

Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce

21 West Mountain Street, Suite. 300 / P.O. Box 4216

Fayetteville, AR 72702-4216