



COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Update

labor.maryland.gov

Tiffany P. Robinson, Secretary



Claims Volume

- **Volume of Claims**
 - March 1-7 - 2,090 new claims
 - March 8-4 - 3,852 new claims
 - March 15-21 - 42,334 new claims
 - The Division took more claims in March than in the entire year of 2019.
- **Main Reasons for Slower Processing Speeds**
 - Volume of Users - The sheer number of users trying to contact UI all at once is overloading both our call centers and our online application.USDOL
 - All unemployment insurance claims have to be run through USDOL's database to verify social security numbers, which is creating a backlog in Maryland and across the country.

New Procedures

- **Call Centers**

- Further extended hours from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. (Effective 4/1)
- Created a new gating procedure to streamline calls...
 - If your last name starts with A - F, file your claim on Monday.
 - If your last name starts with G - N, file your claim on Tuesday.
 - If your last name starts with O - Z, file your claim on Wednesday.
 - Claim filing is open to all last names by phone on Thursday and Friday and online Thursday through Sunday.

- **Online application** (available 24/7)

- Added servers to allow more users to simultaneously file online.
- Encouraging people to file during off-peak hours, like early in the morning before 7 am and in the evening after 8 pm.

New Procedures

- **Shared Email Accounts**

- Urging Marylanders to email our department to have their questions answered and reduce call center traffic.
 - Claimants, please email ui.inquiry@maryland.gov
 - Employers, please email dluiemployerassistance-labor@maryland.gov
 - Bulk Claims support, please email UI.BulkClaim@maryland.gov

- **FAQ's**

- Created numerous detailed FAQ's to prevent people from having to call our department to have their questions answered.

Trust Fund Balance and Solvency

- **Current**
 - No employer will see an increase in their tax rate for 2020 due to COVID-19.
 - Employers are currently in tax table A and are receiving the lowest unemployment insurance tax rates allowed under state law.
 - Maryland's UI Trust Fund has a balance of approximately \$1.176 billion as of March 31st.
- **Solvency Determination**
 - Solvency determines the state's ability to obtain interest free loans from the federal government to replenish depleted trust funds.
 - The solvency determination by the federal government is calculated using the Average High Cost Multiple, which is the average of the three most recent high cost calendar years that includes either 3 recessions or at least 20 years.



Federal Relief for State UI Trust Funds

- The federal government will pay for the first week of benefits for regular UI benefit claims paid after March 29th through December 31, 2020.
- Benefits paid under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program are 100% federally funded.
- The provision under the CARES Act that provides an additional benefit of \$600 each week to all benefit recipients is federally funded.
- Work-sharing benefits are 100% federally funded for states that have work sharing in their law.
- Loans to replenish depleted trust funds interest free through December 31, 2020.

CARES Act - UI Expansion

The federal government recently passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which includes an expansion of unemployment insurance benefits for Marylanders.

- **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**
 - Individuals who are not usually eligible for regular UI and who cannot work due to COVID-19 are eligible for a maximum of 39 weeks of benefits, which includes \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC).
 - Self employed, Independent Contractors, Gig workers, limited work history, etc.
- **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)**
 - \$600 per week on top of current regular UI benefits.
 - This \$600 is a flat amount to those on UI, including those who receive a partial UI benefit.
- **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)**
 - 13 additional weeks of UI benefits, plus \$600 FPUC.



CARES Act Challenges and Opportunities

- Like all other states, we are eagerly awaiting Unemployment Insurance Program Letters (UIPLs) from USDOL to provide the necessary eligibility guidance for these federal programs.
- Though guidance has not been received, we are diligently working to ready our systems to the best of our ability. (create new IT systems, modify our current claims applications, train staff, and conduct tests before administering the new programs created by the federal CARES Act.)
- People will NOT lose benefits due to processing delays, benefits are backdated.

CARES Act Challenges and Opportunities

- Like all other states, our IT system is currently NOT set-up to process these new CARES Act programs immediately.
 - It is going to take a time to change our IT programs to be able to accept new claims for these programs.
 - We are still waiting for guidance from USDOL.
- Specific challenges of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)
 - Our system is currently not set up to process these types of applicants, as they are formerly considered ineligible.

State Level UI Changes

- During this state of emergency and due to the passage of emergency legislation, the department will allow workers who have not been terminated to collect unemployment insurance benefits if...
 - their employer has been closed due to COVID-19;
 - they have been quarantined; or
 - they are caring for a family member who is quarantined.
- The MD Department of Labor has temporarily waived work search requirements for 10 weeks for all current and new unemployment insurance benefit recipients.
- The Department has also extended the due date for tax payments due by contributory employers for the 1st quarter to June 1, 2020. The deadline for filing contribution/wage reports for the 1st quarter will remain April 30, 2020, as timely filing of the reports is necessary to determine monetary eligibility for claimants and to preserve the integrity of the unemployment insurance program.

State Support Needed

- We ask for your patience and understanding as we process this unprecedented volume of new unemployment insurance claims and work to implement new programming.
- Please ask your constituency to sign up for email updates on our webpage to receive notice when the new claims process is available.
- **Pay Check Protection Loan Program**
 - Broad messaging and facilitation of the Paycheck Protection Loan Program, which helps pay salaries and helps keep people working and off of UI benefits
 - Loans will be available once guidance is given by SBA to banks for processing.
 - These loans are for firms that meet SBA small business size standards, self-employed, sole proprietors, independent contractors (i.e., workers in the “gig” economy), and certain nonprofits.

UI Resources

- **Main Web Page**
 - MDunemployment.com
 - **To contact a Claim Center**
 - 410-949-0022 (for employees) or,
 - 410-767-2412 (for employers)
 - **NetClaims Online Application**
 - <https://secure-2.dllr.state.md.us/NetClaims/Welcome.aspx>
 - **Bulk Claims for Employers**
 - 410-853-1700
 - **FAQ Pages**
 - COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
 - <http://labor.maryland.gov/employment/uicovidfaqs.shtml>
 - Bulk Claims Frequently Asked Question
 - <http://labor.maryland.gov/employment/uibulkclaimfaqs.shtml>
 - CARES Act Frequently Asked Question
 - <http://labor.maryland.gov/employment/uicaresfaqs.pdf>
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Additional Labor Resources

- **Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing**
 - If you have a licensing question, please e-mail dlopl-labor@maryland.gov.
- **Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning**
 - If you have a general workforce inquiry, please e-mail dldwdworkforcedevelopment-labor@maryland.gov.
- **Division of Financial Regulation**
 - Customers are encouraged to e-mail DLFRFinReg-LABOR@maryland.gov
- **Division of Labor and Industry**
 - Please e-mail dldlilaborindustry-labor@maryland.gov
- **Maryland Business Express**
 - To access federal and state resources available to help businesses, visit businessexpress.maryland.gov/coronavirus.



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