



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2020

**Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and
Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)
GENERAL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

The CNMI Department of Labor received a number of questions regarding eligibility, dates, and amount of assistance. To ensure the public has the same information, we are publishing the following questions and answers. Please note that this is a new federal program that is still being finalized. Until the program is finalized, some information may change or be supplemented. The following is based on federal guidance and information available to the Department as of May 6, 2020.

1. What is PUA?

PUA stands for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. It is a federal program that provides temporary benefits to covered individuals whose employment has been affected as a direct result of COVID-19. The program is available from February 2, 2020 to December 26, 2020. Individuals who qualify may receive up to \$345 per week, minus deductions for partial earnings, child support and income tax withholdings. Individuals earning over \$345 in a given week will be disqualified from benefits for that week.

2. What is FPUC?

FPUC stands for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation. It is a federal program that supplements the PUA program. Individuals who qualify for PUA and receive at least \$1 of PUA benefits will also receive an additional \$600 supplemental payment under FPUC. This assistance is available from March 29, 2020 to July 31, 2020. You do not have to file a separate application for FPUC.

3. How/When can I apply?

PUA and PUC applications and operations have not yet been finalized. The CNMI Department of Labor is working very closely with our federal partners to launch this new federal program as soon as possible. When the application is available, the CNMI Department of Labor will notify the community through government websites, news, and other media outlets.

When the application is available, the CNMI Department of Labor plans to take applications online, telephonically, and in-person (drive-through/drop off). Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the CNMI Department of Labor encourages individuals to file online.

4. What documents do I need to prepare?

Typically, unemployment insurance requires proof of employment, income, and reason for separation from employment. To streamline the application process, this requirement has changed.

Applicants need only submit the initial application form with copies of **two** forms of ID and social security card. If Applicants want payments by direct deposit, they should also submit a copy of a voided check.

Applicants will “self-certify” the necessary information by signing the application form, under penalty of perjury. Any misrepresentation on the form will be criminally prosecuted for fraud. While you do not need to submit these documents with your initial application, you should have employment records available to help you fill out the application form. Also, the CNMI Department of Labor may require such documents at a later time.

5. Am I eligible?

While we can answer general questions, DOL cannot definitively determine an individual’s eligibility until they file an application with all the necessary information. We strongly urge all individuals to file an application for PUA.

6. What are the eligibility requirements?

Individuals must be partially or totally unemployed (i.e., terminated, furloughed, laid off, or reduced hours), unable or unavailable to work because of at least one of the following COVID-19 related reasons:

- ✓ Diagnosed with COVID-19 or, is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking medical diagnosis;
- ✓ A member of the household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- ✓ Providing care for a family member or household member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- ✓ A child or other person in the household for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility is unable to attend school, or another facility, that is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 and such school or facility is required for the individual to work;
- ✓ Unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine;
- ✓ Unable to reach the place of employment because the individual has been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns;
- ✓ Was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job, or is unable to reach the job, as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- ✓ The individual has become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- ✓ The individual has to quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- ✓ The individual’s place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; or
- ✓ The individual is an independent contractor who is employed (totally or partially) or is unable or unable to work because the COVID-19 public health emergency has severely limited his or her ability to continue performing the customary job.

7. My work hours have been reduced. Can I collect PUA?

If you are working fewer hours due to COVID-19 and it has resulted in a loss of income, you may be eligible for reduced or partial benefits so long as your weekly earnings do not surpass \$345.

8. If an employee refuses to work due to a general fear of contracting the virus, is he or she eligible to receive PUA benefits?

No. A general fear of contracting the virus is not one of the COVID-19 related reasons listed above.

9. Can I quit my job to be eligible for PUA benefits?

To avail of this program, individuals must be “able and available” to work. Individuals who quit their job to access unemployment benefits will be considered to have committed fraud. Further, individuals who decline to return to work when recalled or turn work down will likely not satisfy the “able and available” standard.

10. Are FAS Nationals (Palau, FSM, and RMI) eligible for PUA benefits?

FAS nationals who meet the eligibility requirements above may be eligible for PUA benefits. Individuals should apply with the state or territory where he or she was working at the time their employment was affected by COVID-19.

11. Are CW’s eligible for PUA benefits?

This question was submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor in the beginning of April. We are awaiting official response from the U.S. Department of Labor.

If you have general questions regarding the PUA and FPUC programs, you may call any of the phone numbers listed below between the hours of **8AM to 12PM**, Monday to Friday, **effective April 30, 2020**. Due to high volume of calls, your call may not get connected. If you cannot get through the line, please try again or email us at **info@puamarianas.com**. Please do not send personal or sensitive information via email as it is not secure.

CNMI DOL Phone Numbers for PUA / FPUC Questions

670-989-9090	670-989-9084	670-989-9081
670-989-9089	670-989-9083	670-989-9080

Please note that these numbers are subject to change and may be reassigned to certain PUA/FPUC functions after implementation, such as processing appeals or reporting fraud. For the latest contact information and guidance, please visit the website at marianaslabor.net or at governor.gov.mp.

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