

COVID-19

CARES Act Frequently Asked Questions

Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act:

On Friday, March 27, President Trump signed the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” or the “CARES Act.” This act creates a temporary Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program through December 31, 2020, which expands Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility, duration, and increases benefit amounts.

These benefits are not yet available. DLI is waiting for further guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor. To anticipate these changes, DLI is implementing extensive software programming changes to MontanaWorks and our UI systems to accommodate the changes in this new law. Due to the complexity of these program requirements, this process will take time. We are being proactive to ensure these benefits will be available to support Montanans impacted by COVID-19. **New or enhanced payments will be backdated or applied beginning this Sunday (March 29th) as provided under the act and will be received as soon as programming is in place.** DLI will post updates on our website, share through media outlets and social media. We appreciate your patience as we work through the details.

Q: If I am self-employed, do I need to file a claim online for unemployment?

A: Yes. We are currently programming the MontanaWorks system to accept claims from self-employed individuals. Until then, file for regular employment. If you are denied or you cannot complete an online claim, that should meet the “not otherwise qualify for [regular UI] benefits” requirement in the CARES Act. To prepare, please create an account at MontanaWorks.gov and gather proof of income documents together – recent tax return, 1099s, whatever records show past earnings. Also, please be patient. We will be able to assist you after we have implemented the mechanisms to process these types of benefits. We will be updating the COVID-19 page regularly to provide additional information as it is available.

Q: Do I need to apply to receive the additional \$600 per week on my unemployment claim?

A: If you have already filed a claim that is in process or have filed a claim and are currently receiving benefits, you do not need to take any action to receive the additional \$600 per week. As U.S. DOL provides federal guidance on those payments, you will be issued those payments as they become available.

Q: I was receiving unemployment through last week, and my benefits have exhausted. I am still within my benefit year and was told I couldn't file again until my claim expires. Do I need to refile a new claim to receive the additional money that was passed in legislation for the CARES Act?

A: No, you do not need to file a new application. When the extended benefits are available, additional information will be posted on our website. All claimants who exhausted benefits after March 15, 2020, or the first week an individual is out of work due to COVID-19, whichever is later, will be processed for the extended benefits. In the meantime, keep filing weekly payment requests.

Please know if you are eligible for back weeks of unemployment benefits on one of these federal programs, we will work with you to make those changes as allowed by state and federal law.