



Dear Neighbor,

Due to the current self-distancing and stay-at-home suggestions by the Governor, a number of you have now turned to the Department of Labor (DOL) for the filing of a new Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim. Having worked for the DOL, prior to my time as your legislator, I can tell you that the front-line workers processing your claims are doing the best they can with the antiquated infrastructure and limited additional staff. DOL has attempted to bring back a number of former employees and retirees, but as you can imagine, many are reluctant to leave the safety of their homes. The “good” news, though, is that within the past three weeks, these dedicated workers have processed well over 100,000 of the almost 300,000 UI claims.

As you can imagine, the backlog continues to grow each day as more and more residents find themselves unemployed or underemployed. This means that there is currently a 5 to 6 week processing time. Is this ideal? No. But with the extra staff and potential overtime, the front-line workers are doing their best.

So what can you do to help to have your claim processed? Please take the time to read the tutorial [here](#). When you file, select “**TEMPORARY SHUTDOWN**” as the reason for separation from employment.

Depending on when you filed, you or someone you know may have received an email with the subject: "Critical Information from Department of Labor - PLEASE READ!"

This email was NOT spam and is safe to open and follow. The information it contains may help expedite your claim.

The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allows self-employed individuals and independent contractors to receive benefits through the new federally funded Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. The CTDOL recommends self-employed persons and independent contractors wait until the new PUA system is up before applying for regular benefits.

The CTDOL is also working to program the three federal stimulus unemployment programs into its 40-year-old system.

The following unemployment programs are available through the CARES Act:

- **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA):** For individuals ineligible for regular extended benefits, and those who have exhausted regular state benefits. Individuals must be able to available to work unless they cannot work because of the specific circumstance relating to COVID-19;
- **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC):** Emergency increase in unemployment compensation benefits including:

- An additional \$600 for every claimant
- UI benefits in CT currently range from \$15 to \$649/wk;
- The additional FPUC will bring the range to \$615 to \$1,249/wk; and
- The additional \$600 is applicable to regular and Shared Work UI, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), and Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA).
- **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC):**
 - 13 weeks of federally funded benefits added to the end of the 26 weeks of regular state UI.
 - Eligibility:
 - Have exhausted all rights to UI under state or federal law; and
 - Must be able to work, available to work, and actively seeking work.
 - CTDOL Commissioner has temporarily waived the work search requirement for state UI benefits and is awaiting guidance on work search requirements for this federal program.

Additional information is available on the CTDOL website where there is a Frequently Asked Questions page updated daily where you can find answers to general questions and issues. [Click here to read it.](#)

During the COVID-19 pandemic Connecticut's American Job Centers are closed to in-person visits, however, claimants can call the following numbers for general information concerning unemployment benefits:

- 860-263-6975 and 203-455-2653 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday
- 203-809-9847 and 203-892-6036 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday
- 203-548-7322 (Spanish) from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

Please note, this telephone service does not process or expedite claims.

Sincerely,



Jeff Currey