



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

NEWS RELEASE

North Carolina Division of Employment Security

Lockhart Taylor, Assistant Secretary

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North Carolinians Can Apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Beginning April 24

PUA helps independent contractors, self-employed out of work due to COVID-19

RALEIGH — North Carolina independent contractors and self-employed workers out of work because of COVID-19 can apply for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance beginning this Friday, April 24 at des.nc.gov.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, or PUA, is a federal program for people who are unable to work as a result of COVID-19 and not eligible for regular state unemployment benefits, such as self-employed workers and independent contractors.

For people who have been laid off or had their hours reduced due to COVID-19, the online benefits system will determine eligibility for state unemployment or PUA through a single application beginning April 24.

Individuals who have already applied and been denied for state unemployment benefits may need to provide DES additional information to apply for PUA. Those individuals should sign into their online account and click on the 'Apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance' link to complete the application process. If their claim is in pending status, DES is continuing to review their eligibility for state unemployment benefits.

To help DES process claims more efficiently, claimants should upload all necessary documents, such as proof of income or proof of medical diagnosis, with their application before clicking 'Submit.' If a claimant does not have all of their documents ready when they start the application, they can save their work and come back to it when they are ready to submit all of their information.

"This is a complex program, and we have been working hard to get it up and running," said Lockhart Taylor, assistant secretary for the Division of Employment Security. "We want to get assistance out to people as quickly as possible, while also making sure we protect the integrity of the program by verifying that claimants meet the eligibility requirements for these benefits."

The fastest and most efficient way to file a claim for unemployment is online at des.nc.gov. Individuals who need assistance filing their PUA claim can call the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance line at 866-847-7209.

DES has now paid out a total of more than \$636 million to more than 280,000 people for unemployment claims effective as of March 15.

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