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NMDWS announces benefit applications to begin next week for Self-Employed

UPDATE NOTICE: Individuals applying for PUA will need to submit 2019 tax information. We are no longer accepting 2018 documents. If you have not filed your 2019 taxes, you may submit your W-2 and/or 1099s or any additional documentation that will verify your 2019 earnings.

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NMDWS announces benefit applications to begin next week for Self-Employed

(Albuquerque, NM) – New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions announced today that the application for unemployment insurance benefits for self-employed, independent contractors, and gig economy workers will become available on Sunday, April 26, 2020. These benefits are being offered through the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

Workers who became unemployed, had hours reduced, or had an inability to work as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic may qualify for this unemployment assistance.

People who may qualify for PUA include individuals not eligible for regular unemployment benefits:

- the self-employed;
- independent contractors;
- gig economy workers;
- church employees;
- individuals who were previously found monetarily ineligible;
- nonprofit and governmental workers; and
- workers who have exhausted regular unemployment compensation benefits

Applying for PUA is a two-step process that individuals can begin immediately.

Step 1: Individuals will first need to file a regular Unemployment Insurance claim to determine if their income is covered by the regular state Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. If deemed ineligible, they will be cleared to apply for PUA benefits.

Step 2: Once a claimant is deemed ineligible for regular benefits, they will be provided access to apply for PUA benefits through an application link that will appear on their Unemployment Insurance Tax & Claims System homepage. This application will become available on Sunday, April 26.

Self-employed, independent contractors, and gig economy workers who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, are encouraged to begin filing claims online at www.jobs.state.nm.us .

Those who have already filed a claim for regular UI benefits do not need to file a new claim. Beginning Sunday, April 26, eligible workers will be able to access the PUA application through their online claim. Claimants will be asked to submit additional information required for PUA eligibility including proof of earnings and proof of employment.

When applying for PUA, individuals will need to provide their income information for their most recently completed and filed tax year (either 2018 or 2019) in order for NMDWS to determine their PUA weekly benefit amount.

Acceptable forms of proof of earnings include copies of income tax return forms such as the following:

- Form 1040
- Form 1040A
- Form 1040EZ
- Form 1040NR
- Form 1040NR-EZ
- Form 1040 Schedule C, E, F and SE
- Form K-1

PUA is payable for weeks of unemployment, partial unemployment, or inability to work caused by COVID-19 related reasons beginning on or after January 27, 2020. PUA is not payable for any week of unemployment ending after December 31, 2020. Claimants must certify weekly, and once these claims are processed, all eligible weeks will be paid retroactively.

REMINDER: It is not necessary to call the Department to confirm that your claim has been filed or to check the status. If there are any unresolved issues impacting your claim or if we have questions, we will contact you directly.

Important: If none of the benefits described above, nor unemployment benefits of any kind, are available to employees who quit without good work-related cause, refuse to return to work, or refuse to receive full-time pay. Refusing to return to work could result in a disqualification for benefit eligibility. Attempts to collect unemployment benefits after quitting a job without good work-related cause is considered to be fraud. The CARES Act specifically provides for serious consequences for fraudulent cases including fines, confinement, and an inability to receive future unemployment benefits until all fraudulent claims and fines have been repaid. Employers are encouraged to utilize the New Hire system to report those employees who fail to return to work.

Additional information for workers affected by COVID-19, including frequently asked questions, can be found at www.dws.state.nm.us/COVID-19-Info . For the latest announcements and updates, follow NMDWS on Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

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