Ohio | Department of Job and Family Services
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News Release

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More Ohioans Eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recently issued guidance expanding eligibility for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). PUA supports self-employed individuals, independent contractors, and others who don't qualify for traditional unemployment benefits. The new guidance expands eligibility to include the following three groups of people:

1) Those previously receiving traditional unemployment benefits who refuse to return to work or refuse an offer of work because the workplace is not in compliance with local, state, or national health and safety standards directly related to COVID-19.
2) Those who provide services to an educational institution or educational service agency and are fully or partially unemployed as a direct result of COVID-19.
3) Those who are laid off or had their work hours reduced as a direct result of COVID-19.

For the first group above, the guidance extends to the federal PUA program similar protections Ohioans in the traditional unemployment program have had since June, as a result of Governor DeWine's Executive Order 2020-24D. Individuals not eligible for traditional unemployment benefits may be eligible for PUA. This includes those whose earnings in their previous wages averaged less than $280 per week.

System programming and process mapping are currently underway to make PUA available to those in the three new groups. The guidance issued expanded provisions of the federal CARES Act, which was enacted in March 2020. ODJFS will notify those who may be eligible and will post updates at jfs.ohio.gov/caa.

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.