Press Release: State Labor Department Announces Updates On Unemployment Benefits For Self-Employed, More Access To Claimant Support

For immediate release

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Contact: Office of Government, Policy and Public Relations - cdle_pr@state.co.us (mailto:cdle_pr@state.co.us)
Web: ColoradoUI.gov (https://coloradoui.gov)

(DENVER) - Today the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment announced effective Monday, April 20th, it will begin taking unemployment benefit applications under the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act), paying the additional $600 per week in unemployment benefits and launch other new points of access for unemployed workers to obtain information.

Colorado's Unemployment Insurance program - like all UI programs across the country - has been under unprecedented strain for the last month said Joe Barela, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment during a press conference announcing the new benefit rollout, which includes unemployment to self-employed and independent contractors.

On Monday we will be able to begin accepting applications for these new worker groups who previously were not eligible for regular unemployment, while we will also begin paying the extra $600 benefit provided under the CARES Act, said Barela.

The Department stood up a brand new online application system to begin taking these claims under the CARES Act. By leveraging an existing system in development, Colorado will be among the first group of states to accept applications and pay benefits.

We don't know what the volume will look like into our new system because not only do we not know how many gig workers are out there, we don't know how many of them will apply for unemployment. But we have expanded tools and on Monday will have systems in place to begin taking these applications and provide other resources, he said.

There are several provisions within the CARES Act that provide enhanced or extended unemployment benefits for workers. All of these new benefits are paid for by the federal government and eligible claims will be backdated so claimants will not lose out on benefits due to the waiting period to submit an application (see below).

New claims that fall under one of the new allowed situations for unemployment under the CARES Act will be taken through a new system. Claimants will submit claims, manage their benefits and request payment through this new online system.

This includes gig workers, independent contractors, self employed and those who are out of work because of a number of reasons directly related to COVID-19 including caring for a child whose school is closed or someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

Regular unemployment benefits will continue to be processed through the existing systems so anyone currently on unemployment does not need to take any action.

The CARES Act also provides an additional $600 of unemployment benefits per week on top of a claimant's weekly unemployment benefit. This additional benefit, known as Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation or FPUC, does not require a claimant to take any action, is retroactive to March 29th and will begin hitting active claimants accounts as soon as next week for weeks of unemployment prior to April 15th.

We are working as quickly as we can to get these benefits into the hands of people who are in need during these unpredictable and unprecedented times, said Barela.

The Department also announced a new call center to take these new claims and a Virtual Town Hall to answer claimant questions.

A new 80-person remote call center will go live Monday, April 20th, to help manage claimant questions and overflow from the existing call center by addressing questions directly related to CARES Act benefits. Additionally, two Virtual Town Halls will be offered on Monday, April 20th - one at 9:15 AM and one at 11:30 AM specifically for Spanish speaking claimants. Registration for both Virtual Town Halls is available at coloradoui.gov.

More About the CARES Act and Benefits
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance or PUA, is the program that will provide unemployment benefits, up to 39 weeks, to those not ordinarily eligible for them. This includes gig workers, individuals who are self-employed or contract employees, those who cannot telework while obeying a shelter order, and even those who have exhausted regular unemployment insurance benefits. It also includes workers who were directly impacted by COVID-19, such as needing to care for a child whose school is closed or a dependent who tested positive for COVID-19 (see worksheet). This benefit is retroactive to February 2, 2020.

The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program, or FPUC, provides $600 per week to any individual eligible for any of the Unemployment Compensation programs. This benefit begins March 29, 2020 and extends through July 25, 2020.

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, or PEUC, provides for an additional 13 weeks of benefits beyond the standard maximum of 26 weeks for traditional (regular) unemployment benefits.

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Statistics

Unemployment Rate - February 2021 (https://www.colmigateway.com/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/Feb21PR.pdf)
Colorado: 6.6%
National: 6.2%

Colorado Job Growth (SA) (https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/lmi/default.aspx?pu=1&plang=E)
Jan'21 - Feb'21: 5,200
Feb'20 - Feb21: -156,700

2021 Minimum Wage
$12.32 / Hour
$9.30 / Hour for tipped employees

2020 Minimum Wage
$12.00 / Hour
$8.98 / Hour for tipped employees

Contact Us

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment

633 17th Street, Suite 201
Denver, CO 80202-3660
Phone: 303-318-8000

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