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State of Wisconsin
Governor Tony Evers



TO: **W-2 Agencies
Training Staff**

FROM: Margaret McMahon, Director
Bureau of Working Families
Division of Family and Economic Security
Department of Children and Families

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 Expanded
Unemployment Insurance Benefits**

BWF OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 20-09 (Amended)

DATE: 04/24/2020

AMENDMENT 1: 06/22/2020

AMENDMENT 2: 06/08/2021

W-2 ☒ EA ☒ CF ☐ JAL ☒

RAP ☒ TMJ ☐ TJ ☐ Other EP ☐

CROSS REFERENCE: [2019 Wisconsin Act 185](#)
[Emergency Order #12 Safer At Home Order](#)
[Executive Order 72](#)
[Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act of 2020](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to:

1. Communicate information on the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits; and
2. Provide detail on how to treat the emergency Unemployment Compensation benefits when determining financial eligibility for Wisconsin Works (W-2), Emergency Assistance (EA), Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Job Access Loans (JAL).

BACKGROUND

On March 12, 2020, Governor Tony Evers issued [Executive Order 72](#) declaring a health emergency due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and directing all state agencies to assist in the state's response to the public health emergency. On March 24, 2020, the state of Wisconsin was put under a "[Safer At Home](#)" order that directs Wisconsin residents to stay at home and orders all non-essential businesses to close until April 24, 2020. On April 16, 2020 the "Safer At Home" Order was extended to May 26, 2020. On May 13, 2020, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned the extension to the Safer at Home order, ending the requirements ordered for the state. In response, some Wisconsin counties and municipalities established local orders to continue Safer at Home rules.

The federal government, state government, and local governments are all working together to respond to the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has contributed to a sharp rise in unemployment and legislation enacted at both the state and federal levels is intended to temporarily expand unemployment insurance benefit programs in addition to providing more robust benefits. [2019 Wisconsin Act 185](#) includes several provisions impacting unemployed individuals in Wisconsin. The federal [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act of 2020](#) is intended to provide economic relief in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and includes a number of key provisions impacting individuals, including expanded unemployment benefits.

Many parents whose employment and ability to meet basic needs has been adversely impacted by COVID-19 are turning to W-2 agencies for support and resources. As our partners interact with low-income families in need of guidance during this time of great economic uncertainty, the Bureau of Working Families (BWF) has compiled information to summarize the various changes to Unemployment Insurance and detail how the new and increased payments impact our programs. The information and resources linked below will assist BWF partners when educating individuals on the availability of expanded Unemployment Insurance benefits. Unemployment Insurance is a critical tool for achieving family stability and economic security and W-2 agencies can play a critical role in helping parents understand the changes to this benefit as well as how accepting it impacts eligibility for other programs.

EXPLANATION OF COVID-19 WISCONSIN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFIT CHANGES

The State of Wisconsin has made a number of changes to our unemployment insurance program processes to ensure that individuals have access to benefits without delay during the public health emergency.

APPLYING FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) reported experiencing an unprecedented call volume due to the increase in applications for Unemployment Insurance benefits. Individuals are encouraged to apply for Unemployment Insurance benefits [online](#). DWD has also requested that individuals with questions search for information at the DWD COVID-19 [General Information](#) page or the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

Individuals who need assistance using Unemployment Insurance online services or who are unable to access online services may call (414) 435-7069 or toll-free (844) 910-3661 during business hours. Additional detail on online services and contacting DWD can be found on the DWD [Unemployment Hours of Operation](#) page.

DWD has also developed a number of informational materials to assist individuals in accessing details on Unemployment Insurance benefits and navigating the application process. Several helpful attachments are linked throughout this memo and captured in the Attachments section in hopes that these tools can guide W-2 workers in their conversations with individuals regarding benefits that may be available.

ONE-WEEK WAITING PERIOD

Previously, individuals were ineligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits for the first week of unemployment. The one-week waiting period has been temporarily eliminated to provide

individuals with immediate financial relief. Individuals who filed a new application for benefit years that begin after March 12, 2020 and before February 7, 2021 will not have to serve the one-week waiting period prior to receiving benefits.

Individuals who initiated a new Unemployment Insurance benefit claim in the week of March 15, 2020 or later and served a waiting week will receive a retroactive payment for the waiting week. DWD plans to distribute retroactive waiting week payments prior to April 25, 2020.

WORK SEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Previously, most individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits in Wisconsin were required to conduct a reasonable search for work and document work search actions for the current week. During the COVID-19 emergency, UI claimants are not required to conduct work search actions. The waiver of the work search requirement is retroactively effective to March 12, 2020.

COVID-19 EXPANDED FEDERAL UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Three new temporary federally funded unemployment compensation (UC) programs were created to provide financial relief to individuals whose employment has been adversely impacted by the pandemic. W-2 agencies may opt to provide the DWD [Which Unemployment Program is for You?](#) flowchart to guide their conversation with individuals wanting to learn more about which of these new benefits they may be able to access.

FEDERAL PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (FPUC)

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) is a temporary emergency increase of \$600 per week in unemployment insurance benefits. Wisconsin plans to start making FPUC payments the week of April 26, 2020. FPUC payments will be retroactive to the week ending April 4, 2020 and continue through the week ending July 25, 2020.

Individuals who are collecting unemployment insurance benefits from the following programs are automatically eligible for the temporary \$600 emergency payment increase and do not need to take additional action to receive this extra benefit:

- Standard Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA);
- Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC);
- Work-Share (STC); and
- Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA).

Additional information on the \$600 FPUC can be found on the DWD [FPUC web page](#).

PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE (PUA)

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) expands eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits for up to 39 weeks to individuals who are not otherwise eligible for regular UI. The following groups may be determined eligible for PUA benefits if unable to work as a direct result of the public health emergency:

- Individuals who are currently or formerly self-employed;
- Individuals who are currently or formerly independent contractors; and
- Individuals with limited work history.

W-2 agencies are encouraged to distribute the DWD [Claiming Pandemic Unemployment Assistance in Wisconsin](#) brochure to individuals who may be interested in PUA benefits. This helpful resource provides additional detail on PUA benefits, eligibility criteria, and the application process. It's important to note that individuals are instructed to apply for PUA benefits via the regular Unemployment Insurance benefits [online](#) portal. After logging in or creating an account, individuals can access the PUA application via the Unemployment Insurance Summary page.

W-2 agencies are also encouraged to distribute the DWD [COVID-19 Scenarios](#) publication to individuals with questions about eligibility criteria for PUA benefits. This publication highlights situations that may warrant PUA eligibility for the expanded groups listed above. Examples include:

- Individuals who are unable to work due to a COVID-19 diagnosis;
- Individuals who are unable to work due to the need to provide care to a household or family member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19; and
- Individuals who are unable to work due to role as primary caregiver for child unable to attend school or another facility closed due to COVID-19.

DWD began accepting PUA applications on April 21, 2020. PUA Benefits may be provided for up to 39 weeks. The first payable week will be retroactive to the week ending February 8, 2020, or the first week an individual is out of work due to COVID-19, whichever is later. PUA benefits may be provided through the week ending December 26, 2020.

Additional information on PUA can be found on the DWD [PUA web page](#).

PANDEMIC EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (PEUC)

The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program provides an additional 13 weeks of emergency unemployment insurance benefits for people who remain unemployed after they have exhausted their Regular UI benefits.

DWD is not able to process any weeks of extensions at the time of publication of this memo and details on accessing this benefit are forthcoming. Individuals currently receiving unemployment benefits will not need to take additional action for the PEUC benefit beyond continuing to file weekly claims. Application information for individuals who have already exhausted their regular unemployment benefits has not been determined.

The first Payable Week of PEUC benefits will be retroactive to week ending April 4, 2020, or the first week after an individual exhausts regular UI, whichever is later. PEUC benefits will be provided through the week ending December 26, 2020 and the payment amount will be equivalent to the individual's standard UI benefit amount. The PEUC program does not apply to individuals receiving PUA.

Additional information on the PEUC, including responses to Frequently Asked Questions, can be found on the DWD [PEUC web page](#). DWD will update this page with information on the implementation of the PEUC benefit when it becomes available.

COVID-19 POLICY CHANGES

For all programs, W-2, JAL, RCA, and EA, workers must disregard the \$600 emergency increase in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) benefits as income.

Regular Unemployment Insurance benefits must be counted toward the 115% percent gross income test for determining financial eligibility. In addition, the following expanded federal Unemployment Compensation benefits must be counted in the gross income test:

- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits for individuals not eligible for regular unemployment benefits; and
- Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits for individuals who have exhausted their regular unemployment benefits.

Program	Regular Unemployment Compensation	PEUC	PUA	FPUC
W-2, EA, RCA, & JAL	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income	Disregarded as income


OTHER PROGRAMS

It is important to understand and discuss with individuals how receipt of Unemployment benefits may affect their eligibility for other programs. The table below includes information on other assistance programs' policies on counting Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits as income when determining financial eligibility.


Other Programs	Regular Unemployment Compensation	PEUC	PUA	FPUC
BadgerCare Plus	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income	Disregarded as income
EBD Medicaid	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income	Disregarded as income
FoodShare	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income
Wisconsin Shares	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income	Disregarded as income
Caretaker Supplement	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income	Counted as income

CARES WORKER WEB (CWW) CHANGES

Starting the week of April 27, 2020, FPUC payments will display in CWW with the M indicator code.


CARES Worker Web
ACCEPTANCE

User ID: XCTE8L User Name: A SAYEED




Unemployment Insurance Benefits Details

Claimant Information					
Case:	9151085895	SSN:	112-64-7872	Base:	Active
Name:	CCINDI WW GREEN	PIN:	9585464241	Claim Office:	5 Mon: 04/20/2020
Self Employed:	3710 E KARSTENS DR APT 5 MADISON WI 53704	Birth Date:	09/27/2062	Gender:	FEMALE PVNC: 20-12
		Phone:	608-239-4281	Benefit Year End:	21-11
Self Employed:				Last Week Claimed:	20-14
Maximum Weekly Benefit Rate:	\$370.00	Maximum Benefit Amount:	\$9,620.00	Paid:	\$1,110.00 Left: \$8,510.00

Employer Information		
Employer Number	Last Day Worked	Termination Reason
895821	03/08/2020	Laid Off

Transaction Information							
Week	Paid	CS ICPT	Income	Employer Number	Date	Type	Remarks
2020-14	\$370.00	\$0.00			04/22/2020	P	BENEFIT PAYMENT, NEXT CARD SENT
2020-14	\$600.00	\$0.00			04/22/2020	M	FPUC STIMULUS
2020-13	\$370.00	\$0.00			04/22/2020	P	BENEFIT PAYMENT, NEXT CARD SENT
2020-12	\$370.00	\$0.00			04/22/2020	P	BENEFIT PAYMENT, NEXT CARD SENT
2020-12	\$0.00	\$0.00			04/20/2020	Z	NEW CLAIM DETERMINATION START

Base: A-Active [Lookup](#)



In order to disregard the \$600 FPUC, the CWW UIB data exchange has been updated to exclude it from the UI amount that is automatically populated on the Unearned Income page.

Starting May 21, 2020, PUA payments will start to display in CWW. During any program's Intake driver flow, the lump sum PUA payment will autopopulate the Unearned Income page with the OTTF code and the begin and end month that the lump sum was received.

For ongoing cases, the FEP must create an Unearned Income page and use the **OTTF OTAF** income type for lump sum PUA payments. **OTAF ensures the lump sum will count only for W-2.** For ongoing weekly payments, the FEP must use the OTTF code since both W-2 and Wisconsin Shares count ongoing PUA payments.

PUA payments will appear on the UIB Details page with the P indicator in the Type column and BENEFIT PAYMENT, NEXT CARD SENT in the Remarks column, which is the same display as regular unemployment payments.

Starting June 24, 2020, PEUC payments will start to display in CWW. **PEUC payments are the last of the COVID-19-related unemployment payments that will be issued by DWD.** Applicants and participants may receive retroactive PEUC payments.

PEUC provides an additional 13 weeks of regular unemployment benefits, so these payments will be counted in the same way that regular unemployment benefits and PUA payments are counted. The worker instructions that were developed for counting PUA payments also apply to counting PEUC payments.

For more information on the unemployment insurance data exchange, see *Process Help 44.3.4 Unemployment Insurance*.

AGENCY ACTION

W-2 agencies should ensure program applicants and participants are informed of the expanded Unemployment Insurance benefits for individuals whose employment was adversely impacted by COVID-19. W-2 agencies must discuss the instructions for treatment of the FPUC, PUA, and PEUC benefits with staff and update any relevant local agency procedures as necessary.

ATTACHMENTS

[Which Unemployment Program is for You?](#)

[Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#)

[Claiming Pandemic Unemployment Assistance in Wisconsin](#)

CONTACTS

For W-2 Policy Questions: DCFw2PolicyQuestions@wisconsin.gov

For W-2, CARES and WWP Functionality Questions: BWF Work Programs Help Desk
BWFworkprogramsHD@wisconsin.gov

DCF/DFES/BWF/LW/DH/GS