



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 31, 2020

Media Contact:

Ariane Le Chevallier

971-201-1214

OED_Communications@oregon.gov

Tens of Thousands of Oregonians Awaiting Adjudication Could Receive Unemployment Benefits While They Wait

July 31, 2020 (Salem, Ore.) –The Oregon Employment Department [today announced](#) that it has found a way to pay benefits to thousands of Oregonians who are out of work due to COVID-19 while they wait for their claim, or **“Benefits While You Wait.”** This applies to Oregonians who are waiting for their claim to be reviewed by an adjudicator to determine whether they are eligible for regular unemployment or the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program.

“We are confident this group of Oregonians are eligible for benefits because they lost their job due to COVID-19, we just don’t know which program they are eligible for yet,” said Employment Department Acting Director David Gerstenfeld. “We have found a workaround that will allow us to pay benefits while their claims are being reviewed by an adjudicator. We are grateful we have figured out a way to do this because Oregonians have been waiting too long.”

The Employment Department is proactively notifying claimants who have been identified to fall into this group via email and robo calls.

Strict laws governing unemployment insurance to prevent fraud and provide people due process require that each claim be reviewed. The Employment Department estimates that tens of thousands of Oregonians whose claims are in adjudication may be eligible for PUA if they are not eligible for regular unemployment. This pool of Oregonians could begin receiving “Benefits While You Wait.” We are going to contact people who may be able to receive “Benefits While You Wait” over the next several weeks.

Oregonians who may be eligible for “Benefits While You Wait”:

1. Applied for regular unemployment benefits;
2. Had their claim flagged for adjudication because the Employment Department has to determine if they meet the legal requirements to get regular unemployment benefits;
3. They are out of work due to a [COVID-19 qualifying reason](#) (see full list below); AND
4. Are likely [eligible](#) for PUA if they cannot receive regular unemployment benefits.

For now, people should continue filing their weekly claims as they have been. We will notify people who may be able to benefit from this approach.

The administrative workaround will work as follows:

- As long as claimants qualify for PUA and file weekly regular unemployment claims, the Employment Department will pay these Oregonians their regular unemployment benefit amount until their claim is adjudicated. If, at the end of the adjudication process, it turns out that they qualified for regular unemployment benefits, nothing will change. They will keep getting regular unemployment benefits as long as they file their weekly claims and are eligible.
- If it turns out they didn't qualify for regular unemployment, then the Employment Department will move their claims into the PUA program. If their PUA weekly benefit amount is higher, the Employment Department will also send them the increase for all the past weeks they got the regular UI amount.
- In the unlikely event this results in overpayment, the person would have to pay it back.

"Benefits While You Wait" is not available to individuals having their claims reviewed because of past or current school work experience, people who need to prove they are legally authorized to work in the U.S., claimants who reported being out of their labor market at least 3.5 days during a week, and some other situations.

COVID-19 reasons you may be eligible for PUA:

- You have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Or, you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis.
- A member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- You are caring for a family member or a member of your household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Your child can't go to school because their school is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and you need your child to be in school for you to work.
- A person in your household for whom you have primary caregiving responsibility can't go to a facility for care because the facility is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and you need them to be in facility care for you to work.
- You can't get to your workplace because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- You can't get to your workplace because a health care provider has advised you to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
- You were scheduled to start a job but you can't start it or can't get to it as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- You have become the main income earner for your household because the head of your household died as a direct result of COVID-19.
- You had to quit your job as a direct result of COVID-19.
- Your workplace is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

###

Equal Opportunity program — auxiliary aids and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Contact: (503) 947-1794. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, call 711 Telecommunications Relay Services.