

Friday June 19, 2020

**The Employment Department will never ask you to pay to access your unemployment benefits.**

The Employment Department *does not use any other outside company to get you your benefits*. All communications about your benefits will come directly from OED, not from an outside company.

**If you are asked to send money or pay to access your benefits, be aware that this is a scam.**

- If someone asks you to send them money in order to receive your benefits, contact [www.oregonconsumer.gov](http://www.oregonconsumer.gov) or call 877-877-9392 to report the scam.
- If you receive an email or text you think may be from a scammer posing as the employment department or legislator, first, **do not click on any links and do not respond**. You can file a complaint at [www.oregonconsumer.gov](http://www.oregonconsumer.gov) or call 877-877-9392.

### Using Your Relicard

*No matter what payment type you sign up for, your first payment will come as a paper check. After that, your benefits should appear in your checking account via direct deposit or on your Reliacard, depending on which option you choose. Your unemployment benefit or PUA benefit and the \$600 additional payment will always post as two separate transactions.*

Using a “US Bank” or any “Money Pass” ATM is **free**, even if you do not have a US Bank account.

[Find a US Bank here](#)

[Find a Money Pass ATM here](#)

Using any other ATM or private ATM may incur a US Bank fee as well as a fee from the ATM owner.

- Replacement cards are free but you can choose to pay for expediated shipping via UPS if you would like your replacement card faster than standard mailing time.
- There are fees related to using the card overseas.
- If a balance is kept on the card **without activity** for a year, a monthly fee will begin to be assessed in order to maintain the account until activity resumes, or until the balance reaches \$0, whichever happens first.

For more information, here is the link to US Bank and the fees for ReliaCard: [US Bank reliacard info](#)

**Fees can be completely avoided by using a US Bank or Money Pass ATM in the U.S..**

Can OED provide the number of cases that have not been processed and the number of people waiting to receive benefits? It would also be useful to know about any updates to the average timeline to process regular UI, PUA, and PEUC applications.

OED is working on better metrics. They created a new [data dashboard](#) on their website that has some of this information, but not all of it. OED will continue to work on more ways to track and report in a meaningful way. The ‘number of people waiting to receive benefits’ is a key data point but it is hard to track because of the many reasons an individual might still be waiting for benefits.

If my “return to work” date is incorrect, do I have to reapply and go to the end of the queue?  
What recommendations are there for people in this situation?

In non-pandemic times, when somebody tells OED they anticipate returning to work at a particular time, their system automatically pauses payments on a claim so their employees can review the claim and make sure the person is still eligible for benefits. This works well in normal times, but creates obvious problems now. OED has made changes to their system to automatically stop some claims from pausing. For many scenarios, however, the effort to stop that automatic pausing is very time intensive for our technical team. OED does have employees that are manually reviewing these claims, proactively removing those pauses many times before the person knows it was there. For some scenarios, they do have to get information from you, and they are calling to get the information needed to have payments resume. They are not yet able to prevent ALL of the claims from pausing payments, unfortunately.

OED recommends restarting your claim in this situation because it is not as time consuming, for you or their employees, as filing a brand new claim. You should not have to wait the same amount of time as though you just filed a brand new claim. If you see this happen on your claim, try to call and let them know and usually be resolved by phone. I know that reaching OED is difficult, but they continue to make progress in answering more calls and shortening how long people have to wait to get through. You can also call any local WorkSource center and ask them to restart your claim <http://worksourceoregon.org/Centers.html>

What does claim restart mean?

It typically means that somebody missed a week of claiming benefits. More information may be found here: <https://youtu.be/yy7xSpJaFeQ>

Can I file a claim for UCX (unemployment compensation for former service-members) using the regular unemployment insurance online claims system?

Yes, you can. These claims are more complicated and take longer to process as OED is required by federal law to get information from the military before paying UXC benefits, but you can file your claim using the regular online claims system.

Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

I submitted my information to my legislator. When will I hear from the Employment Department?

While OED is addressing claims as quickly as they can, there are a huge number of people they are helping. A new process of consolidating information from legislative offices is greatly improving the rate at which OED can identify and contact individuals.

Depending on the type of claim you have, resolutions times vary but OED is actively working on the claims being sent to them from my office. They have also enacted several measures to increase capacity within OED to be making outbound calls to reach constituents like yourself.

If you are waiting for a call from OED, please remember that some people’s telephone service providers or phones do not show these calls as coming from the Oregon Employment Department as being from the Oregon Employment Department. In some cases, it even, incorrectly, shows the calls are coming from another state or even country, or it may mark the calls as spam, if a spam filter is activated on your phone.

If you have not heard from OED within three weeks of submitting your information to me, please let me know.

What is the best contact for work share issues?

[www.OregonWorkShare.com](http://www.OregonWorkShare.com)

OED\_WorkShare@Oregon.gov  
503-947-1800 or 800-436-6191

I'm an employer and am having a hard time getting employees to return to work because they are collecting more on unemployment than they will back at work. What can I do about this?

There are some situations where people can continue to receive benefits even if they do not return to work when you ask them to. You can find more information at:

[https://www.oregon.gov/employ/Documents/Employer\\_Resuming\\_Operations-FAQs.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/employ/Documents/Employer_Resuming_Operations-FAQs.pdf)

If your employee does not return to work when you ask them to for other reasons, please report this here:

<https://secure.emp.state.or.us/public/ui-fraud/FraudReferralForm.cfm> (Although this form refers to reporting fraud, it is also how you can report other situations, such as when a worker does not return to work).

People can also call OED at 877-668-3204 to report this information.

I worked out of state or partially out of state, or split my work between Oregon and a bordering state. Which state do I file with?

If all of your wages in 2019 were generated in another state, you likely need to file in that state. If you worked in Oregon in 2019, but also in another state, you may have a combined wage claim.

Out of state claims vary a great deal. If you worked out of state any time in the last 18 months, my office will flag your case as a potential out of state claim when we submit your information to the Employment Department and these claims may take a little longer to process. Not reporting when you have worked in another state can cause even bigger delays.

I was furloughed. Can I get unemployment if I was required to take a week off with no pay?

Yes, in general, people are potentially eligible for UI benefits for a one week furlough. If it is the first week on their claim, they will only receive credit for their waiting week at this time.

But I thought Oregon was eliminating the waiting week. Will they pay my claim retroactively if the waiting week is eliminated later?

Yes, any weeks claimed which serve as a waiting week on a claim OED anticipates paying retroactively after the programming is in place to eliminate the waiting week (unless the person has already received the maximum amount of benefits on their claim).

Do I qualify for the \$600 federal benefit if I have 2, non consecutive 1 week furloughs?

Yes, if you file weekly claims for both weeks and meet the weekly eligibility requirements, you should be eligible to receive one \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) for the second week only (assuming the first week serves as a waiting week).

If an applicant is found ineligible for benefits and needs to appeal, how long does it typically take to process that appeal?

I am hearing about some claims that seem to be incorrect denials (like they didn't include information from the claimant's latest employer who was the one that laid them off for COVID-related reasons) and are concerned

that they will be facing long waits to appeal these incorrect denials since it has been so hard for them to call in and discuss and resolve these issues in a timely manner.

It is taking, on average, about three to four weeks from when OED receives a hearing request to when the hearing is held. OED is bringing on additional staff to assist with the review and processing of these requests and anticipate that they will soon be able to reduce that average wait time by a week. When a hearing request is submitted, they encourage the person to submit any information they have that may show that OED's decision was not correct. OED reviews that information and can make needed corrections without the person having to wait for the appeal hearing to take place.

### How can I be prepared for an appeal hearing?

When a hearing request is submitted, you are encouraged to submit any available information that may show the OED decision was not correct. The information is reviewed, and needed corrections can be made without the person having to wait for the appeal hearing to take place. The Office of Administrative Hearings has independent administrative law judges who conduct these hearings, and it has comprehensive resources specific to unemployment appeals hearings at [https://www.oregon.gov/oah/Pages/UI\\_Publications2.aspx](https://www.oregon.gov/oah/Pages/UI_Publications2.aspx).

### How is OED assisting non-native English claimants?

The department has partnered with a number of organizations to assist claimants. Examples include Catholic Charities, Lutheran Community Services NW, SOAR/Ecumenical Ministries, IRCO, Legal Aid Service of Oregon, and the Oregon Law Center. The department is also working with the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) Office of Workforce Investments on a proposal to fund a hotline through our nonprofit workforce partner Worksystems, Inc. The goal for this hotline is to assist callers with limited English proficiency in filing unemployment insurance, PUA, and PEUC claims over the phone. The partnership with the HECC Office of Workforce Investment has also helped with video production in nine languages to date, with many more in progress.

OED also has taken other actions such as creating resource pages in 15 languages other than English, and the option for people to call any any WorkSource center to file a claim over the telephone where we have many bilingual employees and telephone translators available to help. To receive a callback in a language other than English, any customer or advocate can send the customer's name, phone number, and requested language to us at [OED\\_LanguageAccess@oregon.gov](mailto:OED_LanguageAccess@oregon.gov).

Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### How does giving you my claim information help me?

My office is working with the Oregon Employment Department (OED) to send them the missing information they need to process claims. When you share your claim information with us, we share it with them. This way, you don't have to call or wait on hold.

### How is OED prioritizing claims?

They are focusing on older claims. This means claims filed 60 or more days ago. These claims require manual processing by OED's most experienced employees. On May 29, there were 38,000 of these regular unemployment insurance claims (UI). As of June 8, they processed 72% of them. Now 10,700 remain. Their goal is to process 100% of them by June 12. For the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), they have assigned and trained employees solely dedicated to PUA, so those claims do not have to wait behind regular UI claims before getting processed.

### When will someone call me back?

I know people are having a hard time reaching OED right now. In response, they are hiring and training more people to answer calls and to make calls themselves to people that are waiting for their benefits. They have added phonelines and employees from the WorkSource centers to answer phones and are bringing on the National Guard to help make calls. They are also bringing on volunteers from other state agencies to help.

### Is there anything I can do to help ensure that the Employment Department can reach me if they call?

OED is making hundreds of calls each day. Although all of these calls are made from within Oregon, for some people, their telephone service providers show the calls as coming from out of state or even out of the country. Or they may even be marked as spam, depending on the spam filter on your phone. If you are waiting for a call back from OED, disable the spam filter on your phone, and answer all calls. Be aware that the caller ID likely won't say "Employment Department" and might not even have an Oregon area code.

### How do I know the status of my claim?

You can check the status of your claim on the Oregon Employment Department's (OED) website. Go to the Online Claim System at [Employment.Oregon.Gov/OCS](https://www.employment.oregon.gov/OCS). Go to the "Status of Your Claim and Weekly Reports" section. It will show you which weeks you have claimed and if any benefits have been paid.

### When will I get my money?

OED is processing 96% of claims on time, which the federal government defines as within three weeks of making a claim. Once your claim is approved, here is what you can expect:

- After a weekly claim has been filed, benefits are issued on Tuesdays. Timing depends on the method of payment selected. Payments generally arrive within two to three business days. Payments may take longer to arrive if sent by mail.
- If some weeks have paid, but others have been held up, then typically once the issues holding up any weeks is resolved, those remaining payments are issued the following business day (after overnight processing) and follow the same time frame described in the bullet above.

### How long after my claim has been processed should I get a check? What if I don't get a check?

Seeing that your claim has been processed does not necessarily mean you are eligible for benefits. There could be issues holding up payment – not everybody is eligible for benefits and OED is required to ensure you are eligible before issuing you any benefits. The best way to check if your claim has been processed or if your payments were sent is to visit OED's Online Claim System at [Employment.Oregon.Gov/OCS](https://www.employment.oregon.gov/OCS). If you can see that your claim was processed, check the next day to see if payments were sent. Before contacting OED, wait for a notice from OED that says more information is needed.

I got a letter that there is something wrong with my claim, but it doesn't say what. What do I do with my claim now? Do I keep filing weekly as if everything is okay? Yes, you should continue to claim as if everything is okay. Some common reasons why you will receive these letters are:

- You reported that you either quit or were fired at the time you filed your initial claim
- Your claim is not valid because OED doesn't have a record of sufficient wages
- You waited longer than a week to file a weekly claim and now must restart
- When you filed a weekly claim, you reported that you did not meet one of the eligibility criteria
- If you filed for both regular UI benefits and for PUA benefits, we are required to give you information about both claims you filed. This means you may get notices saying there is an issue with your regular UI claim, for example, even if you are eligible for and receiving PUA benefits

If I am ineligible for regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, but I think I am eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits, does OED automatically move my claim to PUA or do I need to file for it?

No, OED doesn't automatically move an initial UI claim to PUA. Federal law requires that you apply for PUA benefits, so you will need to file a separate PUA claim at <https://govstatus.egov.com/PUA>.

How does the PUA program work?

The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program is a brand new program. It dramatically changes how unemployment insurance works. It provides benefits to Oregonians who would otherwise have been denied benefits —like self-employed people and those who have not earned enough wages to qualify. To get it up and running quickly, OED created both PDF and paper applications. You can also apply using a secured upload option. All options are available [online here](#). OED is processing those claims and have started paying benefits. If you have applied, you should hear back in the next three weeks.

OED has launched a dedicated PUA phone line and added more capacity to their phone lines:

Toll free: 833-410-1004

Local: 503-370-5400

I received notice that my claim was denied. Can I make an appeal?

Any time OED reduces or denies your benefits, they will send you a notice, called an administrative decision. If you don't agree with the decision, you have the right to appeal it by requesting a hearing. The notice includes a form you can use to request a hearing, and instructions for filing an appeal.

Most administrative decisions become final 20 days after OED mails them, so don't wait to file an appeal if you want a hearing. If you don't file an appeal within 20 days, you will lose your chance to change the decision. If you appeal an administrative decision, keep filing for benefits each week. If you don't claim each week while your appeal is pending, you may not be paid for those weeks if the appeal is decided in your favor.

Hearings are held by phone and are conducted by an independent Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). The ALJ will review your case and make a decision based on the available information. Individuals are welcome to present their evidence to the ALJ.