

New DOL Guidance Expanding Eligibility for Unemployment Insurance to Three Categories of Workers

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The Department of Labor (DOL) has issued [guidance](#) to state unemployment insurance agencies that expands eligibility for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

PUA is a federally funded unemployment expansion that was adopted under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to provide unemployment benefits for certain individuals not otherwise entitled to state benefits and unemployed for COVID-19-related reasons. (For more information on COVID-19 unemployment relief, see our article, [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021: Unemployment Relief](#).)

The new DOL guidance was issued in response to a directive from President Joe Biden and reflects the Biden administration's pledge to "ensure that unemployed Americans no longer have to choose between paying their bills and keeping themselves and their families safe from COVID-19."

The DOL guidance expands unemployment benefits to three categories of workers:

1. Workers receiving unemployment benefits who had their continued regular unemployment benefits' claims denied after they refused to work or accept an offer of work at a worksite not in compliance with COVID-19 health and safety standards.
2. Workers laid off or who have had their work hours reduced as a direct result of the pandemic.
3. School employees working without a contract or reasonable assurance of continued employment who face reduced paychecks and no assurance of continued pay when schools are closed due to COVID-19.

The revised PUA eligibility guidelines apply retroactively, meaning that individuals can receive retroactive payments dating back to the beginning of the PUA program in March 2020.

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