

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Know Your Rights!

What is Unemployment Insurance (UI)?

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a weekly cash benefit when you lose your job or your hours are cut and it's not your fault. You can get between \$50 and \$444 per week (about half of what you made while working). You can get UI for up to 26 weeks.



Can I get UI?

To get UI in DC, **all** these things must be true:

- You worked in DC. *You don't need to live in DC.*
- You earned enough money before you lost your job (*usually at least \$1,900 in the last year and at least \$1,300 in one quarter*).
Learn more at <https://does.dc.gov/service/claimant-eligibility/>.
- You worked for an employer. *If you are self-employed or an independent contractor, you can't get regular UI (but might be able to get PUA). See Legal Aid's flyer on PUA.*
- You lost or quit your job for a reason that doesn't disqualify you. *See explanation to the right.*
- You're physically able and available for work.

If you're not sure if you can get UI, it's best to apply anyway!

I'm not a U.S. citizen. Can I get UI?

Yes, as long as you have authorization to work in the U.S. Have proof of your work authorization with you when you apply.

If you don't have work authorization, or are otherwise undocumented, you can't get UI.

What kind of job loss would disqualify me for UI?

Termination. If you were fired for "misconduct," you may not get full UI benefits. Misconduct means you knew you were doing something wrong at work.

Quitting Work. Generally, you can't get UI if you voluntarily quit your job **unless** you had "good cause" for quitting.

"Good cause" means a very good reason to quit that's related to your job (*like unsafe working conditions, discrimination, moving for a spouse's job, needing to care for an ill or disabled family member, or if your job made your illness or disability worse, as long as you give your employer a doctor's note before you quit*).

Are there special benefits related to COVID-19?

Yes. These benefits last until September 4, 2021 and can help you by:

- Extending the time you can receive UI benefits (*Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, or PEUC*)
- Giving you an extra \$300 per week in benefits (*Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, or FPUC*)
- Giving some people benefits who can't get regular UI (*Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, or PUA*)

Can I apply if I don't speak English well?

Yes. The law says the government has to help you in your language. Tell the agency you want help in your language.

Go to the next page to learn how to apply for UI.



Need help? Call Legal Aid at (202) 628-1161 or go to <https://www.legalaiddc.org/online-intake/>.

How do I apply for UI?

Apply for UI with the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES). You can apply by phone at **202-724-7000** or online at dcnetworks.org.

Is there a deadline for applying for UI?

No, there is no formal deadline. However, your wages start to “expire” if you wait too long after your job loss to apply.

It is usually best to apply for UI as soon as possible after losing your job. You get benefits based on the date you apply for UI, not based on your last day at work.

How long does it take for my benefits to start?

DOES tries to respond to applications **within three weeks** of filing. If you haven’t gotten any letters, phone calls, or emails (including in your spam filter) from DOES for four weeks or more, contact DOES either by phone at (202) 724-7000, or email at uiescalations@dc.gov.

What happens after I’m found eligible for UI?

Every week, you have to submit a Weekly Claim Card online, by telephone, or by mail (*mail is not recommended*). On these cards, you have to say:

- You’re physically able to work and available for work; **and**
- You’re actively looking for work (at least twice per week) and will accept work offered to you.

If you don’t fill out your claims cards or you aren’t able and willing to work and looking for work, you can’t get UI.

What if I am denied UI?

If you are denied UI, you can request a hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) within 15 days of the date on your Claims Examiner Determination (although the deadline can be extended if you have a very good reason). There are three steps to appeal.

Step 1: Get the appeal form online at <https://oah.dc.gov/publication/ui-request-hearing-appeal-determination-claims-examiner-involving-unemployment-benefits> or by calling OAH at (202) 442-9094.

Step 2: Fill out the appeal form.

Step 3: File the form in one of these ways:

- **Email** it to oah.filing@dc.gov.
- **Bring it in person** to the Office of Administrative Hearings, 441 Fourth Street NW, Suite 450N, Washington, DC 20001. *Keep a copy of the form.*
- **Mail** it to the above address. *Keep a copy of the form. Write down the date you sent it. **Mail isn’t recommended.***

To follow up on your appeal, you can call OAH at (202) 442-9094.

If you’re denied for regular UI, check and see if you can get PUA. Get the application at https://dcdoes.force.com/PUAForm/s/?language=en_US.