



**Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Human Resources Department
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Transition Assistance Program (TAP) FAQ's
Updated July 2, 2020**

We were able to speak with a MA Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) representative on June 18. Based on that conversation, we have updated information. As a result, the following is our best assessment of how the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefit will be administered. All decisions, including process, eligibility, benefit amounts, etc., are made solely by the MA DUA.

1. Question: Do Archdiocese employees who worked part-time (ex: musicians, after-school teachers) qualify for PUA benefits if they were laid off or had hours reduced because of COVID-19?

Answer: The CARES Act provided PUA benefits for all employees who are not eligible for regular state unemployment benefits, so we believe these employees would qualify for PUA benefits, regardless of benefit eligibility through the Archdiocese.

2. Question: When the system first went live, we had a lot of employees upset because they could not get through the PUA portal. They were being told they had to go through the regular DUA portal first. It does seem that the dual process is required; do you know if that will continue?

Answer: At this time, we have been told that employees need not apply for the regular DUA benefits first as long as the employee did not receive wages from an employer that participates in regular unemployment. Therefore, if the only source of the employee's wages in 2019 was a Catholic parish or school, the employee should answer "NO" to the question shown below. This answer will allow the employee to proceed through the PUA portal without filing a claim in the DUA portal.

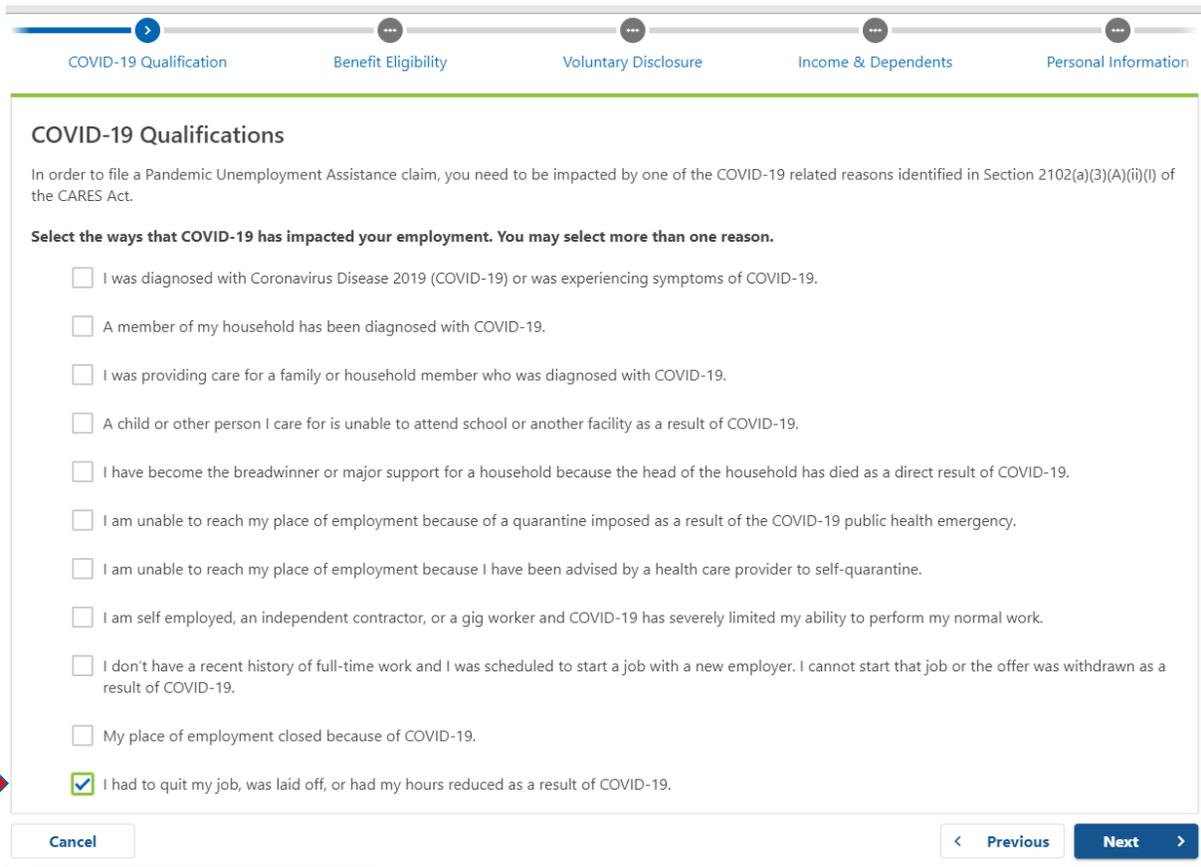
The screenshot shows the 'Benefit Eligibility' section of the application. The questions and their status are as follows:

- Did you work in Massachusetts when you were impacted by COVID-19? *
 Yes No
- Did you work for a Military employer, or were you a participant in Americorps or the Peace Corps, when you were impacted by COVID-19? *
 Yes No
- During the last 12 months, did you earn a total of more than \$5,100.00 of employment income from employer(s) who took taxes out of your paycheck?
 Yes No
- Are you getting full-time pay from your employer or union while not working? *
 Yes No
- If you are able to work from home, have you made a voluntary decision to not work from home? *
 Yes No

Navigation buttons: Cancel, Previous, Next

Note that if the employee has been paid wages over \$5,100 by an employer that participates in the MA DUA program, the employee will first need to apply through the DUA regular unemployment portal.

3. Question: The options for PUA eligibility have changed in the PUA application portal, which now include the question shown below. Do you have a sense of whether these reasons will change again in the future?



The screenshot shows a multi-step application process with the following steps: COVID-19 Qualification, Benefit Eligibility, Voluntary Disclosure, Income & Dependents, and Personal Information. The 'COVID-19 Qualification' step is active. The text reads: 'In order to file a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claim, you need to be impacted by one of the COVID-19 related reasons identified in Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(i)(I) of the CARES Act. Select the ways that COVID-19 has impacted your employment. You may select more than one reason.' There are ten options, each with a checkbox. The last option, 'I had to quit my job, was laid off, or had my hours reduced as a result of COVID-19.', is checked. A red arrow points to this checked option. At the bottom, there are 'Cancel', 'Previous', and 'Next' buttons.

Answer: At this time, we do not have any information on whether the state will change those reasons again. However, our contact at the DUA stated that the purpose of PUA benefits is to assist those who do not qualify for regular unemployment and who cannot work due to COVID-19, and that therefore, the reasons for application should be given a liberal interpretation. We suggested to the DUA that the application wording be changed to encompass additional situations, such as job loss prior to March 2020 and in inability to find employment now.

4. Question: Do employees of parishes, parish schools and other Archdiocese locations qualify for the extra \$600 (FPUC) payment?

Answer: While all benefit determinations are made solely by the DUA, we do believe that employees who qualify for PUA benefits are eligible for the extra \$600 payment for the weeks ending April 4, 2020 to July 25, 2020, as specified by the CARES Act.

5. Question: What if employees do not want to come back to work or be added back to payroll so that they can continue to collect PUA benefits. Do they have to return?

Answer: Employees who choose to reject an offer to return/return to the payroll should send an email or otherwise send a rejection in writing to the location. The employer will be required to report the rejection of the offer/refusal to return to work to the DUA within thirty (30) days of said rejection/refusal. The mechanism for this reporting is still TBD with the DUA. The DUA is also considering requiring PUA applicants to answer a question regarding any offers of work when certifying eligibility for weekly benefits.

If an employee does not want to return for reasons unrelated to PUA benefits – for example, he/she is concerned about infection or childcare responsibilities, please contact the Human Resources Office.

6. Question: Will employers be asked for any information about PUA applicants?

Answer: The US Department of Labor has directed the states to communicate with employers about employee statuses. According to our contact at the DUA, the process for adding employer input is in process.

7. Question: Are contracted teachers, whether paid over 10 months or 12 months, whose school is closing at the end of the school year or who otherwise will not be employed by the school in the Fall due to COVID-19, qualify for PUA benefits over the summer, including the extra \$600 per week under Federal Pandemic Emergency Compensation (FPUC)?

Answer: Teachers will be paid by schools in accordance with their legally binding contracts. However, we were told in our June 18 conversation with the DUA that eligibility for unemployment benefits is based on when the wages are earned and not when they are paid. Therefore, contracted teachers may apply for PUA and FPUC over the summer, when they are no longer performing work.

8. Question: If a teacher is offered a contract for the 2020-21 school year but is not working in July and August 2020, would he/she qualify for PUA and FPUC benefits? Does it matter that the teacher's 2019-2020 school is closing?

Answer: Based on our conversation with the DUA, once a teacher signs a contract, eligibility for PUA and FPUC benefits ends, even if the contract is signed months before the 2020-21 school year. The answer would not change if the teacher will be starting employment at a different school in the Fall.

9. Question: Are hourly school employees (ex: teacher aides) who are paid over 10 months and do not work during the summer eligible for PUA benefits over the summer?

Answer: Non-contracted school employees may apply for PUA when they are no longer performing work. If approved for benefits, based on our conversation with the DUA, non-contracted school employees may continue to collect PUA benefits until such time as they have reasonable assurance of employment in the Fall, such as a signed offer letter.

10. Question: Will employees have to open a new PUA claim once they are no longer being paid by a parish or school through the PPP loan?

Answer: It's our understanding that employees can go back to their original PUA claim and begin to certify for benefits the week following the last week of wages earned as long as they were already approved and remain within their eligibility period. The DUA website indicates that a "Reopen Claim" link will be visible once the employee logs in to the UI online account.

11. Question: If an employee has filed a PUA claim for a week, and then is notified that she was retroactively put back onto active payroll status for some or all of that week, what should she do?

Answer: Employees will have to report the overpayment to the DUA. They must call with a credit card or go online to return the funds. If employees do not report an overpayment, or if they were not aware that they were overpaid, they may be notified by the DUA to return the funds, or their tax refunds may be accessed to recoup the funds.

12. Question: Our parish has a full-time employee who works for another parish part-time. The other parish laid her off. Will she qualify for PUA benefits?

Answer: If a part-time job was lost and was related to a qualified COVID-19-related reason, the employee can apply for PUA benefits. However, full-time earnings may be considered in determining PUA eligibility and/or the amount of the benefit. In any event, determinations for benefits will be made solely by the DUA.

13. Question: What pay information is being used to calculate PUA benefits? Is the self-reported 2019 gross wages number being used, or is there other data being accessed and used? Does the Archdiocese report wage and hour data to the DUA, and is that data used in any way?

Answer: Our DUA contact confirmed that PUA benefits are based on self-reported 2019 gross wages. The Archdiocese does report earnings information to the DUA through the payroll vendor, but that information is not currently being used.

14. Question: Is the PUA benefit amount equal to 50% of these earnings (up to the MA weekly legal max), assuming there are no on-going earnings to offset the award amount?

Answer: Benefits amounts are based on your previous income reported and are "approximately" 50%. We were unable to obtain a specific answer on this question, other than that there is a minimum weekly benefit (\$267) and a current weekly maximum of \$823.

Until July 25, 2020, claimants who collect a weekly PUA benefit will also receive an additional \$600/week.

15. Question: One of our employees has not worked or been paid since March, and he has not yet applied for PUA. Is he eligible to receive retro payment for lost income?

Answer: Yes, the employee should supply information regarding when unemployment began. Retroactive weeks will include any entitlement to the additional \$600 in FPUC.

16. Question: We laid off a full-time employee today who has worked for the parish for five years. Is she eligible for TAP or PUA benefits?

Answer: The employee could be eligible for both TAP and PUA. However, TAP Plan benefits have always been available only when other unemployment benefits are not. Therefore, the employee must first apply for and either exhaust or get denied for PUA benefits before applying for TAP benefits. TAP also provides benefits for a maximum of one year following involuntary job loss, which may mean that the maximum 30 weeks of benefits currently provided by TAP may not be fully available.

17. Question: Are TAP and PUA payment amounts the same?

Answer: The TAP Plan was amended April 1, 2020 to provide payments of up to 50% of former wages. It is possible that TAP benefits may not be made at 50% of former wages for up to 30 weeks depending on the volume of TAP claims made in the future.

18. Question: One of our former employees is currently receiving payments from TAP. If she exhausts her TAP benefits and is struggling to find another job due to the pandemic, will she qualify for PUA benefits?

Answer: The employee may apply for PUA and may be eligible if she is unemployed due to a qualifying COVID-19-related reason. Specific eligibility requirements are noted on the PUA website. The PUA program was designed for those not eligible for regular state unemployment. Based on our June 18 conversation with the DUA, it's our understanding that PUA benefits would be available in this case.