

Unemployed Persons in Pennsylvania Currently Can Receive UC Benefits for Up To 99 Weeks!

The following information is a generalized and simplified attempt to explain the current rules for unemployment compensation (UC) eligibility for Pennsylvania claimants. These rules as stated here will not apply to everyone. A UC claimant should consult with the UC Service Center about his/her own case. Also, these rules may change over time, as temporary UC extension programs change or end. Each person's eligibility for additional weeks under each of the following programs will depend upon the expiration date of the most recent amendment to federal law, which now expires on February 28, 2010.

A. Regular Pennsylvania UC benefits – claims generally are paid for up to 26 weeks.

Regular UC benefits are usually paid for up to 26 weeks. However, in a small number of cases in which the person has a limited work history, regular state claims are paid for only 16 weeks. In such cases, each of the temporary extension programs described below will provide for shorter durations of extended benefits than described below.

B. Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC), Tiers 1 through 4 – in which claims are paid for up to an additional 53 weeks.

EUC is a federal extension program. There have been four extensions passed by Congress which are known as Tier 1, 2, 3 or 4.

1. At the end of a regular state benefit claim, usually 26 weeks, the Department will send a new notice of financial determination for the **Tier 1 EUC** program which generally adds up to another 20 weeks of benefits.
2. At the end of a Tier 1 EUC claim, the Department will send a new notice of financial determination for the **Tier 2 EUC** program which generally adds up to an additional 14 weeks of benefits.
3. At the end of a Tier 2 EUC claim, the Department will send a new notice of financial determination for the **Tier 3 EUC** program which generally adds up to an additional 13 weeks of benefits.
4. At the end of a Tier 3 EUC claim, the Department will send a new notice of financial determination for the **Tier 4 EUC** program which generally adds up to an additional 6 weeks of benefits.

As each level of benefit is exhausted, the claimant does not need to file an application. EUC benefits are claimed by filing biweekly claims on the Internet or Pennsylvania Teleclaims (PAT).

Duration: As of now, no new EUC accounts will be established for claimants who exhaust their preceding EUC benefit level (EUC Tiers 1, 2 or 3) after the week ending February 27, 2010. Also, EUC will not be paid for weeks that begin after July 31, 2010. However, Congress could extend these deadlines as they approach. Note that if you exhaust your EUC Tier benefits after February 27, 2010, you may qualify for regular state Extended Benefits (EB), if PA remains in an EB Period at that time.

C. Extended Benefits (EB) claims generally are paid for up to 20 weeks.

EB is a joint state-federal extension program that is activated only when certain levels of statewide unemployment rates occur. Pennsylvania triggered on to EB with the week ending February 21, 2009.

At the end of a Tier 4 EUC claim, but no later than the week ending February 27, 2010, a claimant may qualify for EB benefits. At the end of a Tier 4 EUC claim, the Department will send a new notice of financial eligibility for the EB program. The claimant does not need to file an application.

However, benefits are *not* claimed by filing biweekly claims on the Internet or PAT. *A paper claim must be filed by mail for each week that EB is claimed.*

Some significantly different rules for EB:

- A claimant must document that s/he conducted an active work search during each week of benefits claimed, by providing information about at least two work search activities per week, each on different days.
- Under many circumstances, a claimant is required to apply for and accept a job that: (1) pays the higher of minimum wage or the EB weekly benefit; and (2) is listed with the PA CareerLink or offered in writing by an employer.
- A claimant who does not comply with these rules on work search and suitable work may be disqualified for the duration of his/her EB claim, unless s/he is able to re-qualify by subsequent employment.
- Note that a person who does not actively seek work during a week may avoid disqualification by not applying for EB for that week. Otherwise, a person would have to re-qualify for EB through earning at least four times the EB weekly benefit amount and being employed in four subsequent weeks.
- Work search is not required if the claimant is enrolled in training under the Trade Act or training approved by the PA CareerLink.

Duration: Uncertain, because the program is tied to statewide unemployment rates.

Note that while collecting EUC or EB benefits, an individual's claim will be reviewed periodically to check for qualification for a new regular UC claim, which would make him/her ineligible to collect any further EUC or EB. For more information about UC benefits and the levels of EUC or EB benefits, see the website of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry at

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=552070&mode=2>

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