

Federal Unemployment Programs to End June 26, 2021

Arkansas will end its participation in federal unemployment programs just a couple months prior to their scheduled end date of September 4, 2021. These temporary benefit programs were created to provide relief for those who are not traditionally covered by the existing state unemployment insurance program (such as self-employed and 1099 workers) who lost income or were unable to work as a direct result of the pandemic. During the time when businesses were shut down and there was no vaccine to protect Arkansans from the virus, these programs served a good purpose. Now, vaccine eligibility is open to all Arkansans over the age of 16 and Arkansas is back in business.

Beauty salons and barbershops in Arkansas were able to reopen with restrictions as early as May 6, 2020 and nearly all other businesses that closed due to public health measures were able to reopen with restrictions as of May 18, 2020. On February 26, 2021, Governor Hutchinson lifted all remaining restrictions for businesses such as bars, restaurants, gyms and large venues. Now, all businesses are open and able to operate without restrictions, including but not limited to, all retail stores, restaurants and bars, hair and nail salons, houses of worship, theaters, stadiums, museums, bowling alleys, casinos, large venues, campgrounds, and gyms.

Employers are in desperate need of workers again and over 45,000 vacant jobs remain unfilled in Arkansas. ADWS will provide maximum job search assistance to those Arkansans still receiving unemployment benefits so that they may transition back to employment. The numbers below reflect the current number of people receiving benefits through the federal unemployment programs. Benefits will continue to be paid to those eligible until the programs end on June 26, 2021. With so many job opportunities available, we hope to see more people getting back to work by then.

Pandemic unemployment assistance (PUA) was created for workers impacted by the pandemic who are not covered by regular state unemployment insurance, such as the self-employed and independent contractors. **28,614** claimants last week.

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) was created to serve as an extension of regular state unemployment insurance, so all claimants receiving PEUC have already received 16 weeks of regular unemployment insurance. **19,178** claimants last week.

Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) was created to provide an additional \$100 payment to those receiving regular state unemployment insurance or PEUC benefits who earned at least \$5,000 in net income from self-employment during the most recent taxable year. **13 claimants** have received at least one MEUC payment.

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) was originally created by the CARES Act and provided \$600 additional payments to those eligible for regular unemployment, PEUC and PUA. The program expired July 31, 2020 but was reinstated by the Continued Assistance Act and provides a lower additional payment of \$300. Anyone receiving regular unemployment insurance, PEUC, or PUA benefits is also receiving the additional \$300 FPUC payments. While those eligible for regular state unemployment insurance will continue to get benefits when the federal programs end, they will no longer get the \$300 FPUC.

We encourage job seekers to visit their local Arkansas Workforce Center or DWS office for assistance with job search, resume writing, applications, information on the labor market and training opportunities, and more. Arkansas JobLink is the state's online job board and serves as a great free resource for both job seekers and employers. www.ARJOBLINK.ARKANSAS.GOV