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# NEWS RELEASE

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## IDES Announces Progress in Implementing Continued Assistance Act

*Revisions Impacting, FPUC, PUA, PUA Overpayments, PEUC, MEUC*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) today announced programmatic updates and changes to several unemployment programs contained within the Continued Assistance Act (CAA), signed into law on December 27, 2020, and the progress the Department is making in implementing the wide-ranging changes to these programs. These updates and changes, outlined below, will impact the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, PUA overpayments waivers, and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program, in addition to the creation of the Mixed-Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) program.

- **Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC):** The CAA provides an additional \$300 per week in supplemental benefits to claimants who receive at least \$1 of regular or federal unemployment benefits per week. This additional supplemental benefit applies between the week ending January 2, 2021 and the week ending March 13, 2021. IDES began paying the \$300 FPUC benefit for all programs beginning January 4, 2021.
- **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)**
  - **Continued Claimants:** IDES is instructing all PUA claimants who applied and were approved for PUA benefits prior to the week ending December 26, 2020, and had not exhausted benefit eligibility, to continue to certify to avoid an interruption in benefit payment. The PUA system is undergoing technical updates and testing to add the new 11 weeks of eligibility authorized under the CAA.

The CAA requires PUA claimants to verify employment or self-employment. During the week of February 1, 2021, notices will be sent to inform claimants of the additional 11 weeks of eligibility, in addition to requests to verify employment or self-employment. The notification will include a deadline to provide information to the Department, along with what information may be submitted to meet the employment or self-employment verification requirement.

- **Claimants Who Had Exhausted PUA Benefits:** PUA claimants who had exhausted benefit eligibility prior to the week ending December 26, 2020 may remain eligible under the

extension provided in the CAA and will be notified by IDES of the additional weeks added to their claim based on the method the claimant selected to receive correspondence from the Department.

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- **New Claimants:** The PUA system is undergoing technical changes to move new PUA claimants to pay status and begin the process of verifying wage and employment or self-employment information supplied by the claimant. The CAA also includes a limitation on backdating new PUA claims. Per the CAA, in most cases claimants filing a new PUA claim after December 27, 2020 can backdate to December 6, 2020.
- **Documentation Requirements:** The CAA includes a new requirement for individuals to submit documentation verifying their prior employment or self-employment. Individuals filing a new PUA claim on or after January 31, 2021 (regardless whether the claim is backdated), are required to provide this documentation within 21 days of application or the date determined by IDES. Individuals who applied for PUA before January 31, 2021 and receive(d) a payment of PUA on or after December 27, 2020, are required to provide employment or self-employment documentation, or documentation demonstrating the beginning of employment or self-employment, within 90 days of application or the date determined by IDES. These deadlines may be extended if the individual shows good cause, and deadlines will be communicated on verification requests provided by the Department.

Documentation can include, but is not limited to, paycheck stubs, earnings and leave statements showing the employer's name and address, W-2 forms when applicable, state or federal employer identification numbers, business licenses, tax returns, business receipts, signed affidavits from persons verifying the individual's self-employment, letters offering employment, statements or affidavits by individuals verifying an offer of employment, written business plans, or a lease agreement.

- **Overpayment Waivers:** IDES has reached out to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) for additional direction on the process of addressing waivers on a case-by-case basis, as required by federal guidance. The Department is in the process of identifying which PUA overpayments are subject to waiver, creating a notice and questionnaire for PUA claimants with an overpayment to request a waiver and supply the information needed to make determinations, and drafting determination notices regarding waivers.

This is a new process provided for in the CAA. The Department is aware this population is seeking quick resolution on any request made to waive an overpayment, and has a set goal

of moving through this process in a manner that provides clarity for claimants and allows the Department to efficiently review requests for waiver, while following the federal requirement that each case be reviewed on an individual basis.

- **Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC):** The CAA provides an additional 11 weeks of PEUC benefits. However, claimant transition to PEUC will vary based on how and when claimants exhaust eligibility for benefits within the various regular and federal unemployment programs. Transition will be evaluated and determined on a claimant-by-claimant basis, and claimants will be notified of their transitions.
- **Transition Language Between Programs or with a New Benefit Year:** The Department's subject-matter experts are working through the transition language necessary to maintain eligibility for claimants who may exhaust various programs. This involves programming and testing changes within all programs.
- **Extended Benefits (EB):** According to unemployment rate data published by the federal government, the Illinois unemployment rate has fallen below the threshold established by law for the additional 7 weeks of EB to be available in Illinois. Illinois remains triggered onto the standard 13 weeks of EB, and is available to claimants who have exhausted the allotted 26 weeks of regular state unemployment benefits, the 13 weeks of Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits, and (in some cases) the additional 11 weeks of PEUC benefits established under the CAA. Claimants who received 13 or more weeks of EB will transition to the maximum 11 additional weeks of PEUC.
- **Mixed-Earning Unemployment Compensation (MEUC):** States have prioritized managing through CAA changes related to existing programs but intend to move quickly to build the program necessary to implement MEUC. The Department will partner with stakeholders to publicize the program, including eligibility requirements.

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