

How to file for UI/PUA in Washington

Unemployment Law Project

Abbreviations defined:

1. **UI:** Unemployment Insurance (UI) refers to state programs designed to partially replace your regular earnings and help you meet expenses while you look for another job. For eligibility in Washington, see the [UI Application Checklist](#).
2. **PUA:** Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is a program that temporarily expands UI eligibility to self-employed workers, freelancers, independent contractors, and part-time workers who are unemployed or partially unemployed because of the pandemic. For eligibility, see the [PUA Application Checklist](#).

****Issue: Answering "Are you available for work?"****

A question in the applications process has created confusion and kept some people from receiving unemployment insurance (UI) or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. It has to do with a basic requirement of PUA and UI in general: You must be available to work. This document is not intended to give legal advice. Instead, it is meant to provide some guidance while applying for benefits. If you have any questions, please contact the [Unemployment Law Project](#).

The Question Creating Confusion

In Section 3 of the application, the "Your Occupation" section, one of the questions is "Are you physically able to work and available to work?"

This question is asking: If COVID-19, a layoff, or your kids' being out of school were not an issue affecting your work right now, would you otherwise be able to work and available for work? During COVID-19, most people should answer "yes" to this question.

Click on YES to Continue Applying for Benefits

The screenshot shows the 'Submit an application' page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home' and 'Submit an application'. Below that, a progress bar indicates 'Estimated percentage completed' at 80%. The main content area is titled 'Application for unemployment benefits' and has a sidebar with sections: 'Your profile', 'Your employers', 'Your occupation', and 'Able and available'. The 'Your occupation' section is expanded, showing a question: 'Able and available for work? Are you physically able to work and available for work?'. There are two buttons: 'Yes' and 'No'. The 'Yes' button is highlighted with a red box and a red arrow points to it. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Save', 'Cancel', 'Previous', and 'Next'.

How long do you have to apply?

PUA is only available until December 26, 2020 in Washington State.

Additional Resources

For more guidance on what the questions are asking of you, see the [guide for expanded benefits](#) or download the PUA-Guidance in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

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