

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE
BENEFIT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Purpose

The purpose of this information is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) Program. Please read carefully before applying for DUA.

What is DUA?

DUA is authorized through federal law, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) (42 U.S.C § 5177). The program provides temporary economic assistance to eligible people who are unemployed as a direct result of a major disaster.

DUA is only available after the President of the United States declares a disaster for specific areas and authorizes Individual Assistance for the affected population.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) administers the DUA program for the United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). DUA funding is provided by FEMA and does not come from employer payroll taxes.

On October 30, 2021, the President authorized major disaster declaration FEMA 4629-DR-CT for the State of Connecticut due to Hurricane Ida. This declaration authorized Individual Assistance, including DUA, for Fairfield and New London Counties, including the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and Mohegan Tribal Nation.

On November 12, 2021, CTDOL announced the availability of DUA and the filing deadline of DUA applications of December 13, 2021.

Duration of Benefits

The Disaster Assistance Period (DAP) begins with the first week following the date the major disaster began. Therefore, week ending September 11, 2021 would be the first week for which you could apply for DUA. During the DAP, DUA is available to eligible individuals so long as they are still unemployed as a direct result of the major disaster or until they are reemployed in a

suitable position. So long as you remain eligible, benefits may be paid for 34 weeks, through week ending April 30, 2022.

What are the Eligibility Requirements for DUA?

1. To be eligible for DUA, you must file an initial application for DUA within 30 days of the date CTDOL announced DUA availability.
2. You must meet at least one of the following conditions:
 - You have had a week of unemployment following the date the major disaster began;
 - You are unable to reach your place of employment;
 - You were scheduled to start work and the job no longer exists or you were unable to reach the job;
 - You became the breadwinner or major support because the head of the household died as a direct result of the disaster; or
 - You cannot work because of an injury caused as a direct result of the disaster.
3. You must also meet all of the following conditions:
 - You are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits in any state;
 - You are unemployed as a direct result of the disaster;
 - You are able and available for work, unless injured as a direct result of the disaster;
 - You have not refused an offer of employment in a suitable position.

In addition:

1. You must be a U.S. Citizen, Non-Citizen National, or Qualified Alien.
2. Your principal source of income must have been generated from your employment or self-employment.
3. You must present documented proof that you were employed or self-employed at the time of the major disaster within 21 calendar days from the date of filing your DUA claim.

What meets the proof of employment requirement?

Proof of employment or self-employment at the time of the disaster can include check/pay stubs, payroll records, bank statements, hire letters, or work orders/ledgers. Self-employed individuals should provide their tax return for the last completed tax year prior to the disaster --- so, for this disaster, January to December 2020.

If proof is not submitted within 21 calendar days, DUA will be denied and an overpayment may result. (See 20 CFR 625.6(e).

What is the weekly benefit amount?

The weekly benefit amount will be based on the gross wages of the individual whose prior source of income was from an employer/employee relationship. It is calculated based upon one twenty-sixth (1/26) of the average of total wages during the two highest quarters during 2020, or 1/26 of your highest quarter of 2020 if you are a construction worker.

If the individual is self-employed, the weekly benefit amount will be based on the net earnings (income) from self-employment during calendar year 2020.

The maximum DUA WBA is \$685.00. If you have qualifying dependents, you will receive an additional \$15.00 for each dependent, up to five dependents for a total of \$75.00 dependency allowance.

The minimum weekly benefit amount is \$160.

How file for DUA?

Claimants must first file for regular state unemployment benefits on the blue button on www.FileCTUI.com.

Once a claimant is found ineligible for state benefits, they must then file for Disaster Unemployment Assistance by calling the *Consumer Contact Center, Option#2 for DUA*:

Monday - Friday: 7:00am - 5:00pm
Closed Saturday, Sunday & holidays
1 203-941-6868
1 860-967-0493
1 800-956-3294
TTY - 711 or 800-842-9710

Do I have to file for DUA every week that I am believe I am eligible? How do I do that?

When you file for DUA, you will certify for the back weeks for which you may be eligible. To continue to receive your DUA benefits after the application is submitted, **you must file weekly certifications**. You do this by calling by the *Consumer Contact Center, Option#2 for DUA*:

Monday - Friday: 7:00am - 5:00pm
Closed Saturday, Sunday & holidays
1 203-941-6868
1 860-967-0493
1 800-956-3294
TTY - 711 or 800-842-9710

What if I disagree with the agency's decision? How do I appeal?

Any denial of benefits may be appealed to the Employment Security Appeals Division within sixty (60) days of the date the determination was issued. You may file an appeal by:

- Mailing or faxing your appeal to any *Full-service American Job Center. Your appeal will be timely if it is received within 60 days of the decision denying benefits or if mailed, and it bears a legible United States postmark dated within such 60-day period.
- Using the Internet at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/appeals/apfrmnt.htm within this 60-day period.

An Appeal's Referee from the Appeals Division will hear your case. While waiting for the Referee's decision, **you should continue to file weekly claims as scheduled as long as you are totally or partially unemployed.**

The Referee decision will provide instructions for filing a further appeal to the Regional Administrator. That appeal would need to be filed within fifteen (15) days of the mailing of the Referee's decision.

Are DUA benefits taxable income?

Yes. You may request that CTDOL withhold state and federal taxes from your weekly DUA benefit payment.

May any other deductions be taken from my weekly benefit?

Yes, benefit payments are subject to child support intercepts, as well as offsets due to overpayments of unemployment benefits.

Am I required to look for work while filing for DUA benefits?

Yes.

Each week you file a claim for DUA benefits, you must:

1. Actively look for full-time work.
2. Make a minimum of 3 work search efforts per week—1 of these must be an employer contact. The employer contacts may not be duplicated.
 - A job interview is a valid work search activity but does not count as an employer contact as it is a duplicate contact.

Ex: You contact Business A in search of a job. This is an employer contact that you can report in your work search efforts that week.

A week later, Business A schedules a job interview. When you go to the interview you can count it as a work search activity, but not an employer contact since you counted it as an employer contact the week before.

3. Document all efforts to find work.
4. Be prepared to provide proof of your work search activities.

Your search for full-time employment can be a combination of activities—at least one of the work search activities must be employer contact.

For example:

- *3 employer contacts, or*
- *2 employer contacts, plus 1 other work search activity, or*
- *1 employer contact, plus 2 other work search activities.*

Work search activities can be in person or virtual and may include the following:

- Contacting an employer for full-time work.
 - **You must have at least 1 employer contact in your weekly efforts.**
 - **Remember, a job interview is not an employer contact as it duplicates efforts. You already counted that employer contact when you applied for the job.**
- Attending a workshop or participating in reemployment activities provided by an [American Job Center](#); or searching job postings.
- Attending a job fair or a networking event held by a formal organization like an industry association.
- Creating a reemployment plan.
- Attending a job interview.
 - This counts as a work search activity, but not an employer contact as it is duplicate effort in contacting the employer for the interview.

- Following up on a job interview.
- Creating a resume, uploading the resume and making the resume viewable to employers in **CTHires**, Connecticut’s job bank.
- Creating a personal user profile on a professional networking site.
- Working with a professional career coach.
- Taking employment-related classes.

FOR PART-TIME WORKERS:

- Part-time workers must show they are looking for full-time work.

INDIVIDUALS AVAILABLE ONLY FOR PART-TIME WORK:

- Individuals who have provided medical documentation to CTDOL showing that they must limit their availability for work to part-time work due to a chronic, long-term or permanent medical condition must also actively look for part-time work, using the guidelines on this page.

FOR SELF-EMPLOYED DUA CLAIMANTS

DUA claimants who are self-employed must make 3 efforts per week as well.

- Self-employed DUA claimants may list their own business as the direct employer contact, and
- Self-employed DUA claimants may engage in work search activities to support their employment, such as:
 - Contacting clients
 - sending out bids
 - maintaining business facilities and/or property
 - attending training
 - expanding business portfolio
 - developing marketing materials to expand customer base

What conditions can cause disqualification or termination from DUA?

- You become employed and the earnings exceed the weekly benefit amount allowed under CTDOL unemployment laws;
- You refuse to accept suitable employment without sufficient cause;
- You refuse to accept a referral to suitable employment without sufficient cause;

- You are not able or available for work (unless it is because of an injury caused as a direct result of the disaster);
- You are not available for work, unless the availability is due to your preparations to resume self-employment; or
- You are no longer unemployed as a direct result of the disaster.