



***Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance***


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**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-52
July 9, 2020**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: Cross Programs: Additional Guidance for Processing Cases with Unemployment Compensation

Overview and Purpose

Online Guide Transmittal 2020-31 and 2020-31A introduced the Unemployment Compensation provisions of the CARES Act and provided guidance on how to process applications and case maintenance actions for cases with unemployment income.

This Online Guide Transmittal provides additional details about Unemployment Compensation income types and advises staff how to work through common scenarios they may encounter while processing applications, recertifications, Interim Reports, reevaluations and completing case maintenance activities. Specifically, this Online Guide Transmittal outlines details about unemployment-related questions and information such as:

- additions to a client's Unemployment Compensation amount;
- scenarios staff may encounter when addressing unemployment income;
- definitions of different types of Unemployment Compensation (Attachment A).

Additional Income

If a client is receiving additional income such as the dependent allowance or \$600 weekly Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), you will see this income under the "Additions" column on UI Online.

**Additional
Income
(Continued)**

If there is any additional income **except for the \$600 FPUC** amount listed in the “Additions” column, **you must add that income to the client’s original weekly benefit amount in BEACON.**

Example: A client receives a total Pre-Tax amount of \$875/week in Regular Unemployment Income. She receives \$200/week in her weekly benefit amount. She also receives \$675/week in additional income. The \$600/week is the FPUC benefit and the \$75/week is her dependent allowance. (The breakdown can be viewed by clicking the end date link) You must add the client’s regular \$200 weekly benefit amount and the \$75 dependent allowance and enter it as one record on BEACON. The client’s Unemployment Compensation would be \$275/week. Then, you must enter the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit as a second Unemployment Compensation record on BEACON.

Scenario 1

**Client Reports
Unemployment
Compensation
over the Phone
and Worker can
view the Income
on UI Online**

Scenario 1: Client Reports Unemployment Compensation over the Phone and Worker can view the Income on UI Online

Unemployment incomes that can be seen on UI Online include:

- Regular Unemployment Income
- Section 30
- *Retraining Extended Duration Benefits (RED)
- Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)

At Application, Interim Report, Recertification, and Reevaluation

Cross Programs: You must enter the income that is reported on UI Online. Be sure to enter two UC line items: one entry for the regular pretax benefit amount and the other for the \$600 weekly FPUC amount.

For Ongoing Cases (Case Maintenance)

TAFDC: You must enter the income that is reported on UI Online.

SNAP: If the client self-declares their unemployment income, you must determine if the income will put the case over the income limit for the household size. If the unemployment income will not put the household over, you must not count the income due to Simplified Reporting rules. Do not check UI Online. Make sure to write a detailed narrative.

If the income will put the household over their income limit, you must check UI Online and enter the income in BEACON for the case to be denied appropriately. Be sure to write a detailed narrative.

**Scenario 1
(Continued)**

Client Reports Unemployment Compensation over the Phone and Worker can view the Income on UI Online

Note: If the client provides documentation of the unemployment (i.e. the benefit award letter or some other document from DUA) regardless of the amount, you must review UI Online and enter the income as it would be considered verified upon receipt.

What About the \$600 FPUC Benefit for this Scenario?

Cross Programs: If the client is receiving Regular Unemployment Compensation, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, or Section 30 Unemployment Compensation, the client is receiving the \$600 weekly FPUC amount. The worker will be able to view this FPUC amount in the “Additions” column.

If the client is receiving Unemployment Compensation through the RED program, the client is not eligible for the \$600 weekly FPUC amount. The worker will be able to see that the client is not receiving the FPUC amount in the “Additions” column.

Scenario 2

Client Reports Receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Worker cannot see the Income on UI Online

Scenario 2: Client Reports Receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Worker cannot see the Income on UI Online

At Application, Interim Report, Recertification, and Reevaluation

TAFDC: A verbal or written self-declaration is acceptable verification of this income.

SNAP: A verbal or written self-declaration is acceptable verification of this income. However, if the reported unemployment income will put the household over their gross income limit, you must send a VC-1 for the unemployment income as a self-declaration is not acceptable. The case cannot be denied for over income until verification is obtained.

For Ongoing Cases (Case Maintenance)

TAFDC: If a client reports receiving unemployment income that cannot be viewed on UI Online, a verbal or written self-declaration is acceptable verification of this income

SNAP: If the client reports receiving unemployment income, you must determine if the income will put the case over the income limit for the household size. If the unemployment income will not put the household over, you must not count the income due to Simplified Reporting rules. Be sure to write a detailed narrative.

**Scenario 2
(Continued)**

**Client Reports
Receiving
Pandemic
Unemployment
Assistance
(PUA) and
Worker cannot
see the Income
on UI Online**

If the income will put the household over their income limit, you must send a mandatory VC-1 for the unemployment income to be verified and denied appropriately, if necessary. Be sure to write a detailed narrative.

If the client provides verification of the unemployment (i.e. the benefit award letter) regardless of the amount, you must enter the income as it would be considered verified upon receipt. The client can send in a picture of the benefit award letter or their UI account using DTACConnect. If the client cannot provide any verification, we will accept the best information available including a self-declaration.

What About the \$600 FPUC Benefit for this Scenario?

Cross Programs: Clients receiving PUA are eligible for the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit and this must be entered in a separate line and marked countable.

Remember: All forms of unemployment income are entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC amount except for clients receiving unemployment income under the RED program.

Scenario 3

**DTA gets a
PI UC Match
and Worker
can see UC
Income on UI
Online**

**Scenario 3: DTA gets a PI UC Match and Worker can see UC
Income on UI Online**

At Application, Interim Report, Recertification, and Reevaluation

Cross Programs: You must enter the income that is reported on UI Online. Be sure to enter two UC line items: one for the pretax UC benefit amount and one for the \$600 weekly FPUC amount.

For Ongoing Cases

Cross Programs: You must enter the income that is reported on UI Online as it is considered verified-upon receipt information. Be sure to enter two UC line items: one for the pretax UC benefit amount and one for the \$600 weekly FPUC amount.

What About the \$600 Weekly FPUC Benefit for this Scenario?

Cross Programs: If the client is receiving Regular Unemployment Compensation benefits, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, or Section 30 Unemployment Compensation, the client is receiving the \$600 weekly FPUC amount. The worker will be able to view this FPUC amount in the “Additions” column.

Remember: All forms of unemployment income are entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC amount except for clients receiving unemployment income under the RED program.

Scenario 4

Scenario 4: Client is Claiming Partial Regular UC and is not Receiving UC Income some Weeks as Wages Exceed Benefit Rate

Client is Claiming Partial Regular UC and is not Receiving UC Income some Weeks as Wages Exceed the Benefit Rate

At Application, Interim Report, Recertification, and Reevaluation

Cross Programs: The worker must review the unemployment income on UI Online. If the Current Week Status column indicates “Not Paid” with a reason of “Exceeded Benefit Rate,” the client did not receive their unemployment income including the \$600 weekly FPUC amount for that week. The worker must enter \$0 in both line items in BEACON for that week.

The worker must review DUA and enter UC income accordingly. Earnings must also be entered. If the Work Number includes the required wage information, staff must inform the client of the listed gross amounts and frequency. If the client disputes the information from the Work Number, a mandatory VC-1 must be sent to the client.

If the Work Number does not have the wage information for the client’s job, staff must send a mandatory VC-1 for earnings and encourage the client to obtain and submit documentary evidence such as wage stubs, screen shots, or a printout/letter from the employer.

If a client cannot verify wages using documentary evidence, we will accept the best available information including a written self-declaration

Remember: If the client is claiming partial Unemployment Compensation, this means that they are also working. All income must be counted at the time of application.

For SNAP: Once verification is obtained, you must enter in the client’s gross earned income by their correct pay frequency (i.e. weekly, biweekly) in BEACON. You must always enter in the unemployment income as weekly in BEACON. The prospected earned income and unemployment income may include \$0 for the weeks the client did not receive wages or unemployment income.

For Ongoing Cases

TAFDC: If the client reports that their regular unemployment income has decreased due to claiming partial Regular Unemployment Compensation, you must explore with the client which weeks they did not get paid. The weeks that the client did not receive unemployment income also confirms that the client did not receive the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit. You must update and recalculate the income in BEACON.

Remember: Since the client is receiving partial Unemployment Compensation, this means the client is also receiving wages. The wages must be entered in BEACON as well as the UC, as both are countable for TAFDC.

SNAP: If the client reports that their regular unemployment income has changed due to claiming partial Regular Unemployment Compensation, you must explore with the client which weeks they did not get paid. If you cannot reach the client and the case is going to be denied for excess income using unemployment and previous wages on file, you must send a VC-1 for wages.

Cross Programs:

The weeks that the client did not receive unemployment income also confirms that the client did not receive the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit.

Finally, review the case to determine if the client is owed a supplement, especially if there were weeks when client did not receive a UC payment nor the \$600 weekly FPUC.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.

Summary of Unemployment Compensation Benefits

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) – This benefit provides an additional \$600 per week to individuals who are collecting regular Unemployment Compensation (UC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Extended Benefits (EB), Trade Readjustment Act (TRA), and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DA). Clients are eligible for FPUC only from March 29 – July 31, 2020. This income can be seen on UI Online under the “Additions” column. FPUC must be a **separate entry** in BEACON.

Unemployment – Standard unemployment benefit claimants are entitled to this after losing a job under certain conditions. Workers are able to view this unemployment income on UI Online and should follow existing procedures on how to enter this income. These clients are also entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit.

Section 30 – This is a training program that allows claimants who are enrolled in full-time, approved training programs. These claimants collect regular unemployment compensation while enrolled in their training program. Section 30 clients will be identified in the “Current Program” column. These clients are also entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit.

Retraining Extended Duration (RED) – Extended benefits for unemployment recipients who seek additional benefits due to professional training opportunities. These benefits are an extension of Section 30 unemployment benefits. RED clients will be identified in the “Current Program” column. Clients that are currently receiving RED unemployment benefits **do not** qualify for the \$600 weekly FPUC amount. Workers are able to view this unemployment income on UI Online and should enter this income in the same manner as standard unemployment benefits, **excluding** the additional line for the \$600 weekly FPUC amount as clients under this program do not qualify for it.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) - PUA provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits to claimants who are not working as a result of COVID-19 and are self-employed, independent contractors, gig economy workers, and others who otherwise would not qualify for regular UC or Extended Benefits under state or federal law or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (see below). Eligible claimants under PUA will be retroactively compensated with this benefit beginning February 2, 2020, or the first week a claimant was unable to work because of COVID-19, whichever date is later. The last week this benefit is payable is the week ending December 26, 2020. These clients are also entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit. **This income is currently not viewable on UI Online.**

Attachment A

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) or Extended Benefits - The PEUC program provides up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment insurance benefits to claimants who have exhausted their previous unemployment benefits. The first week a claimant can be compensated on this benefit is the week beginning March 29, 2020, and the last payable week is the week ending December 26, 2020. PEUC is now claimed directly through the UI Online System in Massachusetts and is a viewable unemployment. These clients are also entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit. Clients who are receiving PEUC will be identified as PEUC 1.0 in the “Current Program” column on UI Online.

Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) – If a company is downsizing and needs to lay off some of their employees as a result of foreign trade, employers can provide their employees with the means to attain competitive and marketable skills for the increasing competitive work environment. Employees are eligible for unemployment benefits as long as they are participating in the trainings. These clients are also entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DA) – If a federal Major Disaster Declaration is awarded to an effected area, clients can receive unemployment benefits and re-employment services if they have become unemployed as a result of a major disaster and are not eligible for regular State unemployment assistance. These clients are also entitled to the \$600 weekly FPUC benefit.