

Can Students and Grads Qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance?

Article By:

Norma W. Zeitler

With the start of summer, scores of high school and college students typically would be returning to (or starting) internships or seasonal employment as camp counselors, lifeguards, and summer retail. But those jobs, like so many others, have been lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we reported in March, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or the [CARES Act provides wide-spread relief for businesses and individuals](#). One form of individual relief provided for under the CARES Act is pandemic unemployment assistance (PUA). Among other things, PUA provides unemployment benefits to those traditionally ineligible for unemployment benefits (people with limited work history, self-employed individuals, and independent contractors) if they are unable to work due to a series of reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While many of the qualifying reasons for PUA are related to being diagnosed with, experiencing symptoms of, or caring for someone with COVID-19, individuals also may qualify for PUA if they are unable to work because their anticipated place of employment is closed or they were scheduled to start work and cannot start as a direct result of COVID-19.

As with other relief legislation, the United States Department of Labor has been publishing answers to frequently asked questions about PUA. Recently, the Department of Labor explained that a full-time student who worked part-time, but who is unemployed, partially unemployed or unable or unavailable to work due to one of the COVID-19 related reasons specified in the CARES Act, may be eligible for PUA.

This means that a student who worked a summer job last year – and who is not able to return to that summer job because of COVID-19 – may be eligible for PUA. While the guidance does not yet address lost internships or delayed start dates, a student who has lost an internship or who has a delayed start date would seemingly qualify if an offer of employment was withdrawn or delayed due to COVID-19.

Generally, individuals wishing to apply for PUA must follow the instructions for doing so through their state workforce agency. Most state workforce agencies have posted FAQs and other resources for unemployed individuals to help guide them in applying for benefits. There is no penalty for applying and testing one's eligibility, as long as applicants are truthful and forthcoming in their answers to

questions posed on the unemployment application.

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