# A QUICK GUIDE TO THE PA UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM

**MON VALLEY UNEMPLOYED COMMITTEE**

monvalleyunemployed.org

**What is Unemployment Compensation (UC)?**

The Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation (UC) program provides temporary income for eligible employees who lose their job or have their hours reduced through no fault of their own. Both PA employers and employees pay taxes into the program, with benefits intended to help workers meet expenses while they seek new employment.

**PA workers may be eligible for UC if they...**

- were laid off off by their employer or had their hours reduced.
- were terminated, but not because of intentional wrongdoing.
- voluntarily left work because of necessary and compelling reasons, such as health, safety, or significant changes in work conditions.
- are able, available, and legally authorized to work in the US.

**What kinds of workers are eligible?**

Most employees who receive W2 tax forms are eligible. However many workers have been misclassified as "independent contractors" and are given 1099s by their employers. But if their employer exercises significant control over how they manage their services, and if their work is not an independently established trade or business, they should be eligible for employee rights and benefits. If you're not sure of your UC eligibility, definitely apply! PA UC program staff consider the specific facts of each case.

# Filing claims for Unemployment Compensation (UC)

**To file a claim online at the PA UC website, go to benefits.uc.pa.gov**

The UC website provides instructions, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page, and a UC System Resources page with videos and user guides on how to complete the application and ongoing required actions to remain eligible. If you need direct assistance, email UCHelp@pa.gov, provide your phone number, and request a callback.

**Applicants who can't use the internet, need language assistance, or accessibility support...**

- can apply by phone at 1-888-313-7284. Non-English speakers can request a conference call with an interpreter and another person of their choice. For American Sign Language (ASL) Videophone Service call 717-704-8474. For Text Telephone Service (TTY) call  888-334-4046 from a TTY device.
- or they can schedule an in-person appointment with UC Service Center staff through the UC Connect program by calling 855-284-8545.

# Suggestions to prevent common problems in the UC process.

- When you first register, write down your user names and passwords for ID.me, CareerLink, and UC dashboard (claimant online portal). Store them in a safe place that you won't forget.
- On your UC website dashboard, go to the Widgets section and click on the Personal Profile link to make sure all your contact information is correct. Then scroll down to the Preferred Notification Method. If you use email, select "Internal Message with Email Notification" as seen on the right. Check your email regularly for UC messages! If you don't use email or don't have internet access, select the postal delivery option. Be aware mail sometimes arrives late.

  **Preferred Notification Method**

  Please select a method in which you prefer to receive your notifications: `Internal Message with Email Notification ▼`

- Complete Work Registration within 30 days at a local CareerLink office or at the CareerLink website: pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/. Even if you registered in the past, be sure to update your resume. Save a copy of your registration confirmation and store it in a safe place!
- Complete your weekly work search, even if you expect to be recalled or have a job offer. You can use a range of websites and print sources to complete your job search, including the CareerLink website, LinkedIn, newspaper listings, etc. UC may require documentation, so keep careful records of your job searches, dates, and applications.
- Be sure to file a weekly claim certification, answering the standard questions, even if you receive a disqualifying determination or decision, an appeal hearing is scheduled, and/or benefits payments are paused. Certifications can be filed through the UC website dashboard at benefits.uc.pa.gov, starting with the Sunday after submitting your application. Or to file using the PA Teleclaims (PAT) telephone claim filing system, first request a Personal Identification Number (PIN) be mailed to you by contacting the UC Service Center at 1-888-313-7284 or uchelp@pa.gov. Then call 1-888-255-4728 and use that PIN number to start filing.
- Remember that the weekly certification question as to whether you are "able and available for work" applies to a wide range of types of suitable employment in line with your education or similar experience, but not just the type of work you've done in the past.
- If you receive a disqualifying determination regarding your eligibility, you CAN appeal by presenting evidence in an appeal hearing. To file an appeal online at your UC dashboard, click on More Unemployment Services to find the Appeals section. You can also file in person at a CareerLink office or by email to UCBoardAppeals@pa.gov

## Is the UC application process complicated? YES!

The Mon Valley Unemployed Committee is a nonprofit organization that has helped PA workers navigate PA's Unemployment Compensation system for many years. This quick guide is based on those years of experience, but MVUC Benefit Advocates are not UC attorneys or PA UC employees. Use the contact information on front of this document to contact UC staff, to find the UC Handbook, and to visit the PA UC website for more information.