

# How Workers in Florida Can Access Disaster Unemployment Assistance After Hurricane Ian

*The National Employment Law Project (NELP) is a non-profit advocacy organization with the mission to build a just and inclusive economy where all workers have expansive rights and thrive in good jobs. The information provided in this fact sheet is based on the best resources we have available on the Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program. However, it should not be relied upon as a source of official government information on the DUA program.*

## Overview

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If you are unemployed due to Hurricane Ian, you may be able to receive unemployment benefits through either Florida's **Reemployment Assistance** program or the federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program—both of which are administered by the Florida Department of Employment Opportunity (DEO).

Florida's Reemployment Assistance, also known as unemployment insurance, is a permanent state program that provides eligible workers with partial wage replacement when they are unemployed. DUA is a federal program that provides temporary financial assistance to workers—including people who are self-employed, contract workers, gig workers, and others who do not qualify for state Reemployment Assistance and are unemployed because of a "major disaster" declared by the president.

On September 29, 2022, FEMA declared a major disaster for many areas in Florida due to the impact of Hurricane Ian. Thus, DUA is currently available to eligible workers in the following counties:

- Charlotte
- Collier
- DeSoto
- Flagler
- Hardee
- Highlands
- Hillsborough
- Lake
- Lee
- Manatee
- Orange
- Osceola
- Palm Beach
- Pinellas
- Polk
- Putnam
- Sarasota
- Seminole
- St. Johns
- Volusia

DUA is also available to eligible workers in the following six areas in the Seminole Nation of Florida:

- Big Cypress Indian Reservation
- Brighton Indian Reservation
- Fort Pierce Indian Reservation
- Hollywood Indian Reservation
- Immokalee Indian Reservation
- Tampa Reservation

This list may grow and you should check [FEMA's website](#) to see the most up-to-date listing of designated counties and areas.

## DUA Eligibility Requirements

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DUA is available to workers—including people who are self-employed, gig workers, and independent contractors—who do not qualify for (or have exhausted) regular unemployment insurance from any state or U.S. territory and are unemployed as a direct result of a major disaster. In Florida, this includes people in the designated areas listed above who are jobless or have lost work as a direct result of Hurricane Ian, including those who:

- Were scheduled to start working but are now unable to do so as a direct result of the hurricane;
- Are unable to reach their job or self-employment due to the impact of the hurricane;
- Have become the primary breadwinner because the head of the household died as a direct result of the hurricane; or
- Are unable to work because of an injury that was a direct result of the hurricane.

Once a worker becomes eligible for DUA, they must also meet continuing eligibility requirements to continue to receive benefits. This includes actively looking for work and accepting any suitable work that is offered. However, the governor recently waived work search reporting requirements, including having to register with [Employ Florida](#). It is unclear how long this waiver will be in place, so, workers should make sure to respond to any notices or requests they receive from DEO regarding work search requirements as soon as possible.

## How to Apply

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To apply for DUA benefits, you must first apply for state [Reemployment Assistance](#). During the application, you must indicate that you have been impacted by the disaster. Once the DEO determines that you are **not** eligible for Reemployment Assistance, you will automatically be prompted to file a DUA application.

You can apply:

- Online at [www.floridajobs.org](http://www.floridajobs.org) and clicking on the link for “Reemployment Assistance.”
- At a local [CareerSource Center](#).
- By calling [1-800-385-3920](tel:1-800-385-3920), Monday – Friday from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm Eastern Time.

To speak to a Creole or Spanish speaker or use translation services, call the Customer Service Contact Center at [1-833-FL-APPLY \(1-833-352-7759\)](tel:1-833-FL-APPLY) Monday -Friday at 7:30 am to 6:30 pm Eastern Time.

You must submit an application by **December 30, 2022**. If you are applying online, you will have to create an online account. This requires going through a multi-factor authentication process and verifying your identity with ID.me. This process requires you to have your own email address and it may take some time, so be sure to give yourself enough time to complete the process. Please see the [Claimant Guide for Accessing Your Reemployment Assistance Account](#) for more information.

## Information Needed to Apply

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You will need the following information to complete the initial application for Reemployment Assistance:

- Social Security number or Alien registration number and expiration date
- Drivers' license or State ID number
- Information for every employer you worked for in the past 18 months, including:
  - Name, address, and phone number
  - First and last day of work
  - Gross earnings (before taxes are taken out)
  - Reason for separation
  - The Employer's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), which can be found on any W2 or 1099 tax forms. (If you don't have the FEIN, you can just use the employer details off a recent paystub.)

If you are self-employed, including gig workers, you will need to have proof of self-employment during the last two years. This can include 1099 statements, state or federal tax returns, bank records, or a copy of a title or deed to a business property. If you were about to begin a job but now cannot work due to the disaster, you will need to provide the name and address of the employer and date you were supposed to start work.

You may be asked to provide additional documentation. If so, you must provide that information within **21 days** of applying. You can submit the documents through your CONNECT account online, fax them to 1-800-222-7934, or mail them to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity DUA Unit, P.O. Box 5350, Tallahassee, FL 32314.

## Amount and Length of Benefits

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You will receive between **\$154 and \$275 per week**. The actual amount you receive will depend on your prior earnings. Like regular state unemployment benefits, DUA benefits are paid weekly.

You can receive DUA benefits for up to **27 weeks**. However, you cannot receive benefits beyond the time when the declared disaster period officially ends, which is six months from the date of the federal major disaster declaration (unless the deadline is extended by Congress). Currently, DUA benefits are available from **September 25, 2022**, to **April 1, 2023**.

## Immigration Status Requirements

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Generally, you must have work authorization both at the time that you were working and while you are collecting benefits to qualify for regular Reemployment Assistance or DUA. Workers who are undocumented are not eligible for Reemployment Assistance or DUA. Individuals who are not U.S. citizens must present documentation supporting their immigration status, and Florida DEO must verify that status through a process called the [Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlement Program \(SAVE\)](#), administered by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS).

## **Additional Resources**

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To find organizations that may be able to provide legal assistance in applying for Disaster Unemployment Assistance, please visit: <https://www.floridalawhelp.org/>

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Resources:

- [Disaster Unemployment Assistance homepage](#)
- [How to File for Disaster Unemployment Assistance](#)
- [Disaster Unemployment Assistance Claimant Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

U.S. Department of Labor Resources:

- [Disaster Recovery Assistance](#)