



Navigating UC Appeals Delays

Currently, the Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefit system is experiencing long delays in handling appeals from denials of UC benefits. People are waiting for their UC referee hearings and decisions for 2 to 6 months, depending on their location in the state. Most people who must wait that long suffer severe financial hardship. If you are a UC applicant, here are some things you can do to protect yourself.

Carefully and Quickly Respond to Everything that the UC Service Center Asks You So that You Can Avoid Having to Appeal

If you are granted benefits at the first level of the UC system, called the “Service Center,” you will not have to appeal and face the delays. Be extra careful to respond correctly to all questions asked in the UC application, a UC questionnaire that you are later asked to fill out, or any other request for information. Here are some tips to put yourself into the best position to not have to appeal.

- **If you do not understand a question on the application, ask for help.** You can use the State’s chat function to ask questions as you are in the process of applying. For more information on UC applications, go to <https://uchelp.org/unemployment-compensation/apply-for-benefits/>.
- **Watch for messages or emails from the State asking for more information.** If you use an online dashboard with the State, select notification by email, so that you get notice that they are trying to reach you. Be sure to check your email regularly throughout your UC claim.
- **Provide information within the timeframe requested by the State.** If you send information late, they may rule against you, requiring you to file an appeal that will be delayed several months.

If You Are Denied Benefits by the Service Center, Appeal As Soon As Possible

Your appeal will be timely if you file within 21 days of the denial of benefits. However, if you wait until the end of the 21 days, you have lost valuable days that you could be “in line” for your appeal hearing to be scheduled.



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What to Do While Waiting for an Appeals Hearing

- **CONTINUE TO FILE A CLAIM EVERY SINGLE WEEK WHILE YOU ARE WAITING FOR YOUR APPEAL TO BE COMPLETED.** Many people become discouraged by the wait and stop filing weekly claims. Even if you win the appeal, you may not get benefits for the weeks you did not file.
- Update your contact information with the State right away if it changes.
- **Actively check your dashboard or your mail for notice of a hearing.** You may only get a few days of notice, so you want to be ready.
- **Seek legal help as soon as possible; don't wait for the hearing to be scheduled.** Legal aid in many counties represents people in UC appeals. Check PALawHelp.org for your local program.
- **Prepare for your hearing before the hearing is scheduled.** Gather any documents that support your position (such as your termination letter, performance reviews, doctor's notes, etc.). Talk to anyone you want to be a witness for you. This way you will be ready when the hearing is scheduled and won't have to reschedule.

Apply for other benefits and work with your creditors while you are waiting for your UC hearing

- The Pennsylvania COMPASS website (<https://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov/home/>) can tell you whether you qualify for cash assistance, Medical Assistance, and/or SNAP benefits.
- If you rent your home or apartment, learn about rental assistance options at <https://phillytenant.org/rental-assistance/>.
- If you have a mortgage, contact your lender to ask for a hardship plan.
- Credit card companies also might give you a hardship plan. Ask to speak to a credit account specialist.
- Both homeowners and renters can get hardship plans from their utilities. Find out how to apply at <https://phillytenant.org/rental-assistance/#utility-assistance>.

To see all the legal issues we help with and how you may be able to get help, visit www.clsphila.org