

AGMA

AMERICAN GUILD *of* MUSICAL ARTISTS

The following is an updated summary of the key provisions of the CARES Act, which was signed into law on March 27. This unprecedented crisis will continue to generate questions that may not have clear-cut answers yet. AGMA is working diligently to share only confirmed, verified information with our members to avoid the spread of misinformation. We appreciate your patience during this precarious, emotionally draining time.

We recognize that many of you are experiencing problems accessing your state unemployment benefits office. Nevertheless, to access the new and enhanced benefits, you must apply for unemployment benefits through your state. Please go to the [Department of Labor's new COVID-19 resource page](#). This page provides a phone number and website for every state's unemployment office. We suggest, as a first step, to visit your state's UI website (or call) for state-specific eligibility requirements. The page also includes guidance, fact sheets, and news releases related to the COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs. It is updated regularly by the DOL.

If you have an unemployment case already open, please check with your state to determine next steps, as procedures are determined by each state. For example, New York has announced that you do NOT need to start the process over or do any updates to your existing claims.

If you are not eligible for traditional unemployment benefits because you are an independent contractor or gig worker, you may be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. The latest DOL guidance is [here](#). Please be aware that we are working with our sister arts and entertainment unions and employment experts to provide guidance on this new program, since there are concerns that DOL may be interpreting the new law too conservatively. PUA still doesn't seem to be accessible on some state's UI sites and it is extremely difficult to call anyone directly. We understand that many states are still updating their sites with special portals to access PUA. Please keep trying your state's website.

Artists who are foreign nationals have many questions relating to their visa status and entitlement to CARES Act relief. Please follow the advice of your immigration attorney, if you have one. AGMA also is consulting with immigration lawyers to answer questions and resolve issues as quickly as possible.

Please keep checking the [AGMA COVID-19 Resource Page](#). We provide regular updates as soon as we have information that we believe is accurate and applicable to our members. Below is a summary of key provisions of the CARES Act.

SUMMARY OF CARES ACT FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT

1. Direct Financial Support

- Eligible taxpayers entitled to “recovery rebates.”
- Direct deposit to your bank account if IRS has account information.
- \$1200 per person for individual’s earning \$75,000 or less.
- \$500 per qualifying child.
- Payments phase out for those earning more than \$75,000 and end completely for those earning \$99,000 or more.
- <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>

2. Extra Unemployment Benefits

- *Improvements to existing unemployment coverage.*
 - Additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits for workers who have or will exhaust state benefits without finding new job.
 - Additional \$600 per week on top of whatever base amount worker receives from state for 4 months.
- *Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).*
 - Temporary program of unemployment benefits through the end of 2020 for pandemic-related work loss for workers not traditionally eligible for unemployment compensation (e.g. self-employed, independent contractors, gig workers, freelancers, 1099 workers, or workers who do not have sufficient work history to otherwise qualify for UI).
 - Minimum benefit equal to one-half state’s average weekly UI benefit PLUS \$600.)

3. Student Loan Assistance for Federal Loans

- Suspension of payments and interest accrual through September 30 for federal student loans.
- Suspension of involuntary payments and garnishments for federal student loans.
- Employers can provide tax-free contributions of up to \$5,250.
- <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus>

4. Federal Income Tax Filings

- Federal filing deadline extended until July 15, 2020. (Check with your state.)
- <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-day-now-july-15-treasury-irs-extend-filing-deadline-and-federal-tax-payments-regardless-of-amount-owed>

5. Insurance Coverage

- All private insurance plans must cover COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccine.

6. Retirement Plan Distributions and Loans

- Law waives 10% early withdrawal excise tax on distributions to employees who are not 59 1/2 when they receive a coronavirus-related distribution (“COVID Distribution”) from a pension, 401(k), profit sharing, or 403(b)

Plan, or from an IRA.

- A COVID Distribution is a withdrawal made to someone who is financially impacted by COVID-19 because they:
 - or their spouse or dependent has tested positive for the virus, or
 - have been quarantined, furloughed or laid off, had a reduction in hours, or were subject to a business closing,
 - were unable to obtain childcare, or
 - other factors as may be determined.

7. Relief for Small Businesses

- \$350 billion loan program to assist small businesses (fewer than 500 employees), non-profits, and other organizations that have reduced staff, missed payroll or are struggling to make payroll due to COVID-19.
- Loans are also available to self-employed and independent contractors who don't have any employees, like some AGMA dance and voice instructors. <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options>
- Loans may be converted to grants equal to the amount the borrower spends on payroll, rent, mortgage interest, and utilities.
- Relief for existing loans is available for six months for small businesses already holding SBA loans.

8. Federal Arts Funding

- National Endowments for the Arts: \$75 million to state agencies to provide grants and other support to arts organizations.
- National Endowment for the Humanities: \$75 million.
- Corporation for Public Broadcasting: \$75 million for fiscal stabilization grants to public television and radio stations facing declines in non-federal revenues.