



*Updated: June 29, 2020 / Information is subject to change

COVID-19: Unemployment Benefits

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The answers below are not intended to be legal advice. To receive legal advice, you can contact an attorney through the legal aid resources listed [below](#).

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Where can I apply for unemployment benefits?

Apply online [here](#).

What are [unemployment benefits](#)?

If your work is reduced more than 25%, you can qualify for a claim. Unemployment benefits provide you with temporary income when you lose your job through no fault of your own. The money partly replaces your lost earnings and helps you pay expenses while looking for new work. The benefits, from taxes your former employer(s) paid, are not based on financial need.

What are the basic eligibility requirements to apply for unemployment benefits?

To apply for [unemployment benefits](#):

1. You must have worked in this state during the past 18 months. The only exceptions are if you were in the military or worked for the federal government.
2. You must have worked at least 680 hours in your base year, and at least some wages must have been earned in Washington, unless you recently left the military and are currently located in Washington state.

*this requirement is relaxed during COVID-19

3. You must be available and able for work for the weeks you are claiming.

How are the benefits and access to unemployment different during COVID-19?

During [COVID-19](#):

1. Many people who don't usually qualify for unemployment benefits because they are self-employed or don't have the typically required 680 hours will be covered under this legislation.
2. An additional \$600 each week will be paid to those on unemployment, for up to four months. (Some individuals will also receive \$1,200, but that is not connected to unemployment and will come directly from the federal government.)
3. Unemployment benefits will be available for longer, up to 39 weeks (usually it is up to 26 weeks).

Am I eligible for unemployment benefits because of [COVID-19](#)?

If you are out of work as a result of the governor's stay home order issued on March 23, you are eligible for unemployment benefits. This does not apply to employees who are considered [essential critical infrastructure workers](#), as outlined by the governor. If you are not receiving payment from your employer, such as paid sick leave or paid time off, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits and may qualify for standby during this time.

How long do I need to wait to be eligible for unemployment benefits?



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In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Governor Inslee has waived the one-week waiting period **for unemployment benefits**. This means you can be eligible for UI benefits the first week of your claim.

I am an essential worker who is immunocompromised/above 60/vulnerable to COVID-19, what should I do?

Essential workers who are immunocompromised or older are advised to not quit, but tell their employer they cannot return until safe, and get medical documents, if possible.

Do I have to look for other work while collecting unemployment benefits?

Work search requirements are optional for all claimants until further notice. Standby means you do not have to look for another job while you collect **unemployment benefits**, so long as you stay in contact with your regular employer. You must accept any work you can do without breaking isolation or quarantine that is offered by your employer, such as telework. **Emergency rules allow workers up to 12 weeks of standby.**

I have an open unemployment claim and I am receiving benefits. Do I have to do weekly job searches and write down my contacts?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on July 14, 2020)

The suspension of the job search requirement has been extended to August 1. You still have to be able to work and available for work in order to receive benefits, but the original March 8 suspension of the job search requirement has been extended.

I am a part-time employee. Am I eligible for standby?

If you have an anticipated date that you will return to work, under the emergency rules we put into place as a result of COVID-19, **standby** is available to **all full-time, part-time, and other less than full-time employees**. If you worked part time in the last 18 months, you must meet the minimum requirement of having worked 680 hours in your base year in order to have an unemployment claim.

I am a gig worker. Am I eligible for unemployment benefits?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on April 14, 2020)

Maybe! Coverage under Washington's unemployment insurance law is broader than under most other laws. This means that just because you are classified as an independent contractor under some laws does not mean that you are an independent contractor under Washington's unemployment laws. If you are a gig worker who has been laid off or lost work, you are encouraged to apply for benefits.

I have been driving for Uber and there is no work now. Can I get unemployment insurance benefits?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on April 14, 2020)

Yes. The new federal law allows states to give benefits to self-employed workers. The State of Washington Employment Security Department will implement the new rules after April 18.

What if I am an undocumented worker?

Undocumented workers do not qualify for unemployment benefits. Undocumented workers should instead



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file for DSHS benefits. If undocumented, do not apply without advice from NWIRP/immigration attorney.
DACA recipients can apply.

I have a friend who is a DACA recipient who just lost her job. Can she get unemployment if she is not a citizen?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on April 14, 2020)

Yes. She worked in the United States legally and can accept a new job when the crisis is over. She is eligible for unemployment insurance.

Am I eligible for the federal additional \$600/week for [unemployment benefits](#)?

Yes! Everyone will get it. The money is paid with regular check on a weekly basis.

I am getting the extra \$600 a week added to my claim. When will this end?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on June 29, 2020)

The \$600 bonus amount known as PUC will no longer be available after the week ending July 25th. As long as you continue to qualify for benefits, however, your regular weekly benefit will continue. If your regular benefits are exhausted (normally after 26 weeks), you may seek an extension of 13 weeks more benefits under the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program.

What if I get sick with COVID-19 while working and am forced to quit?

If a worker falls seriously ill and is forced to quit, they may qualify for Paid Family Medical Leave while ill under the existing program. Once recovered and available for work, they may apply for unemployment benefits. Also see: [information on Workers' Compensation](#). You cannot collect Unemployment insurance and Paid Family and Medical Leave benefits at the same time. **If your employer is forcing you to work when you are sick, that's a safety hazard. You may have good cause to quit and receive unemployment benefits while you find a new work.**

Where can I go if I am looking for work?

Updated job opportunities are posted [here](#).

I filed for benefits and was denied. What should I do?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on April 14, 2020)

Your claim may be processed after April 18 when the new system goes online. If the denial includes hearing rights, request a telephone hearing right away and call the [Unemployment Law Project](#) for help when you get your hearing date.

I have been waiting for my unemployment since March. I read that there is a court case in Olympia. Can I join the case?

(updated from [Unemployment Law Project](#) on June 29, 2020)



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On June 5th, the Sheridan Law Firm in Seattle filed a petition in the Washington State Supreme Court. It is not a class action. The petition is asking the Supreme Court to order the Employment Security Department to process claims and make benefit payments in a timely manner. If you would like to make a witness statement (declaration) to support the case, contact the Unemployment Law Project at 206-441-9178 or 509-624-9178. [Learn more in this blog post.](#)

Can I file a Washington State Workers' Comp Claim for COVID-19?

All workers have the right to file a work related COVID-19 exposure claim, regardless of immigration status.

What are the criteria to file for Workers' Comp?

1. Was there an increased risk of greater likelihood of contracting the condition due to the worker's occupation?
2. If not for the job, would the worker have been exposed to the virus or contracted the condition?
3. Can the worker identify a specific source or event during the performance of his or her employment that resulted in exposure to the new coronavirus?

How do I file a Workers' Comp Claim for COVID-19?

File online [here](#) or call 1-877-561-3453. [Project HELP](#) does claims assistance. They can be contacted at 1-800-255-9752.

Can my wages still be garnished for debts during COVID-19?

No. The Governor signed a [proclamation](#) that suspends state statutes that allow collection of consumer debt judgement, including bank account and wage garnishments until September 1, 2020. This proclamation also pauses current post judgment interest from accruing.

Where can I find a lawyer to help me?

If you are between the ages of 12-24, in King County or Walla Walla County, LCYC may be able to assist you with this issue. Please contact us at 206-494-0323. More information about services and intake sites is available online at www.lcycwa.com. By contacting LCYC for a referral, LCYC does not automatically become your lawyer. LCYC will respond to you directly to gather more information to see if we can help.

Unemployment Law Project (ULP) serves all people of all ages in Washington State with unemployment related issues. Contact them at 206-441-9178. Additional resources can be found on their webpage [here](#).

For Latest Updates:

[Employment Security Department – Washington State](#)
[Washington Law Help – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
[City of Seattle: Covid-19 Resources for Community](#)
[Unemployment Law Project](#)
[WorkSource](#)



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For other general legal advice IN KING COUNTY, call 2-1-1, open weekdays from 8am-6pm.

For general legal aid advice OUTSIDE OF KING COUNTY, call the CLEAR HOTLINE at 1-888-201-1014, open weekdays between 915am – 12:15pm.