



## **COVID-19 – UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE**

The economic disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic has led to business closures and layoffs, causing millions of Americans to lose their jobs. To help individuals and families make ends meet during this crisis, the federal government has taken a number of steps to provide assistance to people who have lost their jobs.

**For more information, please contact our Unemployment Rapid Response Team:**

Jake Tyner (DC): [jake.tyner@mail.house.gov](mailto:jake.tyner@mail.house.gov)

Linda Wooldridge (Morgantown): [linda.wooldridge@mail.house.gov](mailto:linda.wooldridge@mail.house.gov)

Robert Villers (Parkersburg): [robert.villers@mail.house.gov](mailto:robert.villers@mail.house.gov)

### **UNEMPLOYMENT CHANGES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act"), signed into law on March 27, 2020, provides enhanced unemployment provisions for individuals who have lost their jobs during this challenging time.

The CARES Act expands the size and scope of unemployment benefits for laid-off Americans during this unprecedented time. The bill makes benefits more generous by **adding a federally-funded \$600/week across-the-board payment increase** to existing unemployment insurance amounts through the end of July. In addition, the bill **provides an additional 13 weeks of benefits beyond what states typically allow.**

The expansion in unemployment benefits expires at the end of 2020 in recognition of the temporary nature of this challenge.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Q: Who is Covered?**

A: These enhanced benefits are available to all Americans who lose their job during this crisis.

The CARES Act also creates an unemployment benefit for those who are not traditionally eligible – such as the self-employed, individual contractors, and "gig workers."

Those wishing to receive these temporary unemployment benefits must self-certify that they are either self-employed, seeking part-time employment, do not have sufficient work history, or otherwise would not qualify for regular unemployment or extended benefits under existing law, OR are otherwise unable to work due to any of the following factors:

- The individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or is experiencing symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis;
- A member of the individual's household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- The individual is caring for a family member that has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- A child or other person in the individual's household, for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility, is unable to attend school or another facility that has closed as a direct result of COVID-19, and that school or facility care is required for the individual to work;



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- The individual cannot reach his or her place of employment due to a quarantine or has been advised by a healthcare provider to self-quarantine;
- The individual was scheduled to begin employment and does not have a job, or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- The individual has become the primary head of household because the prior head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- The individual has had to quit his or her job as a result of COVID-19;
- The individual's employer has closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- Any additional criteria to be established for assistance by the Secretary of Labor.

### **Q: Who is Not Covered?**

A: Those that are not covered include those that are able to telework with pay, those receiving paid sick leave or paid family sick leave, and new entrants to the work force that cannot find jobs.

### **Q: How Much Will I Receive?**

A: Covered individuals will be provided the weekly benefit amount authorized under the unemployment compensation law of the State where the covered individual was employed **plus an additional \$600 per week**. States typically determine the amount paid in an unemployment check based on a worker's prior wages over the last four quarters.

### **Q: How and When Will I Receive My Benefits?**

A: Any emergency assistance provided to a covered individual will be paid at the same time and in the same way assistance is regularly provided. Individual states have the option to pay emergency assistance separately, although it would still be received at the same time.

Depending on the State, the traditional one-week waiting period for emergency assistance will be waived.

### **Q: How Long Will Benefits Last?**

A: Covered individuals will receive up to 39 weeks of payments. The additional \$600 payments will cover weeks of unemployment through July 31, 2020.

### **Q: What Else Do I Need to Know?**

A: Individuals already receiving state unemployment benefits for reasons unrelated to COVID-19 will have those benefits extended by 13 weeks and will receive the extra \$600 benefit from the federal government.

If you have exhausted your unemployment benefits, eligible individuals can reapply for those benefits and receive the additional assistance.

The Secretary of Labor will clarify how States can interpret their State unemployment compensation laws to provide the maximum flexibility to reimbursing employers. This includes the type of acceptable pay documentation for newly covered individuals.

Any additional unemployment assistance paid to an individual will be disregarded when determining income for purposes of Medicaid or CHIP.

Updated April 2, 2020



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- For information from WorkForce West Virginia on unemployment and COVID-19 [please click here](#).
- To file for unemployment benefits [please click here](#).
- If you do not have internet access, have a disability requiring assistive technology or need further assistance **please call 1-800-252-JOBS**.
- **NOTE:** WorkForce West Virginia is experiencing high traffic on their website and hotline, causing delays and outages. Individuals filing for unemployment should consider visiting the website at off-peak times to submit the application:
  - *As of 4/2/20: "Due to an influx in website traffic, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, WorkForce WV's systems are experiencing intermittent disruptions and temporary outages. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and are working diligently to resolve the problems. Workforce WV is committed to providing excellent service to each person attempting to access our systems or file an unemployment claim. During this difficult time, we ask you remain patient as we work to resolve these issues."*