

The COVID19 Unemployment Update

President Trump declared COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) a National Emergency on March 13, 2020. The declaration provides new guidance and outlines flexibilities that states will have in administering their unemployment insurance programs. The following are Washington State Employment Security Departments latest unemployment updates.

Shared Work:

- Effective March 25th, employer eligibility for participation in Washington's shared-work program was expanded under an emergency rule. Employers that owe unemployment tax or are assessed an unemployment tax rate of at least 5.4% no longer are to be barred from implementing a shared-work plan.
- Effective March 12, SharedWork is a smart alternative to a layoff. SharedWork allows employers to reduce the hours of permanent and paid hourly employees by as much as 50 percent, and the employees can collect partial unemployment benefits to replace a portion of their lost wages

Rules for Claimants:

- Current unemployment claimants who are in isolation or quarantine, more leniency when it comes to UI deadlines and mandatory appointments, such as deadlines for applying for training programs.
- Employees laid off work as a result of the governor's stay home order issued on March 23, are eligible for unemployment benefits. When employees apply for benefits, they have been directed to select "laid off" as the reason for separation and to choose "Company temporarily closed" from the secondary options.
- Work search requirements are optional for all claimants until further notice. Employees can request standby status for up to 12 weeks. If on standby, workers must accept any work you offer that they can do without breaking isolation or quarantine. Exceptions can also be made due to a COVID-19 infection at the employer's place of business or an emergency proclamation by the governor that causes the employer to close or severely curtail operations
- Standby is available to all workers including full-time, part-time and other less than full-time employees
- The one-week waiting period to be eligible for unemployment benefits is waived.
- Workers must accept any telework offered by employer.
- Claimants who have contracted COVID-19 and have mild symptoms and/or claimants who are quarantined are eligible for Unemployment benefits. If a claimant exhibits severe COVID-19 symptoms, they are covered by other programs.
- Claimants who are immune-compromised and are advised by a medical professional to quarantine, are also eligible for benefits under new Emergency Rules.

Employers:

- Employers will receive leniency when it comes to financial penalties for employers who file their tax reports late, pay their taxes late, or miss deadlines as a result of COVID-19.
- Employers may receive relief of benefit charges. Under the new emergency rules, temporary shutdowns related to COVID-19 infection at the place of business that causes you to close or severely reduce operations are considered extraordinary circumstances. Request for relief of benefit charges.
- **For complete details from the State of Washington, go here: <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19-employer-information>**
- **State of Washington Scenarios and Benefits go here: <https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/newsroom/COVID-19/covid-19-scenarios-and-benefits.pdf>**

CCC is in contact with both national and state representatives regarding this issue and will keep you updated as more information becomes available