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## The COVID19 Unemployment Update

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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. This bulletin is intended to answer frequently asked questions and provide links to resources related to the effect of COVID-19 on employer unemployment programs.

### **Washington**

As of March 12th, 2020, Washington announced their adoption of new emergency rules relieving the burden of temporary layoffs, isolation, and quarantine for workers and businesses. These new rules allow 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. It also allows businesses more 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. The state agency has provided tips for employers on handling the outbreak of COVID-19 as well as answered questions for claimants effected by the virus.

For complete details from the State of Washington, go here: <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19>

### **Expanded Programs for Employers:**

- **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

- **Temporary shutdowns due to quarantine**

If you need to shut down operations temporarily because an employee becomes sick and other employees need to be isolated or quarantined, your workers may be able to receive unemployment benefits and you may receive relief of benefit charges. You may request to place employees on standby for up to eight weeks and your employees can collect unemployment benefits without having to look for other work. We may grant standby for more than eight weeks if you make your request in writing and can show extraordinary circumstances. *Under the new emergency rules, temporary shutdowns related to COVID-19 infection at the place of business that cause you to close or severely reduce operations are considered extraordinary circumstances. You may request relief of benefit charges. Workers must accept any telework you offer.*

- **Temporary layoffs due to a slowdown in business**

You may request to place an employee on standby for eight weeks and your employee can collect unemployment benefits without having to look for other work. If on standby, workers must accept any work you offer that they can do without breaking isolation or quarantine. Relief of benefit charges cannot be granted in this situation.

### **Important Notes about Emergency Rules:**

- 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.

For ESDWAGOV Scenarios and Benefits available form, go here: <https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/newsroom/COVID-19/covid-19-scenarios-and-benefits.pdf>

Information contained in the bulletin was gathered both independently, as well as utilizing resources obtained from NASWA and the Department of Labor. CCC is in contact with both national and state representatives regarding this issue and will keep you updated as more information becomes available.