

COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits

UPDATED: [FAQ for Claimants](#) | [FAQ for Employers](#) | [FAQ for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation \(FPUC\)](#)

Unemployment benefits may be available to some individuals whose unemployment is attributable to COVID-19. IDES recently adopted emergency rules to try to make the unemployment insurance system as responsive to the current situation as possible.

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Questions

What is Unemployment Insurance (UI)?

In general, UI provides temporary income maintenance to individuals who have been separated from employment through no fault of their own and who meet all eligibility requirements, including the requirements that they be able and available for work, register with the state employment service and actively seek work. [Click here for more information.](#)

What determines if I'm able to work?

An individual is considered able to work if he or she is mentally and physically capable of performing a job for which a labor market exists.

What determines if I'm available for work?

To be considered available for work, an individual cannot impose conditions on the acceptance of work if those conditions essentially leave him or her with no reasonable prospect of work.

What determines if I'm actively seeking work?

An individual is considered to be actively seeking work if he or she is making an effort that is reasonably calculated to return the individual to work.

What if I'm temporarily laid off because the place where I work is temporarily closed because of the COVID-19 virus?

An individual temporarily laid off in this situation could qualify for benefits as long as he or she was able and available for and actively seeking work. Under emergency rules IDES recently adopted, the individual would not have to register with the employment service. He or she would be considered to be actively seeking work as long as the individual was prepared to return to his or her job as soon the employer reopened.

What if I quit my job because I am generally concerned over the COVID-19 virus?

An individual who leaves work voluntarily without a good reason attributable to the employer is generally disqualified from receiving UI. The eligibility of an individual in this situation will depend on whether the facts of his or her case demonstrate the individual had a good reason for quitting and that the reason was attributable to the employer. An individual generally has a duty to make a reasonable effort to work with his or her employer to resolve whatever issues have caused the individual to consider quitting.

What if I'm confined to my home 1) because a licensed physician has diagnosed me as having COVID-19 or 2) because I must stay home to care for my spouse, parent or child, whom a medical professional has diagnosed as having COVID-19 or 3) because of a government-imposed or government-recommended quarantine?

An individual in any of those situations would be considered to be unemployed through no fault of his or her own. However, to qualify for UI, he or she would still need to meet all other eligibility requirements, including the requirements that the individual be able and available for work, registered with the state employment service and actively seeking work from the confines of his or her home. The individual would be considered able and available for work if there was some work that he or she could perform from home (e.g., transcribing, data entry, virtual assistant services) and there is a labor market for that work.

What if I leave work because my child's school has temporarily closed, and I feel I have to stay home with the child?

Ordinarily, an individual who left work to address child care needs would be considered to have left work voluntarily and would generally be disqualified from receiving UI, unless the reason for leaving was attributable to the employer. However, the fact that

all schools statewide have temporarily closed in response to the COVID-19 virus presents a unique situation in which it is unlikely a parent whose child cannot stay home alone has a ready alternative to staying home with the child himself/herself. Under the current circumstances, someone who left work to care for the child could be considered as unemployed through no fault of his or her own; in that case, to qualify for UI, the individual would still need to meet all other eligibility requirements, including the requirements that the individual be able and available for work, registered with the state employment service and actively seeking work from the confines of his or her home. The individual would be considered able and available for work if there was some work that he or she could perform from home (e.g., transcribing, data entry, virtual assistant services) and there is a labor market for that work.

I have exhausted my rights to UI. Will additional benefits be available because of the COVID-19 situation?

At this point, no additional UI is available to individuals who have already received the full 26 weeks' worth of benefits for their current benefit years.

For Employers:

If an employee receives unemployment benefits as a result of COVID-19, will the employer's unemployment contribution rate increase?

At this time, no further guidance has been issued. Until such time, normal procedures will be followed. In general, the contribution rate of an experience rated employer is based, in part, on the amount of unemployment benefits paid to the employer's former employees.

Potential Closure or Layoff

Rapid Response Services are available to employers who are planning or have gone through a permanent closure or mass layoff at a plant, facility, or enterprise, or a natural or other disaster, that results in mass job dislocation. The State Dislocated Worker Unit coordinates with [employers](#) to provide on-site information to workers and employers about employment and retraining services designed to help participants retain employment when feasible, or obtain re-employment as soon as possible. For more information, visit [Rapid Response Services for Businesses](#) or contact your local Illinois workNet Center.