



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR
KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

ROSALIN ACOSTA
SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH, 17, 2020

IMPORTANT EMPLOYEE and EMPLOYER INFORMATION RELATED TO COVID-19 and
UNEMPLOYMENT

The Baker-Polito Administration's Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), in coordination with the US Department of Labor (USDOL), and the Massachusetts Legislature continue to take actions to assist workers and employers related to COVID-19.

For unemployment claims:

- The one-week waiting period to collect an unemployment claim payment has been waived.
- All requirements regarding attending seminars at the MassHire career centers have been suspended.
- Deadlines missed by employers and claimants due to effects of COVID-19 may be excused under DUA's good cause provision.
- Employers whose businesses are severely impacted by COVID-19 can request extensions for filing and paying unemployment contributions.
- "Worksearch" requirements will be interpreted to appropriately permit claimants affected by COVID-19 to collect benefits.
- All appeal hearings will be held by telephone only.

DUA may pay unemployment benefits if a worker is quarantined due to an order by a civil authority or medical professional, or leaves employment due to reasonable risk of exposure or infection or to care for a family member. The worker need not provide medical documentation and need only be available for work when and as able.

To assist individuals who cannot work due to the impact of COVID-19, the Baker-Polito administration filed emergency legislation, which is now law, that allows new claims to be paid more quickly by waiving the one week waiting period for unemployment benefits. This means that DUA is authorized to pay benefits without delay to persons who become unemployed because of layoffs or business shutdowns taken in response to the virus, because of quarantine orders or directives or illness that prevents them from leaving their homes, or because they must care for a sick or quarantined family member.

EOLWD and DUA also filed emergency regulations that allow people impacted by COVID-19 to collect unemployment benefits if their workplace is shut down and expects to reopen. This applies to all employees (full- and parttime) who are impacted by such shutdowns. Claimants are urged to file claims online at: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-unemployment-benefits>

The following conditions apply to temporary shutdowns:

- Workers must remain in contact with their employers during the shutdown.
- Workers must be available for any work their employer may have for them that they are able to do.
- An employer may request to extend the period of the covered shut-down to eight weeks, and workers will remain eligible for the longer period under the same conditions described above.
- If necessary, DUA may extend these time periods for workers and employers.

Employers who have been paying into the system for themselves (are receiving a W-2) are able to apply as well.

Currently self-employed individuals and 1099 contract employees are not eligible for unemployment benefits. If the President of the United States makes a disaster unemployment declaration for Massachusetts or nationwide, the self-employed and 1099 contractors would become eligible for unemployment assistance. This is already coded into the DUA system and would be available immediately upon declaration and press release announcement.

If a person contracts the virus for any work-related reason, that person could be eligible for workers' compensation. If you qualify, you can receive payments to partially replace your paycheck and for medical care related to your injury. Please visit mass.gov/workers-compensation-for-injured-workers. In most cases, a claimant is not eligible for both unemployment benefits and workers' compensation.

Due to the volume DUA is experiencing at this time the fastest way to process a claim is online at mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-unemployment-benefits, which remains fully operational. To further mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all in-person services are currently unavailable at all Career Centers and Unemployment walk in centers across Massachusetts. However, those individuals requiring additional services may head [here](#). This contact form should be used primarily by those with disabilities, special needs, and language barriers. In addition to staffing up the remote call center capabilities, the DUA contact center will likely be extending hours and including weekends in the near future.

Thank you for your continued patience in this effort and please check back at mass.gov/unemployment/covid-19 for updates.