

MassHire Department of Career Services Rapid Response Pandemic Employer Information

Revised 4/21/2021



DEPARTMENT OF
CAREER SERVICES

RapidResponse

What is MassHire Department of Career Services Rapid Response?

RapidResponse

- Rapid Response is a federally mandated program through the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act (WIOA) designed to assist businesses and employees experiencing a layoff or closing.
- The MassHire Rapid Response Team is a business service of the MassHire Department of Career Services.
- Before your employees are separated from your company, the MassHire Rapid Response Team will provide them with options prior to a layoff and refer them to a MassHire Career Center of their choice.

What to Expect while Working with Rapid Response

While you may not be able to change the business conditions that make layoffs necessary, calling the MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS) Rapid Response Team can reduce the cost of layoffs for you and your employees.

In working with Rapid Response, you can expect:

- A quick response to your transition planning needs
- Confidentiality
- Information about alternatives that may reduce or avoid the layoff, or possible future layoffs
- Pre-layoff services designed to help workers shorten their transition time
- Information on MassHire Career Centers and Unemployment Insurance
- Assistance in maintaining worker morale and productivity during the transition
- Assistance in preparing affected workers to find new employment
- Coordination with AFL-CIO Rapid Response Team members for union employees

MassHire Career Centers & Locations

- The Rapid Response team assists companies with the support of the local MassHire Career Centers.
- MassHire Career Center Business Services staff are ready to assist and coordinate with the Rapid Response Team.

Greater Boston

MassHire Boston Career Center

1010 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02119
(617) 541-1400, TTY#: (617) 442-3610

MassHire Downtown Boston Career Center

75 Federal Street, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 399-3100, 800-436-WORK (9675)

MassHire Metro North Career Centers

186 Alewife Brook Parkway, Suite 310
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 661-7867, (888) 454-9675
TTY#: (800) 439-2370

(affiliated limited services)*

4 Gerrish Avenue
Chelsea, MA 02150
(617) 884-4333

100 TradeCenter
Suite G-100
Woburn, MA 01801
(781) 932-5500, (888) 273-WORK

MassHire Framingham Career Center

1671 Worcester Road
Framingham, MA 01701
(508) 861-7993

MassHire Norwood Career Center

32 Day Street
Norwood, MA 02062
(781) 269-5494

Northeastern Massachusetts

MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Centers

Haverhill Opportunity Works
(HOW Building)
671 Kenoza Street,
Haverhill, MA 01830
(978) 241-4730

255 Essex Street
Lawrence, MA 01840
(978) 722-7000

MassHire Lowell Career Center

107 Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA 01852
(978) 458-2503, TTY#: (978) 805-4915

MassHire North Shore Career Centers

70 Washington Street
Salem, Massachusetts 01970
(978) 825-7200

(affiliated limited services)*

5 Pleasant Street
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 283-4772

(affiliated limited services)*

North Shore Community College
300 Broad Street, LE-102
Lynn, MA 01901
(781) 691-7450

MassHire North Shore Youth Career Center**

117 Franklin Street
Lynn, MA 01902
(781) 691-7430

Southeastern Massachusetts

MassHire Attleboro Career Center

95 Pine Street
Attleboro, MA 02703
(508) 222-1950

MassHire Cape & Islands Career Center

372 North Street
Hyannis, MA 02601
(508) 771-JOBS (5627),
TTY#: (508) 862-6102

MassHire Greater Brockton Career Center

34 School Street,
Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 513-3400

MassHire Greater Brockton YouthWorks**

34 School Street, lower level
Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 584-9800

MassHire Fall River Career Center

446 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
(508) 730-5000

MassHire Youth Connections**

139 South Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720
(508) 675-9245

MassHire Greater New Bedford Career Center

618 Acushnet Avenue
New Bedford, MA 02740
(508) 990-4000

MassHire Taunton Career Center

72 School Street
Taunton, MA 02780
(508) 977-1400

MassHire South Shore Career Centers

36 Cordage Park Circle, Suite 214B
Plymouth, MA 02360
(617) 376-5170

1515 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 745-4000

Central Massachusetts

MassHire North Central Career Center

100 Erdman Way
Leominster, MA 01453
(978) 534-1481, TTY#: (978) 534-1657

MassHire Southbridge Career Center

5 Optical Drive, Suite 200
Southbridge, MA 01550
(508) 765-6430, TTY#: (508) 765-6437

MassHire Worcester Career Center

340 Main Street, Suite 400
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 799-1600

Western Massachusetts

MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Centers

One Arch Place
Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 774-4361, TTY#: 413-772-2174

(Affiliated limited services)*

20 West Street
Northampton, MA 01060
(413) 774-4361

MassHire Holyoke Career Center

850 High Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
(413) 532-4900, TTY#: (413) 535-3098

MassHire Berkshire Career Center

160 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 499-2220, TTY#: (413) 499-7306

MassHire Springfield Career Center

95 Liberty Street, Third Floor
Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 858-2800, TTY#: (413) 858-2800

Are you Experiencing a Downturn in Business?

What are the Options for Businesses Experiencing a Downturn?

- **WorkShare**
 - Your business needs to reduce work hours of your employees
- **Furloughs**
 - Your business requires temporary layoffs
- **Layoffs**
 - Your business experiences a permanent layoff situation

What is the Department of Unemployment Assistance WorkShare Program?

- If your company needs to reduce payroll costs because of a temporary decline in business, the WorkShare program is your alternative to layoffs
- WorkShare allows an employer to reduce the work hours of employees in an entire company or individual units/departments
- The employees receive unemployment benefits to supplement their reduced wages
- Visit **mass.gov/workshare** or call (617) 626-6877 for more information

What is a **WARN** Notice & Why do you need one?

The **Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN)** requires employers give full and part-time workers written notice 60 calendar days prior to a layoff or company closing

- This is a Federal layoff requirement and applies to both permanent and temporary layoffs
- An exception may be that a business could not reasonably foresee circumstances leading to an event
- **WARN** gives workers adequate time to seek new jobs or enter training programs before losing their current jobs

If you are ready to submit your WARN notice, please email it to **warnnotice@detma.org** and attach your notice

COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Benefits

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) have made changes to unemployment eligibility to assist workers and employers related to COVID-19

- 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
 - Impacted because their workplace is shut down due to COVID-19
- DUA may excuse missed deadlines during the processing of a claim, such as responding to fact-finding questionnaires and requesting an appeal, if the reason for failing to meet the deadline is due to COVID-19
- DUA may grant employer requests for extensions for filing quarterly wage reports and paying contributions

Additional Federal Coronavirus Unemployment Insurance Aid

CARES ACT -Unemployment Insurance Provisions

- Created a new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program (through December 26, 2020) to help those not traditionally eligible for Unemployment Insurance (UI), including self-employed individuals, independent contractors, those with limited work history and those who are unable to work as a result of the Coronavirus public health emergency
- Provides an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits to help those who remain unemployed after state unemployment benefits run out

The **American Rescue Plan** signed on **March 11th, 2021** extends PEUC and PUA (*both referenced in the Cares Act above.*) These programs are now authorized to pay through the week ending September 4th, 2021

In addition, Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) in the weekly amount of \$300 has been extended and will end the week ending September 4th, 2021.

Unemployment Insurance Benefits and Returning to Work: Guide for Employers

In normal times, the intent of the unemployment insurance program is to assist people during periods of unemployment when suitable work is not available. But, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Labor encourages flexibility to effectively comply with government social distancing recommendations and to mitigate the spread of the virus. In response, the Department of Unemployment Assistance enacted emergency regulations, that, among other things, altered the definition of suitable work.

However, if suitable work is available, the claimant has an obligation to properly apply for or accept offered work. Indeed, recent guidelines promulgated by the United States Department of Labor provide that refusing suitable work will likely result in a loss of unemployment benefits. A claimant may not refuse work because unemployment benefits are higher than the amount the claimant would earn from employment.

Can an employer report when an employee refuses to come back to work or refuses an offer of work?

- You can report job refusals at UIReturntowork@detma.org.

Please report the date the offer of work was made, the date the employee would have returned to work, and a description of how the offer was directly communicated to the employee.

For more information and frequently asked questions [click here](#).

Are you or your employees in need of Health Care Coverage?

Massachusetts Health Connector

Find affordable, high-quality health insurance if you lost coverage through your job



The Health Connector is a state agency and health insurance marketplace that makes coverage available to people who recently lost their insurance from their employer. Most people who apply through the Health Connector can get a plan for a low monthly cost, and some people even qualify for a **\$0 monthly payment**.

All Health Connector plans cover services like doctor visits, emergency care, physical therapy, and prescription drugs.

Learn more and apply

Learn more and sign up today at www.MAhealthconnector.org. When you fill out an application online, you'll find out right away if you qualify for a health plan from the Health Connector or coverage through MassHealth.

➔ If you've lost health insurance that you had through a job, make sure to apply within **60 days** of losing that coverage. However, the sooner you apply, the sooner your new health insurance can start.

Losing your employer coverage is considered a qualifying life event, which gives you a special enrollment period for enrolling through the Health Connector. Once your special enrollment period is over, you may not be able to enroll through the Health Connector again until the next Open Enrollment period.

Already have a Health Connector account?

If you've applied to the Health Connector in the past or currently have Health Connector coverage and your income has changed, please update your account with this information now. If your income is now lower, you may end up qualifying for lower-cost health insurance.

Sign into your account at www.MAhealthconnector.org to update your income or other information.

You can find detailed instructions for updating income on our website at: www.MAhealthconnector.org/update-income

Steps to enroll or change plans

1. Apply or update your account
2. Choose a plan
3. Pay your first monthly bill (if you have one)

Deadlines

April 23
Last date to enroll or change plans for May 1

May 23
Last date to enroll or change plans for June 1

➔ Tip for entering income

Enter your income as it is right now, then adjust your expected yearly income based on what you think you'll end up making over the course of the year.

If your income changes later on, please update your information again to so you are keeping it as correct as possible.

If you need health insurance, you may qualify for coverage through the Health Connector.

Apply today and get covered. For more detailed information please go to: <https://www.mahealthconnector.org/the-right-plan-right-now>

Apply online at www.MAhealthconnector.org

Paid Family and Medical Leave

Notice of Benefits Available Under M.G.L. Chapter 175M Paid Family and Medical Leave

Beginning on October 1, 2019:

- Employers will deduct payroll contributions from a covered individual's wages or other earnings to fund PFML benefits.

Beginning on January 1, 2021:

- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 20 weeks of paid medical leave in a benefit year if they have a serious health condition that incapacitates them from work.
- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid family leave in a benefit year related to the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child, or because of a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that a family member is on active duty or has been notified of an impending call to active duty in the Armed Forces.
- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 26 weeks of paid family leave in a benefit year to care for a family member who is a covered service member with a serious health condition.

Beginning on July 1, 2021:

- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid family leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

Covered individuals are eligible for no more than 26 total weeks, in the aggregate, of paid family and medical leave in a single benefit year.

Who is a Covered Individual Under the Law?



Generally, a worker qualifies as a covered individual and may be eligible for paid family and medical leave if:

- S/he is paid wages by a Massachusetts employer; or
- S/he resides in Massachusetts and is paid for contract services by a Massachusetts entity that is required to report payment for services on IRS Form 1099-MISC for more than 50 percent of its workforce; or
- S/he is a self-employed individual who resides in Massachusetts and chooses to opt-in to the program.

Job Protection

Generally, an employee who has taken paid family or medical leave must be restored to the employee's previous position or to an equal position, with the same status, pay, employment benefits, length-of-service credit, and seniority as of the date of leave.

These job protections do not apply to contractors.

Weekly Benefits

To fund PFML benefits, employers will deduct payroll contributions from a covered individual's wages or other earnings beginning on Oct. 1, 2019. Covered individuals can apply for benefits beginning in January 2021 through the Department of Family and Medical Leave. A covered individual's average weekly earnings will determine his or her benefit amount, for a maximum weekly benefit of up to \$850.

No Retaliation or Discrimination

- It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate or retaliate against an employee for exercising any right to which s/he is entitled under the law.
- An employee or former employee who is discriminated or retaliated against for exercising rights under the law may, not more than three years after the violation occurs, institute a civil action in the superior court, and may be entitled to damages of as much as three times his or her lost wages.

Private Plans

If an employer offers employees paid family leave, medical leave, or both, with benefits that are at least as generous as those provided under the law, the employer may apply for an exemption from paying the contributions. Employees continue to be protected from discrimination and retaliation under the law even when an employer opts to provide paid leave benefits through a private plan.



The Massachusetts Department of Family and Medical Leave (DFML) announced that workers eligible for Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) may begin filing certain benefit requests on Jan. 1 in accordance with legislation enacted in 2018.

If you have questions or concerns about your **Paid Family and Medical Leave** rights, please contact:

MassPFMLA@Mass.gov or visit:
<https://www.mass.gov/DFML>

Business Loans & Additional Resources

Small Business Administration (SBA) Business Loans

Express Bridge Loan Pilot Program allows small businesses who currently have a business relationship (i.e. account or loan) with an SBA Express Lender to access up to \$25,000 with less paperwork

Economic Injury Disaster Loans

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced that the deadline to apply for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program for the COVID-19 pandemic disaster declaration has been extended to Dec. 31, 2021.

- The Economic Injury Disaster Loan Advance was a grant program offered together with the economic injury loan program.
- All available funds for the EIDL Advance program have been allocated. SBA is not able to issue EIDL Advances once program funding has been obligated and is no longer available
- EIDL loan applications will still be processed even though the Advance is no longer available

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)

- President Joe Biden signed the PPP Extension Act of 2021 into law on March 30, 2021, extending the Paycheck Protection Program an additional two months to **May 31, 2021**. This provides an additional 30-day period for the SBA to process applications that are still pending.

The SBA is also offering **Debt Relief** to small businesses, this relief is not available for Paycheck Protection Program loans or Economic Injury Disaster loans

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Business Loans continued

The **Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG)** program was established by the Economic Aid to Hard-Hit Small Businesses, Nonprofits, and Venues Act, and amended by the American Rescue Plan Act. The program includes over \$16 billion in grants to shuttered venues, to be administered by SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance.

- Eligible applicants may qualify for grants equal to **45% of their gross earned revenue**, with the maximum amount available for a single grant award of \$10 million. **\$2 billion is reserved for eligible applications with up to 50 full-time employees.** SBA is building the grant program and expects to open applications in early April 2021.

The American Rescue Plan Act established the **Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF)** to provide funding to help restaurants and other eligible businesses (see list below) keep their doors open. This program will provide restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to \$10 million per business and no more than \$5 million per physical location. Recipients are not required to repay the funding if funds are used for eligible uses no later than March 11, 2023.

Additional Resources for Business and Employees

- **Main Street Lending Program**

The Federal Reserve established the Main Street Lending Program (Program) to support lending to small and medium-sized for-profit businesses and nonprofit organizations that were in sound financial condition before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Massachusetts Administrative Tax Relief Measures** for small local businesses that have been impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, especially in the restaurant and hospitality sectors
 - This includes the extension of the deferral of regular sales tax, meals tax, and room-occupancy taxes for small businesses due from March 2020 through April 2021, so they will instead be due in May 2021
 - Additionally, all penalties and interest that would otherwise apply will be waived.
- The **Small Business Resiliency Technical Assistance Grants** will support nonprofit organizations who offer programming to help existing small business recover from COVID-19 and thrive post COVID-19 in underserved communities. The deadline for applications is April 5.
- The **CDFI and CDC Matching Capital Program** is available to eligible nonprofit community-based lenders to provide matching capital to spur job creation across the Commonwealth, support entrepreneurship and small business recovery, sustainability, resilience and growth by lowering the barriers to capital access faced by small businesses. The deadline for applications is April 19.
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Additional Emergency Resources

- **Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)** ensures the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters
 - MEMA's Emergency Operations Center's Private Sector Hotline
 - The hotline will be staffed Monday – Friday from 8am to 4pm
 - The number for the hotline is (508) 820-2094
- The **U.S. Chamber** also has resources available to inform and equip businesses with the most important and up-to-date information to prevent the spread of the virus and prepare businesses for the near and long-term impact
- All of the state **Manufacturing Extension Partnerships**, including the one in Massachusetts, have formed a national network to offer supply chain solutions to the manufacturers disrupted by the efforts to stem the spread of Coronavirus.
- The **Manufacturing Emergency Response Team (M-ERT)** supports Massachusetts manufacturers in pivoting their operations to produce needed materials in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MassTech Collaborative will continue to oversee efforts in partnership with MassMEP. **Contact MassMEP at (508) 831-7020 or MassTech Collaborative at (508) 870-0312**

Reopening Massachusetts

General business guidance

All businesses must meet these requirements before reopening:

- **COVID-19 control plan template** – Template that satisfies the written control plan requirement for self-certification
- **Compliance attestation poster** – Poster that customer facing businesses are required to print, sign, and post in an area within the business premises that is visible to workers and visitors
- **Employer and Worker posters** – Posters that businesses can print and display within the business premises to describe the rules for maintaining social distancing, hygiene protocols, and cleaning and disinfecting

Go to [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) for more information to assist businesses in meeting the self-certification requirement to reopen

For Assistance with Rapid Response Services

Statewide Office

Ken Messina

Business Services Manager/Rapid Response
Hurley Building
19 Staniford Street, 1st Floor
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-5703 Office
ken.messina@detma.org

Boston/Metro North Region

Chuck Bennett

Rapid Response Coordinator II
MassHire Metro North Career Center
186 Alewife Brook Parkway
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 620-4695
charles.bennett@detma.org

Central Region

Sandra Foley

Rapid Response Coordinator II
MassHire North Central Career Center
100 Erdman Way,
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Northeast Region

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MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Center
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Southeast Region

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MassHire Taunton Career Center
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Western Region

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MassHire Springfield Career Center
95 Liberty Street,
Springfield, MA 01103
(617) 438-7896
carol.snyder@detma.org

Additional Links and Contacts

[Mass.gov/Rapid-Response](https://www.mass.gov/Rapid-Response)

(800) 252-1591

[Mass.gov/dua/WorkShare](https://www.mass.gov/dua/WorkShare)

(617) 626-6877

[Mass.gov/unemployment-insurance-ui-for-employers](https://www.mass.gov/unemployment-insurance-ui-for-employers)

(617) 626-5075

**Certificate of Good Standing is required for the WorkShare program*

*Disclaimer

- ▶ Information in this presentation is changing rapidly and we are updating it regularly.
- ▶ Many programs and services are changing quickly depending on funding availability so be sure to contact the individual resource for up-to-the-minute information.
- ▶ Check back to our Rapid Response or BizWorks pages at www.Mass.Gov for updated information periodically.
- ▶ **Coming Soon! Pandemic Resource Guide to Mass.gov**