

Section 30 – Training Opportunities Program (TOP)

2024



DEPARTMENT OF
CAREER SERVICES

May 17, 2024

- We've updated the automated reply on the top@detma.org email box to provide clarity that applications for TOP are not accepted via that inbox, from any party. The TOP unit can not accept applications through that email box, or through any means other than mailed to the address listed on the application.

What is the Training Opportunities Program (TOP)?

The Training Opportunities Program (TOP) allows claimants to collect unemployment benefits while they attend full-time training to obtain new job skills. If a claimant needs to acquire new skills to become re-employed, they may be eligible for TOP.

To participate in TOP, claimants must submit a completed application to the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA). If the claimant and training program meet the eligibility requirements and the Section 30 application is approved:



What is the Training Opportunities Program (TOP)?

- DUA will waive the work search requirement for weeks within the approved training effective begin and end date
- Claimants will continue to receive unemployment benefits while in DUA-approved training; and
- For timely applicants, TOP will allow them to receive up to 26 weeks of additional benefits if their training extends beyond the duration of their initial unemployment claim's regular benefits
- Additional information about TOP can be found online at www.mass.gov/dua/top.



What is Section 30?

TOP is governed by Part I, Title XXI, Chapter 151A, Section 30 of Massachusetts' General Laws. Thus, "Training Opportunities Program", "TOP", and "Section 30" are often used interchangeably when referring to the program.



The general goal of M.G.L. c. 151A, § 30(c) is to allow claimants to acquire new skills or knowledge necessary to obtain appropriate employment, including, but not limited to, enhanced or improved employment. Section 30's full legal text can be found at:
www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXI/Chapter151A/Section30.

Am I eligible for Section 30?

If a claimant has a monetarily eligible UI claim in the state of Massachusetts, they may apply. Predeterminations regarding eligibility for specific schools/programs CANNOT be given over the phone.

A claimant must submit a TOP application and the issue must be adjudicated to receive a formal determination regarding their eligibility.



Am I eligible for Section 30?

They may qualify if:

- They no longer work for their former employer
- They filed a claim and are eligible for unemployment benefits in Mass
- It will be difficult for them to get a new job, unless they get new skills
- They have the skills to complete and benefit from approved training
- Their training program is full-time
- They will complete their training within two years (three in some situations)



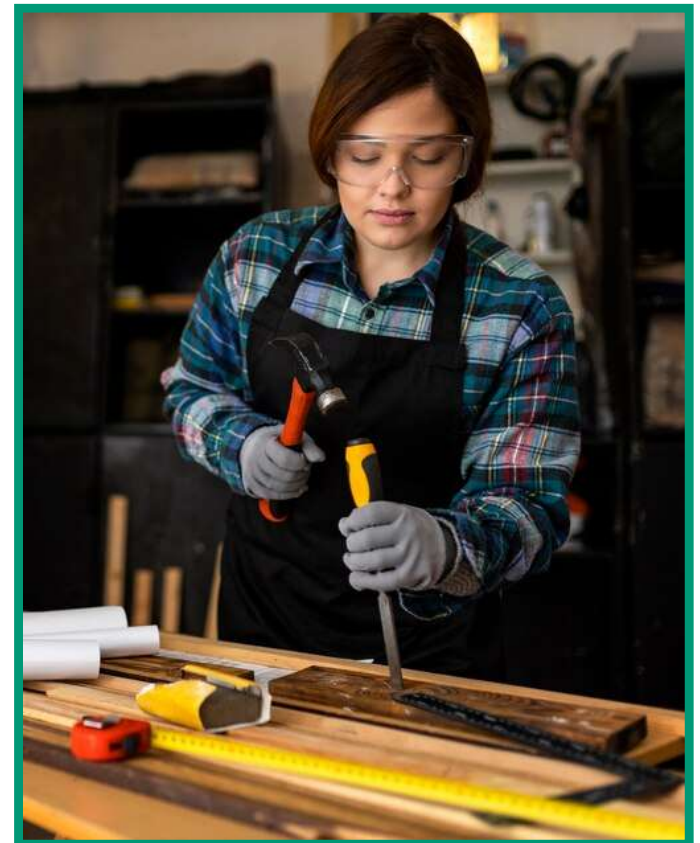
What kind of school/training program can a claimant enroll in?

A claimant should choose a training program that will give them job skills that are in demand.

They can choose training for jobs in demand where they live now, or in another place they would commute to or move.

Claimants may choose to enroll in an hourly-based vocational/training program or in a credit-based university/college program.

More information about the labor market and which jobs are in demand can be found at www.mass.gov/lmi.



Where can a claimant find school / training?

- Claimants may visit www.mass.gov/jobquest and click the “**Locate Training**” link to browse approved programs.
- They may also contact their local Career Center and ask for assistance finding school/training.
- Alternatively, they can find a program on their own, but it is recommended that the program they find meets the minimum eligibility criteria for Section 30.



Is there a deadline to apply for TOP?

430 CMR 9.02 defines the application period as:

The 20-week application period commences with the week the first payment is issued to a claimant and continues for each week payment is issued thereafter unless the period is tolled by regulation or waived for good cause under 430 CMR 9.05.



Is there a deadline to apply for TOP?

- If a determination denying regular benefits under M.G.L. c. 151A, §§ 39, 41 or 42 is reversed and regular benefits are awarded, however
- the application period begins the week after the notice of such reversal is sent to the claimant.
- the claimant shall not be barred from applying for and commencing training, even if the benefit year has expired, so long as the claimant applies for training within 21 weeks of the notice of reversal and commences training with the first available program.

430 CMR 9.05 (6)(e) states that **“If economic circumstances permit the provision of extended benefits or any other emergency unemployment benefits funded in whole or in part by the Federal Government, the application shall be extended until the end of such period.”**



What are the benefits of being Section 30 approved?

If claimants become Section 30 approved, they are:

- eligible for a **waiver** on the work search requirement for the duration of the Section 30 approval, and
- eligible for an extension on their UI benefits of up to 26 weeks through the Retraining Extended Duration (RED) extension if their application was timely



What is the RED extension?

“If in the opinion of the commissioner, it is necessary for an unemployed individual to obtain further industrial or vocational training to realize appropriate employment, the total benefits which such individual may receive shall be extended by up to 26 times the individual's benefit rate, if such individual is attending an industrial or vocational retraining course approved by the commissioner; provided, that such additional benefits shall be paid to the individual only when attending such course and only if such individual has exhausted all rights to regular and extended benefits under this chapter and has no rights to benefits or compensation under this chapter or any other state unemployment compensation law or under any federal law..” (M.G.L. c. 151A, § 30(c))

- A claimant will be enrolled into the **RED** extension if they are Section 30 approved at a time where they have exhausted all other regular benefits and federal extensions available.
- The **RED** extension consists of a maximum of 26 weeks of additional benefits after regular benefits are otherwise exhausted. Thus, Section 30 approval does not guarantee a claimant benefits for the entire duration of their program, depending on how long their program is.
- A claimant will only be eligible to receive **RED** benefits for the duration of their Section 30 approval. Once their approval ends, they are no longer eligible for **RED**.

Does the DUA pay for school/training?

No. It is the claimant's responsibility to either pay for the program themselves or to find financial aid on their own.

Claimants may apply for FAFSA (federal financial aid) at studentaid.gov and may contact their local MassHire Career Center to inquire about funding.

Claimants can visit mass.gov/careercenters to find a MassHire Career Center near them.



What is the minimum eligibility criteria for Section 30?

Claimant must be able to complete their school/training program within two years. If the claimant needs basic skills (ESL, ABE, GED) before they can start their program, TOP will allow them three years to complete their program. Claimant must be enrolled in their program full-time. **Full-time is defined as either:**

- **20 hours per week or more for hourly-based programs**
- **The equivalent of 12 credits per semester for credit-based programs**
- **Claimant must be permanently separated from their previous employer**



Where can claimants get the TOP application?

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Friday, October 1, 2021

Change Password | Logoff

My Home Page

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View and Maintain Account Information

Estimate Future Benefits

View And Request 1099G

View UI Records

Request TOP Application

Benefit Charges

Collections

Eligibility Issues

Manage Claimant Account

Monetary

Claimant Profile

Claimant Information

Name: [Redacted] Claimant ID: [Redacted] Claim ID: 2020-01

Effective Date: 11/29/2020 Benefit Year End: 11/27/2021 Claim Status: Exhausted COVID-19

Generate TOP Application

Claimant Name: [Redacted]

Claimant Mailing Address: [Redacted]

Important: This application should be returned **as soon as possible**. In order to be eligible for the additional 26 weeks of Unemployment Insurance benefits while in training, you **must** return the completed application **before your 20th payable week of Unemployment Insurance benefits** unless you have an approvable reason for submitting your application after that date.

Previous **Print TOP Application** Mail TOP Application

TOP applications can be found in a claimant's UI Online account. There is a link on the left-hand side of their homepage that says, **"Request TOP Application."** The claimant clicks on the tab and can then print out the application.

How is the TOP application completed?

The TOP application must be completed by both the claimant and their school/training program.

The DUA does not dictate exactly which representative at a school the application should be completed by. The claimant should reach out to their school/training program for additional guidance regarding who the application can be completed by.

A TOP application that has not been completed by both parties in their respective areas of the application cannot be adjudicated.



How should a TOP application be sent to the DUA?

Completed TOP applications should be mailed to DUA at:
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114



Completed TOP applications should **NEVER** be sent to
top@detma.org

How long does it take to process a TOP application?

- Specific timeframes can never be given, and TOP applications are reviewed on a first-come first-serve basis.
- If it is determined that additional information is needed to adjudicate a TOP application, the claimant will be contacted either by phone and/or a questionnaire sent to them.



How does a claimant know if they have been Section 30 approved?



- Claimants will receive a written determination, based on their correspondence preferences, regarding their eligibility for the Section 30 program.
- If a claimant does not agree with the determination they receive, they may appeal it.
- If a claimant has questions about the status of their TOP application or to confirm their application was received, they can **call TOP at 617-626-5521**.

Can claimants continue to receive benefits while on school breaks?

During school breaks that are three weeks or less, claimants may continue to be eligible for TOP benefits provided that they attend school immediately prior to and immediately after each break.

If the school break exceeds three weeks, they may receive benefits if:

- they still have a balance of regular UI benefits (claimant is not receiving RED benefits)
- they conduct an active work search and maintain a record of their work search activities; and
- they apply for and accept suitable work if a job offer is made to them

Applying for Approved Training While You Are Collecting Unemployment Insurance

Do You Need Training?

If you need to acquire new skills in order to become re-employed, please visit this information on the Training Opportunities Program to learn how to find the right training program and how attending training may affect your unemployment insurance (UI) benefits.

Section 36 of the Massachusetts Employment and Training Law allows the Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) to waive an active work search by claimants who meet certain eligibility requirements. This means that claimants can continue to collect their UI benefits while in agency-approved training.

Reasons to Ask Yourself

If you need new job skills and want to attend a training program while you are collecting unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, there are several things for you to consider and questions for you to ask yourself:

1. **When training will be right for you? How much training do you need?**
 - To be approved for approved training, you must choose a program no longer than six months duration.

Will you be able to complete it before your benefits end?

- If so, you will only need to apply for a waiver of your work-search activities while you are collecting UI benefits.

3. What if the program extends beyond the duration of your benefits?

- If it does, you can apply for an extension of your unemployment insurance benefits. The extension is a maximum of six weeks of benefits or until the completion of your training, whichever comes first.
- To be approved for the extension, you need to apply for benefits no approved for the **six** **week** **period** of your claim.
- To qualify, your training program must be an approved or approved training program.

5. How will you pay for your training?

- Can you pay for the training yourself?
- Will you need funding to pay for your training? If you do need help paying for your program, will you meet the eligibility requirements for funding assistance?
- Even if you are eligible to receive financial assistance, will funding be available?



If you are approved for financial assistance, it is based on the approved cost.

For more information, and to apply for funding assistance, check with your local State Employment Center (SEC) or your local training provider.

Eligibility Requirements

You may be eligible for approved training if you:

- are previously separated from your previous employer;
- are unable to obtain suitable employment based on your current skill level; and
- need training to become re-employed.

When to Apply

If you need training, you should start to look into the availability of training programs as soon as possible.


If your approved training program is going to extend past the duration of your regular unemployment insurance benefits, you may be eligible for an extension of your benefits while you are completing your training. The extension can be no longer than **six** **weeks** **or** **until** **the** **completion** **of** **your** **training**.

In order to be eligible for the extension, you must apply by the **six** **week** **period** of your claim. It must work in such a way that you receive six or less of your weekly benefits.

You must file an application with DUA for approval of your program prior to starting training. Allow at least three weeks in order to ensure that there is enough time to process your application.

If you apply after the **six** **week** **period**, you may attend an approved training program while you are collecting benefits, but will not be eligible for an extension of those benefits.

DUA Division of Unemployment Assistance
Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development
100 State Street, Room 3000, Boston, MA 02109
617-725-6000
www.mass.gov/dua



Commonwealth
of Massachusetts

Friday, October 1, 2021
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[Request TOP Application](#)
[Benefit Charges](#)
[Collections](#)
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[Manage Claimant Account](#)
[Monetary](#)

Claimant Profile

Claimant Information

Name:

Effective Date: 11/29/2020

Claimant ID:

Benefit Year End: 11/27/2021

Claim ID: 2020-01

Claim Status: Exhausted

[Change Claim](#) [Change Claimant](#) [Leave Claimant](#)

COVID-19

Welcome, [Show Profile Details](#)

Important reminder!

Federal UI benefits, including FPUC, PUA, PEUC and MEUC ended the week ending September 4, 2021.

Benefits Overview

Your benefit claim balance is now \$0.00. To view benefit request history, go to the "Weeks Claimed" page. If you are still unemployed after 11/27/2021 and have earned additional wages, login and reapply for ben

A wide variety of other assistance programs and services are available while you are unemployed. For more information, please visit [Programs and Services for Claimants](#) on mass.gov website.

Claim Information

Benefit Year: 11/29/2020 - 11/27/2021

[View Weeks Claimed](#)

Last Requested Week: 8/29/2021 - 9/4/2021

Payments Overview

Last payment: \$640.00 on 09/08/2021

Recent Payments

Payment Date

Amount

Method

09/08/2021

\$640.00

Direct Deposit

08/31/2021

\$640.00

Direct Deposit

08/25/2021

\$640.00

Direct Deposit

Payment Preferences

Federal Tax Withholding: 10.00%

State Tax Withholding: 5.00%

Payment Method: Direct deposit

Top 10 Things You Should Know...

[Claim Processing Overview](#)

[Benefits Guide](#)


[Contact Us](#)

[Training Opportunities Program Information](#)

[WorkShare Program Information](#)

Need Help?

- Claimants can access additional information in their UI Online accounts. When viewing their home page, there is a “Need Help?” link on the top right-hand side.
- After clicking that, they can click the “Training Opportunities Program Information” link which will then bring them to mass.gov/training-opportunities-program-top.

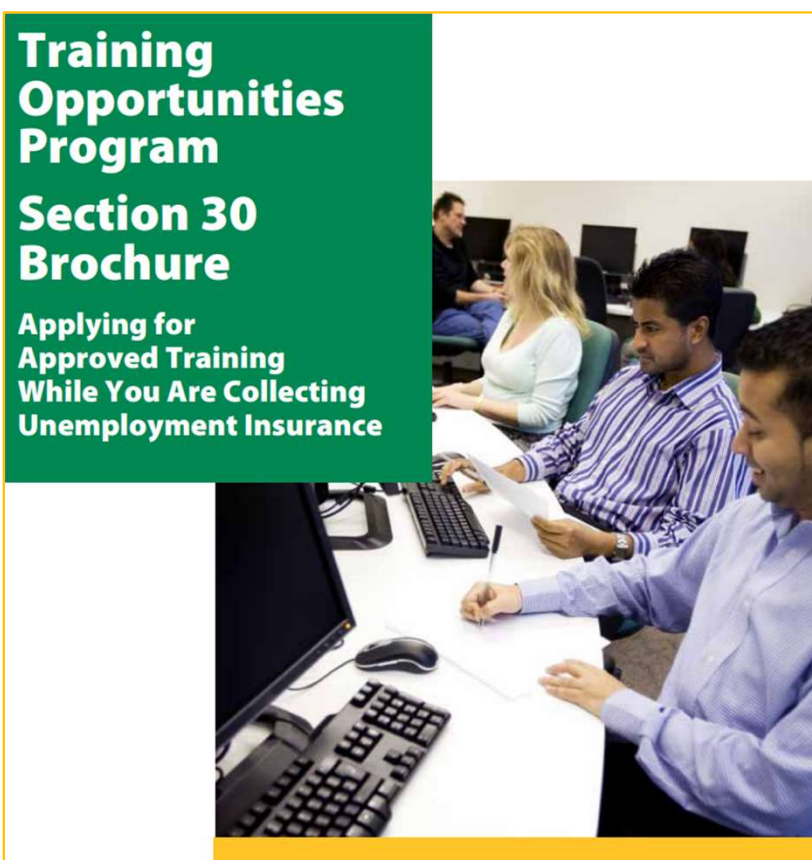


MASSSHIRE

DEPARTMENT OF
CAREER SERVICES

Section 30 Brochure

Claimants can find a Section 30 brochure with general information at mass.gov/dua/top.



Do you need new skills to get a job?

Apply to the Training Opportunities Program (TOP)



The Training Opportunities Program (TOP, for short) allows you to collect unemployment benefits while you attend full-time training for new job skills.

If you qualify, you can:

- Collect unemployment benefits, **without** having to search for a job, and
- Extend your unemployment benefits up to 26 weeks.

Who can be in TOP?

You may qualify if:

- You no longer work for your former employer
- You filed a claim and are eligible for unemployment benefits
- It will be difficult for you to get a new job, unless you get new skills
- You have the skills to complete and benefit from approved training
- Your training program is full-time and approved by the TOP unit

Is there a deadline to apply?

You must apply during the first 20 weeks you receive unemployment benefits.

Tip: Apply for TOP as soon as you know you are eligible for unemployment benefits **AND** have a training course.

What kind of training can I choose?

Choose a training program that will give you job skills that are in demand.

You can choose training for jobs in demand where you live now, or in another place you would commute to or move.

Learn more about the labor market and which jobs are in demand at: www.mass.gov/lmi.

Is the training free?

No. You must pay for the training or find scholarships or grants that can help you pay.

Here are some financial aid resources:

- **MassHire Career Center:** Visit your local center. Ask a job specialist to help you look for grants or loans. Visit www.mass.gov/careercenters to find a center near you.
- **Federal Financial Aid:** To find out if you are available for financial aid, including Pell grants for up to \$5350, and other grants and loans, fill out a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**.

If you already have a 4-year college degree, you won't qualify for a Pell grant but you may qualify for other kinds of aid.

- Visit www.opportunity.gov for information about financial aid, and tools to help you explore careers and options.

How do I know if my program is approved?

You can find out what training is DUA-approved by:

- Calling the TOP Unit at (617) 626-5521, or
- Visit any MassHire Career Center, or
- Searching at www.mass.gov/jobquest

The program you choose must be an intensive, full-time vocational, technical or basic skills training program that you can finish within 2 years.

The training program should also:

- Give you job placement opportunities for a specific occupation before the training ends,
- Have proven success in placing similar trainees, and
- Provide proof that the training will help you get a new job.

Type of program	Minimum requirement
Vocational/Industrial Training	20 or more supervised class hours per week See: www.mass.gov/dpl
School- or College-based Training	12 credits per semester at a school or college licensed by the state Department of Education See: www.mass.edu
Distance Learning Training	12 credits per semester, or 20 hours per week – Cannot be self-paced; must follow established curriculum
Internships or Externships	20 or more hours a week, if it is part of the established curriculum
	Call the TOP unit to see if your program qualifies if it is: • Part coursework, part internship or practicum, or • An undergraduate or graduate degree program.

www.mass.gov/dua/top
(617) 626-5521

Form 1938 Rev. 11-05-19

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
Department of Unemployment Assistance



What if I need basic skills training first?

You may need basic skills **before** you can do a training program. For example, you may need to:

- Improve your reading, writing, or math skills,
- Learn English if it is not your first language, or
- Prepare for a high school equivalency test if you did not graduate from high school.

If you need any of these basic skills, your vocational plan will include classes from one or more of these areas:

- English as a second language,
- Adult Basic Education (ABE), or
- General Equivalency Diploma (GED)

TOP allows claimants who need basic skills 3 years to complete their program. That gives you extra time to take the basic skills classes you need along with vocational or technical training.

Important! Your eligibility period for benefits does not change.

How can I apply?

To apply to TOP and to extend your Unemployment Benefit period, follow these steps:

1. Find an approved training program that will prepare you for the job market. The best way to do this is:
 - Visit any MassHire Career Center, or
 - Search at: www.mass.gov/jobquest
 2. Call the TOP unit to get an application: (617) 626-5521
 3. Fill out your part of the application. Ask your training program to fill out their part.
 4. Send your completed application to the DUA TOP department at least **3 weeks before** your program starts
- If you don't hear from TOP within 3-4 weeks of applying, call: (617) 626-5521.

Need help selecting a training program?

Visit a MassHire Career Center where staff can help you find training that is right for you.

The Career Center staff can also:

- Evaluate your job skills,
- Give you a list of approved training programs,
- Tell you if you can finish the training before your unemployment benefits run out,
- Explain your options for paying for the training, and
- Help you fill out the TOP application.

Could I lose my TOP benefits during training?

Yes. You could lose your benefits, if you:

- Stop requesting your weekly claims for unemployment,
- Do not keep up with the training program requirements,
- Stop the training program before you complete it, or
- Take more than one training program at a time (unless the other program is for Basic Skills).

If you are receiving TOP extended unemployment benefits when your training ends your TOP benefits will end the last week of the training program.

Important! If you are having problems with your training program, contact TOP right away. Call: (617) 626-5521.

If my job training program has vacation breaks, will my TOP benefits stop?

No, if:

- The vacation period is **less than 3 weeks**, and
- You go back to the training program right after the break.

If the vacation period is **more than 3 weeks**, and you continue searching for work as required, you may be able to get regular benefits but not extended unemployment benefits.



www.mass.gov/dua/top
(617) 626-5521

Form 1938 Rev. 11-05-19

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
Department of Unemployment Assistance





Lee Glasser

Department of Unemployment
Assistance - Special Programs
Administrator

Lee.Glasser@mass.gov