

Unemployment Benefits During The COVID-19 Pandemic:

**Disclaimer: The below information was gathered from a direct email from the NC Assistant Secretary of Commerce and the Employment Security Commission website. We are no HR professionals and cannot guarantee acceptance of benefits, nor is any person in the NC West District Office an expert of benefits during a pandemic crisis. This document is simply a tool for your information and help to your members.*

What you need to know: Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the State of North Carolina, new changes to the state's unemployment system have occurred. On March 17, 2020 Governor Roy Cooper enacted [Executive Order 118](#). The Employment Security Commission is working to ensure that necessary unemployment insurance benefits will be available to eligible North Carolinians affected by job loss due to the COVID-19 coronavirus disease in our state.

We have contacted the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for NC directly on your behalf to inquire how to file and if Pastors/Ministers are eligible for unemployment benefits during this time. The answer we received in an email was that: **if you have a W-2, you can file for unemployment benefits.**

Governor Cooper's Executive Order specifically addresses filing of benefits for people facing job loss due to the COVID-19 coronavirus situation as follows:

- Individuals who are separated from employment;
- Individuals who have had their work hours reduced;
- Individuals who are prevented from working due to a medical condition or under direct quarantine orders as a result of COVID-19.

How to File:

- For people wishing to file a new claim for unemployment benefits, the fastest and most efficient way to begin is to visit on the website: des.nc.gov. *Please note, all normal restrictions DO NOT APPLY during COVID-19 Crisis management. For example, weekly job search submissions do not apply during this time.
 - *At that website, you will be able to submit information about your situation and start the process of filing your claim for benefits.*
 - *If you're temporarily out of work or your working hours have been reduced due to COVID-19, choose one of those two separation reasons on the screen where you'll enter and submit your claim information.*
 - *As an individual, your eligibility, exact amount of benefits, and duration period of those benefits cannot be determined until after you file and submit your claim.*
- **Step 1 – Create An Account – [click here](#) – Here's a list of what you will need and the steps to create your account:**
 1. Select [Sign Up](#) on the DES webpage
 2. Enter your Social Security Number twice.
 3. Select 'Next.'
 4. You will then reach the 'Account Creation' page. Here you will:
 - Create a user name.
 - Enter your email address twice.
 - Create a pin number.
 - Enter your contact phone number.
 - Create a password.
 5. Select 'Create Account.'
 6. After your new account is created, an email will be sent to the email address you provided during your account creation. Select the link in the email to activate the account. The link is only valid for one hour. You can now [Sign In](#) to the website using your user name and password.
- **Step 2 – Once you have created your account and signed in, then you are able to FILE for Unemployment Benefits. To watch a video for instructions on how to Create An Account and How To File For Benefits – [click here](#)**

Basic FAQs:

Q. What if I am temporarily laid off work because business has slowed down as a result of COVID-19?

A. If you are laid off work temporarily or if your hours are reduced due to a business slowdown or a lack of demand as a result of COVID-19, you may be able to receive unemployment benefits. In order to determine eligibility, you must first apply for unemployment. If you're temporarily out of work or working reduced hours due to COVID-19, select one of those two separation reasons when filing your claim.

Q. What if my employer goes out of business as a result of COVID-19?

A. You may be eligible for unemployment benefits if you're laid off. If you're out of work due to COVID-19, indicate that while filing your claim.

Q. My employer has shut down operations temporarily because an employee is sick, and we have been directed to be isolated or in quarantine as a result of COVID-19. Am I eligible for unemployment benefits?

A. If you are not receiving payment from your employer, such as paid sick leave or paid time off, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits during this time. If you are laid off work temporarily or if your hours are reduced due to a business slowdown or a lack of demand as a result of COVID-19, you may be able to receive unemployment benefits. In order to determine eligibility, you must first apply for unemployment. If you're temporarily out of work or working reduced hours due to COVID-19, select one of those two separation reasons when filing your claim.

Q. What if I need to take time off work because I contract COVID-19?

A. The first and best option for employees who need to miss work due to illness is to use their employer-paid time off.

Q. What if I am directed by a medical professional or public health official to quarantine as a result of COVID-19, but I am not sick?

A. If your employer is not offering paid time off, you should apply for unemployment insurance. If you are laid off work temporarily or if your hours are reduced due to a business slowdown or a lack of demand as a result of COVID-19, you may be able to receive unemployment benefits. In order to determine eligibility, you must first apply for unemployment. If you're temporarily out of work or working reduced hours due to COVID-19, please select one of those two separation reasons when filing your claim.

Q. I am a part-time employee. Am I eligible for unemployment?

A. Anyone can file for unemployment insurance. In order to determine eligibility, you must first apply for unemployment. If you're temporarily out of work or working reduced hours due to COVID-19, please select one of those two separation reasons when filing your claim.

Q. Do I qualify for unemployment benefits if I become seriously ill and I am forced to quit my job as a result of COVID-19?

A. When filing for unemployment insurance, an employee must provide information about their decision to leave the job. In order to determine eligibility, you must first apply for unemployment.

Q. How am I supposed to meet requirements related to my existing unemployment claim if I am in isolation or quarantine as a result of COVID-19?

A. Individuals currently filing for unemployment insurance benefits who have to quarantine due to COVID-19 will be considered able and available to work as long as the individual has not removed themselves from the labor market.

Q. Must I still attend a previously scheduled in-person appointment?

A. No, please contact the unit who scheduled the appointment or our Customer Call Center for other options to complete your appointment.

Q. Do I have to search for work while filing for unemployment?

A. If you are out of work as a result of COVID-19, you do not have to conduct a work search while filing for unemployment.

Q. Is there any category of worker who is not eligible for unemployment insurance? Are independent contractors eligible?

A. Independent contractors and self-employed workers are typically not covered. In order to be eligible, workers must have held a job considered covered employment.

Q. How do I file for unemployment insurance?

A. The fastest and most efficient way to file a new claim is to file online at des.nc.gov. If you don't have access to a computer, you may file over the phone by calling [888-737-0259](tel:888-737-0259).

Learn more about [Applying for Unemployment](#).

If you're having issues filing a Weekly Certification online, you can file over the phone by calling 888-372-3453.