

COVID-19 and Unemployment Compensation (UC) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

As of: March 17, 2020

PENNSYLVANIA EMPLOYEES AFFECTED BY COVID-19

If your job has been affected by COVID-19, you may be eligible to receive Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits. Please continue to read this FAQ for more guidance. Many of your questions will be answered below.

For the most accurate and up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated [coronavirus webpage](#) that is updated daily.

Am I eligible for UC if I am out of work because my employer closed (temporarily or otherwise) because of COVID-19?

Yes. The fastest and easiest way is to [file an initial claim online](#). After submitting your initial claim, you will receive a confirmation email with important details.

Beginning March 16, 2020:

- Work Search and Work Registration requirements have been temporarily suspended for all UC claimants.
- The Waiting Week requirement has also been temporarily suspended. This means that new claimants who are approved for UC benefits will receive payment for their first week of unemployment.

If approved, your first benefit payment should arrive within two to four weeks of filing your initial application. Payments are issued via a debit card or direct deposit.

You must continue to file your bi-weekly claim as directed in your "Claim Confirmation Letter" that you will receive in the mail, even if you are still waiting for your benefit eligibility to be determined. Familiarize yourself with all [requirements](#) to receive benefits from the UC program.

After receiving your PIN in the mail, you can go online to check the status of your claim and see when to expect your payment. Keep your PIN in a safe, easy-to-remember place.

Am I eligible for UC if I am quarantined due to COVID-19?

If you are currently employed but have been directed by a healthcare provider, medical professional or public official to [isolate or quarantine](#), you may be eligible for UC. Follow the instructions above to file an initial claim.

Am I eligible for UC if my hours are being reduced because of COVID-19?

You may be eligible and should [file an initial claim online](#).

I am a part-time employee. Am I eligible for UC benefits if I have to self-isolate/quarantine or am unable to work because I tested positive for COVID-19?

Yes, you may be eligible. See above answers for full-time employees.

Am I eligible for UC if I am employed by a school that has been closed by order of the Governor?

If you are no longer being paid, including using paid sick leave, you may be eligible for UC.

Am I eligible for UC if I have paid leave?

You should exhaust all paid leave available through your employer before filing a UC claim:

- Most paid leave will provide 100 percent of your usual pay, while unemployment benefits typically pay between 50 to 70 percent, depending on your circumstances.
- Paid leave may be available immediately and allow you to keep receiving a paycheck; it typically takes two to four weeks to receive UC benefits.
- To be eligible for UC benefits, you must have sufficient wages and must have been employed for a certain number of weeks. Please learn more about financial eligibility [here](#).
- You may file a UC claim if you know you will exhaust your paid leave. You must report all income received from any source, including paid leave.

Am I eligible for UC if my employer offers me the ability to telework/telecommute/work from home?

If your employer offers you telework and you are able to perform that work, you are not eligible for UC. However, if the telework your employer offers results in a reduction of hours, you may be eligible for UC benefits.

Can I access UC if I my child's school has been closed and I stay home with them?

No. UC is only paid to employees whose employer has temporarily or permanently closed their business (including businesses that close due to COVID-19).

Can I file for UC benefits if I was told to stay home because my employer thinks I am a risk of spreading or at risk of contracting COVID-19?

If you are not receiving pay or using employer-paid sick leave or time off, you may be eligible for UC benefits. You should [file an initial claim](#) online.

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

If you are out of work due to lack of work, you may be eligible for UC benefits. See "Am I eligible for UC if I am out of work because my employer closed (temporarily or otherwise) because of COVID-19?" on page 1 of this FAQ document.

Have any UC rules changed due to the Governor's emergency declaration regarding COVID-19?

The following rules have been temporarily suspended due to Governor Tom Wolf's emergency declaration to make it easier to file for UC benefits:

- **Work Search and Work Registration requirements** are temporarily suspended for all UC claimants. Claimants are not required to prove they have applied or searched for a new job to maintain their UC benefits. Claimants are also not required to register with [PACareerLink.pa.gov](https://pa.careerlink.gov).

- **The Waiting Week** is temporarily suspended for all UC claimants. Previously, eligible claimants would not receive compensation for the first week of unemployment. Eligible claimants may now receive benefits for the first week that they are unemployed.

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

Under Pennsylvania's emergency rules currently in place due to COVID-19, the need for work registration and work search for UC benefit eligibility has been waived. You should continue to file your bi-weekly claims.

What should I do if I contract COVID-19 at work?

Please see [L&I's Workers' Compensation](#) information to learn more.

How much in benefits will I receive?

- Benefits are based on your reported earnings during the base year (the first four of the last five completed quarters). You must also have over 18 credit weeks (weeks during which you earned \$116 or more) in your base year to be eligible.
- [Click here to find out how to calculate your weekly benefit rate](#)

How long will it take to receive my benefits?

- Eligible claimants typically receive their UC benefits in two to four weeks for their initial claim. Benefit payments are issued via a debit card provided by the UC office or through direct deposit.

COVID-19 and Unemployment Compensation (UC) Employer FAQs

As of: March 17, 2020

PENNSYLVANIA EMPLOYERS

[Governor Tom Wolf's updated guidance for Pennsylvania businesses \(as of 3/17\)](#)

The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has a resource account for businesses to reach out to directly with questions and concerns about operations. Email ra-dcedcs@pa.gov with your name, business, contact information, and concern, and someone will be in contact to assist you.

Employees affected by a business closure, reduction in hours, or a medically- or government-directed quarantine or isolation should be encouraged to file for Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits if no other compensation, such as paid leave, is available to them.

Employees should be aware that they cannot receive both UC benefits and paid leave, as it may result in an “overpayment” that requires them to return benefits.

Can my employees file for UC benefits if my business is closed (temporarily or otherwise) because of COVID-19?

Yes, if your employees are temporarily laid off due to a business downturn or closure as a result of COVID-19, they may be eligible for UC benefits.

If you are experiencing a business downturn, you can use L&I's [Shared-Work program](#) to avoid employee lay-offs. Additional resources for businesses are available through the [PA Department of Community and Economic Development](#).

Can my employees file for UC benefits if I tell them to stay home because I think they are a risk of spreading or at risk of contracting COVID-19?

Your employees should first use paid sick leave or paid time off; however, if they are not receiving paid time off, they may be eligible for UC benefits.

Can my employees file a claim if they have COVID-19 and cannot come to work?

Your employees should first use paid sick leave or paid time off. However, if they are not receiving paid time off, they may be eligible for UC benefits.

Can my employees file for UC benefits if I reduce their hours because of COVID-19?

Yes.

Can my employees file for UC benefits if they are told to isolate or quarantine?

Your employees should first use paid sick leave or paid time off. However, if they are not receiving paid time off, they may be eligible for UC benefits.

Are there any programs to support employers experiencing financial difficulties or business downturn due to COVID-19? (Shared-Work?)

The [Shared-Work program](#) can help keep employees attached to your workplace. Additional resources for businesses are available through the [PA Department of Community and Economic Development](#).

If I am a small business owner, am I eligible for unemployment benefits if I need to close or temporarily shut down my business because of COVID-19?

No. However, you may qualify for a small business loan through the [PA Department of Community and Economic Development](#), or for other programs available through the [Small Business Administration](#).

Will my UC tax rate increase if my employees file for benefits?

No, businesses who are temporarily closed due to COVID-19 will be granted Relief From Charges, and your tax rate will not be increased because of COVID-19-related claims.