



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

# Unemployment Insurance Benefits Q&As



## COVID-19 and Unemployment Insurance Benefits Arizona Department of Economic Security

### Questions and Answers

DES is committed to ensuring Arizonans get the help they need. The below questions reflect the requirements of the program under current law. However, we are monitoring potential changes in federal and state laws and regulations, which may impact funding, eligibility and requirements for unemployment insurance. If changes are enacted, DES will update its program requirements as soon as possible.

#### **Question: Will workers impacted by COVID-19 qualify for unemployment benefits?**

Answer: Yes. DES encourages the following individuals impacted by COVID-19 to apply for Unemployment Insurance Benefits:

- Individuals whose employer has permanently or temporarily ceased or drastically reduced operations due to COVID-19 resulting in a reduction of wages;
- Individuals who, due to requirements that the individual be quarantined, are separated from employment and do not have any available paid leave even if the individual has an expectation of returning to work after the quarantine is over;
- Individuals who leave employment due to a risk of exposure or infection and are a member of a population that is particularly susceptible to COVID-19;
- Individuals who leave employment to care for a family member who has been infected with COVID-19; or
- Individuals who for any other scenario are separated from work for reasons related to COVID-19.

#### **Question: When should individuals impacted by COVID-19 apply for benefits?**

Answer: Individuals should apply as soon as possible after their last day of work (applications cannot be submitted while an individual is still working even if they know their employment is ending soon).

#### **Question: How can individuals apply for unemployment benefits?**

Answer: The fastest and easiest way to apply is online [www.azui.com](http://www.azui.com) anytime between 12:00 a.m. on Sunday through 6:00 p.m. on Friday. Individuals without Internet access should call 1 (877) 600-2722. Hard copies of the applications are also available in the documents center (UB-105 Arizona Initial Claim for Unemployment Insurance) at [www.azdes.gov](http://www.azdes.gov).

An individual can know his or her application is successfully completed when reaching the end of the application, certifying the statements made on the application are true, and receiving a confirmation number.

**Question: What information is needed to apply?**

Answer: When submitting an application for an initial claim, individuals will need to provide their Social Security Number, mailing address, county of residence and, if available, their Driver License or state-issued ID number. In addition, they will need the following information about their employment history:

- The names, addresses, and phone numbers of all employers for the last 18 months including the correct mailing address and telephone number for the most recent employer
- The last day worked immediately prior to filing the UI claim
- Amount (before deductions) and date of any payment for severance, vacation, holiday or unused sick pay
- The name and local number of your union hall, if applicable
- Alien Registration Number, if applicable
- Copy # 4 of DD Form 214 if released from the military in the last 18 months
- SF 8 or SF 50 if employed in Federal Civilian service in the last 18 months
- Start date and monthly benefit amount of any pension (other than Social Security), you will need the start date of the pension and the monthly benefit amount

**Question: What am I eligible to receive if I qualify for benefits?**

Answer: DES can provide individuals who have lost their job through no fault of their own with a weekly stipend of up to \$240 for up to 26 weeks, to supplement lost income while they search for employment.

**Question: How long can I receive unemployment benefits?**

Answer: Currently an individual can receive unemployment benefits for a maximum of 26 weeks. Depending on economic conditions within the state, this duration may be lengthened in the future.

**Question: How long do claims take to process?**

Answer: DES is doing everything it can to get Arizonans benefits as soon as possible. However, DES is experiencing an influx of claims due to COVID-19 and processing times could vary. Additionally, if there are issues with the claim, such as incomplete information, processing the claim could take up to 21 days.

**Question: How does an individual receive benefits?**

Answer: Direct deposit is available at [www.AZUI.gov](http://www.AZUI.gov). Applicants may also receive an Electronic Payment Card (EPC) issued by Bank of America (applicants who have received UI within less than 3 years or are currently receiving child support, will not receive a new EPC card). The EPC card will have a zero balance until the applicants first benefit payment has been processed.

**Question: When can I expect to receive my benefit payment?**

Answer: DES is doing everything it can to get Arizonans benefits as soon as possible. However, DES is experiencing an influx of claims due to COVID-19 and processing times may vary. Additionally, if there are issues with the claim, such as incomplete information, processing the claim may be delayed. Prior to the increased claim volume, payments were being made, on average, within 14-calendar days after benefits have been processed and approved.

**Question: If an employer imposes a mandatory quarantine on an employee because of COVID-19, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

Answer: In most cases, yes. Again, the factors of each circumstance are important. If the employer required the individual to stay home, did not offer telework, and was not offering compensation, the individual might be eligible for benefits if they meet the monetary and weekly eligibility criteria.

**Question: What is DES doing to accommodate applicants affected by COVID-19?**

Answer: DES is developing application assistance for individuals impacted by COVID-19. Federal and state laws around eligibility requirements are also changing in response to COVID-19. DES is analyzing the impacts of these changes and will update its requirements accordingly. These may continue to change as the government response to COVID-19 evolves.

**Question: What are partial unemployment benefits?**

Answer: An individual may be eligible for partial unemployment benefits, even if they are working, if they earn less than the weekly benefit amount (between \$187 and \$240) and meet the [monetary and weekly eligibility criteria](#).

**Question: Do I have to look for work each week if I have been furloughed?**

Answer: Furloughed employees who have been separated from employment are eligible for unemployment benefits as long as they meet the other eligibility requirement for benefits. Effective beginning benefit week March 8, 2020, the DES is instituting an emergency temporary suspension of the “actively seeking work” requirement. What this means is the individual will no longer be required to look for work and apply for other employment, while collecting unemployment insurance benefits.

**Question: What happens after I complete the application process?**

Answer: Within approximately one week of filing an initial claim, applicants will receive information from DES in the mail. They must print, sign, and return the Certificate of Understanding to the address or fax number listed on the form. If DES needs more information to process the claim, the applicant will be mailed an additional questionnaire to complete and send back.

**Question: Are there more requirements I need to meet after I apply?**

Answer: Yes. To maintain benefits, applicants, including those impacted by COVID-19 are required to file a weekly claim by visiting our online claims system at [www.AZUI.gov](http://www.AZUI.gov). The week starts on a Sunday and ends on Saturday. Applicants are encouraged to review the guidance provided in the online claim system by hovering over the question mark icon immediately adjacent to each required question. Guidance has also been provided to include specific examples of COVID-19 related scenarios impacting claimants.

DES is analyzing changing state and federal guidance and updating its eligibility requirements accordingly. These requirements may continue to change as the government response to COVID-19 evolves.

Applicants are also automatically registered on Arizona’s largest jobs database, Arizona Job Connection ([www.AZJobConnection.gov](http://www.AZJobConnection.gov)). By completing their registration, applicants can create a digital resume, search for jobs, and get matched with hiring employers.

**Question: Where can applicants find additional information about DES' unemployment program?**

Answer: Additional information about Arizona Unemployment Benefits can be found by visiting [www.AZUI.gov](http://www.AZUI.gov).

**Question: Am I eligible for UI benefits if I am a freelancer, or self-employed?**

Answer: Employment, for purposes of UI coverage, is employment of workers who work for others for wages; it does not include self-employment or freelance work. Currently, to qualify for UI, an individual must have worked for an employer who paid unemployment tax. The individual must have earned wages equal to \$4,680.00 in one calendar quarter and at least half of that in another calendar quarter of the base period, which is the past 18 months. The Department is closely monitoring all new state and federal guidance as it becomes available. Policy will be updated quickly to adopt applicable procedures as it relates to COVID-19.

**Question: Where can job seekers get help with finding employment?**

Answer: ARIZONA@WORK staff can provide you with no-cost job assistance to help you get back to work. You can learn more about the services available to you and view a list of jobs with immediate openings by visiting, [www.ARIZONAatWORK.com](http://www.ARIZONAatWORK.com).

**Question: What should applicants do if they make an error on their application?**

Answer: If an error is made after a claim is submitted, please call 1 (877) 600-2722. Claims cannot be edited after they are submitted.