

# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

# CORONAVIRUS AID, RELIEF, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT (CARES Act)

## UI BENEFIT PROVISIONS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

(April 8, 2020)

THE DISTRICT'S UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) SYSTEMS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERGOING MODIFICATIONS TO ADDRESS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE RECENTLY PASSED CARES ACT. WE ARE WORKING EXPEDITIOUSLY TO CREATE NEW INTERNAL PROCESSES, MODIFY OUR CURRENT TECHNICAL SYSTEMS, TRAIN STAFF, AND CONDUCT USER ACCEPTANCE TESTING BEFORE ADMINISTERING THE NEW PROGRAMS CREATED BY THE CARES ACT.

### 1. Who is covered by the new law?

The CARES Act creates three new Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs. These cover individuals: (1) who are not eligible for traditional UI benefits including the self-employed, those seeking part-time employment, individuals lacking sufficient work history, independent contractors, and gig economy workers; (2) who are currently receiving regular UI; and, (3) who have recently exhausted their regular UI.

### 2. How much will I be eligible to receive?

Benefit amounts will be calculated based on the income that you received over the prior 18 months. Those who are eligible to receive benefits will also receive an additional \$600 per week; however, this additional benefit currently expires at the end of July 2020.

### 3. Are gig workers, freelancers, and independent contractors covered in the bill?

Yes. There is a special program that provides benefits to those who are not traditionally eligible for UI, which includes gig workers (Uber, Lyft, AirBnB hosts, etc.), freelancers, and independent contractors. This special program expires on December 31, 2020.

Claimants under this scenario should be prepared to provide wage verification documentation to assist us with expediting UI benefit eligibility.

Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are (1) partially or fully unemployed, or (2) unable and unavailable to work because of one of the following circumstances:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of it and are seeking diagnosis;
- A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a family member or member of the individual's household diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a child or other household member for whom the caregiver has primary caregiving responsibility and the child or other household member can't attend school or another facility because it is closed due to COVID-19;

- They are quarantined or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;
- They were scheduled to start employment and do not have a job or cannot reach their place of employment as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak;
- They have become the breadwinner for a household because the head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- They meet other criteria established by District of Columbia's emergency pandemic support legislation.

## 4. I am self-employed, but my business is no longer providing me with any income. Am I eligible for UI benefits?

Yes. Self-employed people are eligible for UI benefits under the new law. Self-employed workers are also eligible for the additional \$600 weekly amount, although the extra \$600 benefit currently expires at the end of July 2020. Claimants under this scenario should be prepared to provide wage verification documentation to assist us with expediting UI benefit eligibility.

Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are (1) partially or fully unemployed, or (2) unable and unavailable to work because of one of the following circumstances:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of it and are seeking diagnosis;
- A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a family member or member of the individual's household diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a child or other household member for whom the caregiver has primary caregiving responsibility and the child or other household member can't attend school or another facility because it is closed due to COVID-19;
- They are quarantined or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;
- They were scheduled to start employment and do not have a job or cannot reach their place of employment as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak;
- They have become the breadwinner for a household because the head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- They meet other criteria established by District of Columbia's emergency pandemic support legislation.

## 5. What if I am a part-time worker who lost my job because of a coronavirus reason? Am I still eligible for UI benefits?

Yes. Part-time workers are eligible for partial benefits, which are calculated by taking into consideration your recent wages. You will also be eligible for the additional \$600 weekly benefit, although the extra \$600 benefit currently expires at the end of July 2020. Claimants under this scenario should be prepared to provide wage verification documentation to assist us with expediting UI benefit eligibility.

Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are (1) partially or fully unemployed, or (2) unable and unavailable to work because of one of the following circumstances:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of it and are seeking diagnosis;
- A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;

- They are caring for a family member or member of the individual's household diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a child or other household member for whom the caregiver has primary caregiving responsibility and the child or other household member can't attend school or another facility because it is closed due to COVID-19;
- They are quarantined or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;
- They were scheduled to start employment and do not have a job or cannot reach their place of employment as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak;
- They have become the breadwinner for a household because the head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- They meet other criteria established by District of Columbia's emergency pandemic support legislation.

## **6. What if I have COVID-19 or need to care for a family member who has COVID-19? Am I eligible for UI benefits?**

If you have received a diagnosis, are experiencing symptoms or are seeking a diagnosis – and you are unemployed, partly unemployed or cannot work as a result – you are eligible to receive UI benefits. If you need to care for a member of your family or household who has received a diagnosis, you are still eligible to receive UI benefits.

## **7. What if my child's school or daycare shut down? Am I eligible for UI benefits?**

If you rely on a school, daycare, or another facility, elderly parent, or another household member to care for a child so that you can work – and that facility has been shut down because of coronavirus – you are eligible to receive UI benefits.

## **8. What if I have been advised by a health care provider to quarantine myself because of exposure to coronavirus? Am I eligible for UI benefits?**

If you must self-quarantine due to exposure or possible exposure to the coronavirus, the CARES Act allows you to receive UI benefits that traditionally you would not receive.

## **9. I was about to start a new job and now cannot get there because of an outbreak. Am I eligible for UI benefits?**

Under the CARES Act, you are now eligible for UI benefits. You are also eligible if you were immediately laid off from a new job and do not have a sufficient work history to qualify for benefits under traditional circumstances. Claimants under these scenarios should be prepared to provide wage verification documentation to assist us with expediting UI benefit eligibility.

Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are (1) partially or fully unemployed, or (2) unable and unavailable to work because of one of the following circumstances:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of it and are seeking diagnosis;
- A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a family member or member of the individual's household diagnosed with COVID-19;

- They are caring for a child or other household member for whom the caregiver has primary caregiving responsibility and the child or other household member can't attend school or another facility because it is closed due to COVID-19;
- They are quarantined or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;
- They were scheduled to start employment and do not have a job or cannot reach their place of employment as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak;
- They have become the breadwinner for a household because the head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- They meet other criteria established by District of Columbia's emergency pandemic support legislation.

### **10. My employer shut down my workplace because of coronavirus. Would I be eligible for UI benefits?**

If you are unemployed, partly unemployed, or unable to work because your employer closed down, you are eligible to receive UI benefits under the CARES Act.

### **11. Is anyone explicitly excluded from receiving assistance under the CARES Act?**

Workers who are able to perform their jobs through paid telework, and those receiving paid sick leave or paid family leave are not eligible.

### **12. How long will my benefit payments last?**

The District of Columbia traditionally provides 26 weeks of UI benefits. The CARES Act provides all eligible workers with an additional 13 weeks. Eligible claimants in the District may receive a maximum of 39 weeks of UI benefits.

### **13. I have not earned a sufficient amount of income to be eligible for regular UI benefits. Is there anything under the CARES Act that will provide me with assistance?**

Those who do not have sufficient work history are covered under the CARES Act. Claimants under this scenario should be prepared to provide wage verification documentation to assist us with expediting UI benefit eligibility.

Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are (1) partially or fully unemployed, or (2) unable and unavailable to work because of one of the following circumstances:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of it and are seeking diagnosis;
- A member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a family member or member of the individual's household diagnosed with COVID-19;
- They are caring for a child or other household member for whom the caregiver has primary caregiving responsibility and the child or other household member can't attend school or another facility because it is closed due to COVID-19;

- They are quarantined or have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine;
- They were scheduled to start employment and do not have a job or cannot reach their place of employment as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak;
- They have become the breadwinner for a household because the head of household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;
- They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19;
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19; or
- They meet other criteria established by District of Columbia’s emergency pandemic support legislation.

**14. I am already receiving unemployment benefits. Will I receive any assistance under this law?**

Even if you are already receiving unemployment benefits for reasons unrelated to the coronavirus, your District of Columbia UI benefits will be extended by 13 weeks under the CARES Act. You will also be eligible for an extra \$600 weekly benefit, although the extra \$600 benefit currently expires at the end of July 2020.

**15. I exhausted my benefits some weeks/months ago. Can I get the 13 weeks of extended benefits? If yes, will I also get the extra \$600 per week?**

If you exhausted your regular UI benefits, there are provisions under the CARES Act that will provide you with an additional 13 weeks of benefits. You will also be eligible for the additional \$600 weekly benefit amount, although the extra \$600 benefit currently expires at the end of July 2020.

**16. Will these UI benefits disqualify me from any other benefit programs?**

It is possible the benefits provided under this new program could affect your eligibility for other programs. For example, the additional \$600 UI benefit counts as income when determining eligibility for means-tested programs, except for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (known as CHIP).

**17. How long will I need to wait to receive benefits?**

The District of Columbia has waived the waiting week for claims filed AFTER March 15, 2020. We strive to disburse all benefit payments within 21 days of filing an initial claim for unemployment benefits. However, due to the current and expected claim load, the Office of Unemployment Compensation cannot provide a definite timeline on benefit delivery.

Please continue to file your weekly continued claim forms. We greatly appreciate your patience and cooperation as we move swiftly to support you during this period of economic uncertainty.

For resources and additional information on the District of Columbia Government’s response to coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit [www.coronavirus.dc.gov](http://www.coronavirus.dc.gov).