



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

News Release

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ANNOUNCES NEW GUIDANCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FLEXIBILITIES DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

WASHINGTON, DC – Following President Donald J. Trump’s swift action to protect the American workforce from exposure to COVID-19 – also known as novel coronavirus – the U.S. Department of Labor today announced new guidance outlining flexibilities that states have in administering their unemployment insurance (UI) programs to assist Americans affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Under the guidance, federal law permits significant flexibility for states to amend their laws to provide UI benefits in multiple scenarios related to COVID-19. For example, federal law allows states to pay benefits where: (1) An employer temporarily ceases operations due to COVID-19, preventing employees from coming to work; (2) An individual is quarantined with the expectation of returning to work after the quarantine is over; and (3) An individual leaves employment due to a risk of exposure or infection or to care for a family member. In addition, federal law does not require an employee to quit in order to receive benefits due to the impact of COVID-19.

“President Trump has made the safety, security, and health of the American people his top priority. The Administration is using all available tools to decrease the risk of coronavirus in the United States and to assist workers who may be affected,” stated Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia. “Under the guidance issued today, states have greater assurance about the circumstances in which they are authorized to extend unemployment insurance benefits to Americans whose employment has been disrupted by coronavirus.”

“From the beginning, this Administration has taken aggressive action in protecting the health and safety of the American workforce,” said Assistant Secretary for the Employment and Training Administration John Pallasch. “Clarifying the flexibility in which a person may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits during the coronavirus outbreak will ease financial burdens for those workers affected by the virus.”

An individual receiving paid sick leave or paid family leave is still receiving pay. Thus, generally speaking, the individual is not “unemployed,” so the individual is ineligible for unemployment insurance. The Department’s Employment and Training Administration will continue to assist any states seeking assistance in implementing these flexibilities.

For more information about the COVID-19, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

The Employment and Training Administration administers federal job training and dislocated worker programs, federal grants to states for public employment service programs, and unemployment insurance benefits. These services are primarily provided through state and local workforce development systems.

The mission of the U.S. Department of Labor is to foster, promote and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

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