

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Guidance for Vermont Employers and Employees

As of March 19, 2020

EMPLOYERS

Q: What if I am forced shut down my business due to COVID-19 impact? Are my employees eligible for unemployment benefits?

A: If you are forced to temporarily shut down business operations, your employees will likely be eligible for unemployment benefits, assuming they meet all other eligibility criteria, and have a return to work date that occurs before the 10-week maximum. Under this circumstance, unemployment insurance claims made by impacted employees will be charged against the employer's account.

Q: What if I need to temporarily reduce my employees' hours due to slow-down in business as a result of COVID-19? Are my employees eligible for unemployment benefits?

A: If you experience a slow-down in business, causing a reduction in available work hours for employees, your employees may be eligible for partial unemployment benefits. unemployment insurance claims made by impacted employees will be charged against the employer's account.

Q: What if I need to temporarily shut-down my operations as a result of COVID-19? Are my employees eligible for unemployment benefits?

A: If you need to shut down operations temporarily because an employee becomes sick and other employees need to be isolated or quarantined, your employees may be able to receive unemployment benefits. unemployment insurance claims made by impacted employees will be charged against the employer's account.



Q: What if I permanently close my business because of COVID-19 coronavirus?

A: The Vermont Department of Labor, Workforce Development Division, provides Rapid Response services to businesses in transition, downsizing, laying off workers and/or closing a facility. This includes coordination with key state and regional partners to explore alternative layoff aversion strategies if possible.

Q: My business has to reduce staff or close due to the global impact that COVID-19 has caused. Is there anything that can help my affected workers:

A: The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program is a federal entitlement program that assists U.S. workers who have lost or may lose their jobs as a result of foreign trade. This program seeks to provide adversely affected workers with access to funding opportunities to obtain the skills, credentials, resources, and support necessary to become reemployed.

Q: Is there any support to help me cover my operating expenses while I am shut down?

A: The federal Small Business Administration (SBA) may be able to provide assistance through the **Economic Injury Disaster Loans** program to businesses that have suffered substantial economic injury in an eligible disaster area. Congress approved up to \$7 billion in low-interest disaster loans specifically to assist small businesses impacted by COVID-19. These loans can help small businesses meet financial obligations and cover operating expenses.

Please contact the Agency of Commerce and Community Development website for more information. <https://accd.vermont.gov/about-us/disaster-planning/covid-19-guidance-vermont-businesses>

EMPLOYEES:

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

A. You may be eligible for unemployment benefits if you meet the following criteria:

- *You are following the guidance of a medical health professional or public health official to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure*
- *You are not receiving paid sick leave or other types of leave from your employer*

To ensure that you are properly filing your claim, please contact the Department of Labor's Claimant Assistance Line at 1-877-214-3330. If you are looking to file an initial claim, that can be done through the Department's electronic form. [Click here to complete the form.](#)

Please note there will not be a work search requirement if your return to work date is within 10-weeks of separation.

Q. What if my employer has closed, either as a precautionary measure or because an employee is sick, and other employees have been asked to self-isolate or 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 period.

To ensure that you are properly filing your claim, please contact the Department of Labor's Claimant Assistance Line at 1-877-214-3330. If you are looking to file an initial claim, that can be done through the Department's electronic form. [Click here to complete the form.](#)



Q: What if my employer reduces my hours or I am laid-off due to a slow-down in business as a result of COVID-19?

A: In these cases, you would likely be eligible for unemployment benefits during the layoff period. If your hours are reduced, then you would likely be eligible for benefits to assist in time loss. In the case of a temporary lay-off, if you have a return to work date within 10-weeks, then you would not be required to conduct a work search.

To ensure that you are properly filing your claim, please contact the Department of Labor's Claimant Assistance Line at 1-877-214-3330. If you are looking to file an initial claim, that can be done through the Department's electronic form. [Click here to complete the form.](#)

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

A. If you are forced to quit your job due to contraction of COVID-19, you may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits once you recover. The Department is looking into all options to protect individuals in this circumstance.

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

A. Employer-paid time off is the first and best option for employees in this case. If employer-paid time off is not available, under the Vermont Earned Sick Time law, employers are required to give employees 40-hours per year of earned sick time. Employees should check with their employer to confirm what, if any, accrued leave balances they have available.

- Information in English -- <https://labor.vermont.gov/document/update-2019-earned-sick-time-poster>
- Information in Spanish -- <https://labor.vermont.gov/document/earned-sick-time-spanish-mandatory>



Q: What if I need to leave my job to care for a family member as a result of COVID-19?

A: If you leave work to care for a family member, you are likely not eligible for unemployment benefits. Employees may be entitled to job protections under [Vermont Parental Family Leave Act](#) or the [Federal Family and Medical Leave Act](#). Click the links for more information.

Q. What if I have an existing unemployment claim? Will I be required to meet deadlines, attend mandatory appointments, and participate in training programs if I am in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19?

A: Claimants with existing unemployment claims will likely remain eligible for benefits if they contract COVID-19 while currently filing. In the event that it is deemed necessary, the Department of Labor is prepared to exempt certain program requirements for claimants. Further updates will be provided should they be necessary.

Q. I still have questions about what benefits and programs may be available to individuals who are financially affected by COVID-19.

A. Please contact the Vermont Department of Labor or visit labor.vermont.gov

- *Existing UI Claimants:* Claimant Assistance Line – 1-877-214-3332
- *Filing a new UI Claim:* 1-877-214-3330 or 1-888-807-7072
- *Employers:* UI Employer Services - 802-828-4344
- *General questions:* Department of Labor Commissioner's Office - 802-828-4301