

State Representative Karina Villa

District 49 News

May 19, 2020

# Unemployment Benefits During COVID-19



## Checking In

Each week my staff and I work diligently to provide timely, accurate information to you in these newsletters. We base our topics on the concerns shared with my office. Today's newsletter will specifically address information for unemployment benefits.

Although there is a certain level of frustration throughout the state with the Illinois Department of Employment Security, I want to thank those working day and night to help process an unprecedented number of unemployment claims. In a matter of weeks the staff at IDES has had to process record numbers of claims for unemployment benefits. Thank you.

As always, if you are in need, and looking for help and resources I encourage you to utilize the information my office has accumulated over the last few weeks and put out to you in the weekly [newsletters](#). The fastest way to get the appropriate response is to fill out the [Constituent Contact Form](#) on my website. Don't forget, you are always welcome to contact my office at 630-326-9319 (English); 630-326-9419 (Español) or [StateRepKarinaVilla@gmail.com](mailto:StateRepKarinaVilla@gmail.com).

## Claim Process

The Illinois Department of Employment Securities has a short informational video on the [unemployment claim](#) process.

During the coronavirus crisis the process is much the same as previously established with the exception that the "waiting" week has been suspended as well as an

expansion of the “able/available” rule which now includes the ability to work from home. Once an individual is let go that individual should visit the IDES website or call 800-244-5631 to begin an unemployment benefits claim. It is important to note that all claims are back dated.

Within days of filing the claim a debit card will be issued (unless the direct deposit option is selected which is the IDES recommendation) regardless of whether the claim is approved or denied. This step has been automated to decrease the time in which a recipient will receive benefits. Funds will only be available if the individual qualifies for benefits and *after* certifying.

### **Certify**

To certify, an individual must contact IDES as directed to confirm any wages earned and that the individual continued to seek employment. Benefits are paid a few days following certification.

### **Self-Employed**

Illinois now has the ability for self-employed individuals to apply for [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#) (PUA). PUA is a federal program designed to assist those who have previously been excluded from receiving unemployment benefits due to self-employment. To learn more about PUA, you can review the IDES guide [here](#).

#### Who can file for PUA?

- Individuals who had an Illinois regular unemployment claim but have exhausted those benefits
- An employee of a nonprofit church or religious organization that does *not* pay unemployment.
- Individuals who have been self-employed for only the last 18 months and have paid taxes on that income (not earned any wages as a W-2 employee) such as sole proprietors; business owners; recipient of a form 1099; or you file a Schedule C with your Form 1040 income taxes.

#### Additional COVID-19 conditions to file for PUA:

- You have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- You have a member of your family diagnosed with COVID-19;
- You are providing care to a household or family member;
- You have primary caregiving responsibility for a child or other person who is unable to attend school or another facility as a result of COVID-19
- You have been advised to self-quarantine and cannot get to work
- Were scheduled to start work and that job is no longer available as a result of COVID-19

- You have become the major support for a household because the head of the household died as a result of COVID-19.

What every worker should know about Unemployment Insurance in [English](#); in [Spanish](#).

I filed, now what? [English](#) [Spanish](#)

### **Fraud**

As an individual, should you discover that an unemployment claim has been fraudulently filed under your name, you can take action and report [unemployment insurance fraud](#) to IDES.

As an employer, if an employee is offered to return to work, and refuses, their continued eligibility would depend upon the reasonableness of their refusal, something which is determined by one of our adjudicators. If an employer makes an offer to re-hire an employee, the employee refuses, and the employee remains on unemployment insurance, the employer should file notice with IDES. If it is determined that the employee made an unreasonable refusal then they would no longer be eligible for benefits.

### **IDES Operations**

We understand that there remains an unprecedented number of calls coming in daily to the call center. IDES is working diligently to correct and overcome issues as they arise. My office is happy to contact IDES on your behalf if you are experiencing difficulty.