

Unemployment Insurance and COVID-19

March 22, 2020 – The impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) on North Dakota’s workforce and employers has raised a variety of questions related to the Unemployment Insurance program. Although the situation is fluid and could change over time, the following are answers to some of the more frequently asked questions that we have been receiving from workers and employers. *As information changes, we will update this document. New information will be **in color**.*

Please note that unemployment insurance laws vary from state to state and eligibility for benefits may be different between states. Both the federal government and the state of North Dakota are working as diligently and as quickly as possible to respond to this rapidly developing situation. Newly released information may impact the information provided below.

Frequently asked Questions from Workers:

1. NEW: I have a claim and I was required to do four work search contacts each week. Do I have to do my work search during the pandemic?

No. Governor Burgum signed an Executive Order on Friday, March 20th that temporarily waives the work search requirement for all claimants. Job Service has adjusted our systems so that you will not be asked to enter any work searches you have completed when you certify your weekly eligibility.

2. Would I be eligible for benefits if my employer shuts down or lays me off because of the COVID-19 situation?

If your employer shuts down or lays you off due to lack of work caused by the impact of COVID-19 on the business, you will generally be eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits.

3. UPDATED: Would I be eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits if I become ill with the COVID-19 virus and cannot work?

Yes, if you cannot work due to contracting COVID-19 but will be returning to your employer, you would be eligible to receive benefits based upon recent federal guidance relating strictly to COVID-19.

4. **UPDATED:** Would I be eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits if I am quarantined and cannot work?

Yes, if you are quarantined and physically able to work but cannot work from the quarantine location do to other reasons, you would be eligible to receive benefits based upon recent federal guidance relating strictly to COVID-19.

5. I am a contract worker. I receive a 1099 in lieu of a W2. Will I be eligible for unemployment benefits if no work is available for me?

Contract workers are not eligible to receive regular unemployment benefits. At this time no other unemployment benefit program has been activated that would allow contract workers to receive benefits.

Frequently asked Questions from Employers:

6. Will my employees be eligible for benefits if they cannot work even if my business remains open and I have work for them?

Please see the FAQ responses under the Employee section above.

7. **UPDATED:** If my business declines, or I need to close, lay off staff, or cut staff hours, will my Unemployment Insurance account be charged for any benefits paid to employees I had to lay off?

No. Governor Burgum signed an Executive Order on Friday, March 20th directing that individual base period employers accounts will be relieved of charges (I.e. No Charged) on claims filed as a direct or indirect result of COVID-19.

8. **NEW:** I am a business owner and I pay into the Unemployment Insurance system. Can I file a claim if I must shut down my business?

Yes. Governor Burgum signed an Executive Order on Friday, March 20th to assist business owners in the receipt of Unemployment Insurance by temporarily eliminating income reduction requirements for business owners.