

# Unemployment Benefits Update

## [TWC Waves Certain Requirements for Unemployment Benefits Services](#)

03/18/2020 08:49 AM CDT

Yesterday, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott instructed the Texas Workforce Commission to waive the waiting week, for Unemployment Benefits. In addition to waiving the waiting week, the Texas Workforce Commission is exercising its authority under the Governor's declaration of a Statewide Disaster to waive Unemployment Insurance work search requirements effective immediately.

### Handling General Potential Unemployment Insurance Inquiries related to Coronavirus/COVID-19 Workers

1. How do I apply for benefits and/or ask general questions about an unemployment claim that was already filed? If your employment has been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19), you may apply for benefits online at [www.texasworkforce.org](http://www.texasworkforce.org) any time 24/7 using <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/unemploymentbenefits-services> and this will allow us to more quickly handle your claim needs. If you are unable to file online you may call TWC's Tele-Center at 800-939-6631 from 8 a.m.- 6 p.m. Central Time Monday through Friday. • If you would like to file over the phone you can call 817.420.1600 • If you have questions or concerns and would like to speak to an Unemployment Agent call 817.420.1605 • We also encourage you to sign up for Electronic Correspondence by visiting: <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/unemployment-benefitsservices#viewElectronicCorrespondence> so that you can receive your TWC communications online as soon as possible. TWC will investigate why you lost your job and mail a decision explaining whether you are eligible for unemployment benefits.

2. Is there an emergency fund to cover unemployment related to the coronavirus? There is not an emergency fund to cover unemployment related to the coronavirus at this time.

3. What are my rights under unemployment compensation/what is considered? TWC evaluates your unemployment benefits claim on a case by case basis based on you meeting 3 requirements: • Past Wages: Your past wages are one of the eligibility requirements and the basis of your potential unemployment benefit amounts. • Job Separation: To be eligible for benefits based on your job separation, you must be either unemployed or working reduced hours through no fault of your own. Special considerations on a case by case basis are being applied relative to coronavirus depending on the circumstances. • Ongoing Eligibility Requirements: In addition to the past wages and job separation eligibility requirements, there are requirements you must continue to meet to stay eligible and you may find those online under "See Ongoing Eligibility Requirements for Receiving Unemployment Benefits" at [www.texasworkforce.org](http://www.texasworkforce.org).

The Unemployment Insurance Call Center is experiencing overwhelming call volumes due to the pandemic and they are taking steps to answer as many calls as possible. Thank you for your

patience, if you would like to file an unemployment claim or check the status of an existing claim online visit: [ui.texasworkforce.org](http://ui.texasworkforce.org). If you lost your job as a result of the pandemic, you should check the Coronavirus (COVID-19) box on the online form.

## Handling General Potential Unemployment Insurance Inquiries related to Coronavirus/COVID-19 Employers

1. Can an employee take a sick day due to fear and not illness? Would an employer be required to cover that?

Policies related to paid sick leave are between employers and employees. The Texas Workforce Commission does not have jurisdiction or enforcement of qualifying paid sick leave. If your employee has been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) and is not receiving payment while away from work, they may apply for benefits either online at any time using Unemployment Benefits Services or by calling TWC's Tele-Center at 800-939-6631 from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. The local number to speak to an agent is: 817.420.1605.

2. What if I must close my business temporarily or permanently? a. If you have to close your business either temporarily or permanently and need to lay off employees, you may be able to submit a mass claim for unemployment benefits on their behalf. The Mass Claims program streamlines the unemployment benefit claims process for employers faced with either temporary or permanent layoffs. Employers can submit basic worker information on behalf of their employees to initiate claims for unemployment benefits. You can submit a mass claim request on Employer Benefits Services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. b. For more information, see: Mass Claims for Unemployment Benefits at [www.texasworkforce.org](http://www.texasworkforce.org) or contact TWC's Mass Claims Coordinator at 512-463-2999.

3. What if my business has slowed down? a. If your business has slowed down due to the pandemic and you need to reduce employee working hours, you may be able to avoid laying off employees by submitting a shared work plan. How to Apply for a Shared Work Plan: Log on to Employer Benefits Services (EBS) to submit your Shared Work Plan online. EBS online is fast, easy, secure, and available 24/7. b. If you have any questions, please email: [ui.sharedwork@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:ui.sharedwork@twc.state.tx.us). If you are unable to get online contact TWC's Shared Work Department by phone: 512-340-4337 or 888-741-0446.

4. What if I have questions about an unemployment claim that was filed? a. EMPLOYERS should contact TWC at [ui.sharedwork@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:ui.sharedwork@twc.state.tx.us) If they do not have Internet they may call the Tele-Center at 800-939-6631. They are open from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Central Time Monday through Friday.

For Tax questions please go to: Employer Registration questions: Tax Status Section [tax.statussection@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:tax.statussection@twc.state.tx.us) Employer Rate Questions: Tax Experience Rating [taxexperience.rating@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:taxexperience.rating@twc.state.tx.us) Employer Account Maintenance: Tax Central Operations [TaxCentralOperations@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:TaxCentralOperations@twc.state.tx.us)