

COVID-19: Partner Toolkit



**Employment
Security
Department**
WASHINGTON STATE

For the week of April 12, 2020

Last updated April 14, 2020

Objective & Key Message



**The more people prepare before they apply,
the faster they will get their benefits.**

Key tools to share



Tool	Purpose	Link
COVID-19 Action Alerts	An email list-serv through which we're distributing instructions and updates on how to prepare and when to apply for unemployment benefits	https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAESD/signup/15249
Eligibility Checker	Helps workers identify whether they're eligible now for unemployment insurance or for the upcoming CARES act expanded unemployment assistance	https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/UIEligibilityChecker.pdf
Application Checklist	Steps people through all they need to have available/done so they can be maximally ready when they apply	https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/COVID-19_Applications_CheckList.pdf
SAW Video	One of the biggest challenges people have faced is just signing up for an account. This video helps them do it smoothly	https://youtu.be/JgrLhqbtHQ4
FAQ	60% of calls into our call center have been questions – most of which we answer in our FAQ. Start there before you call if you have a question. There's one for workers and one for employers	Worker: https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19-worker-information Employers: https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19-employer-information
Weekly Benefit Calculator	This will help people estimate their weekly benefit. Later in this ppt, we have a grid of benefit amounts per salary level (including the \$600 expanded benefit)	https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/calculate-your-benefit

Key Issues and Q&A



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Top questions/issues we receive



Question / Issue	Answer / Response
I can't get through on the phone lines and need help!	Please point people to the website first to answer their questions. If they are asking about a specific claim, they'll still need to contact customer service
I can't get through and am worried I'll miss out on some of my benefits!	Please assure people that they will get paid retroactively to the date of their eligibility. They should go to the website to see if their questions can be answered with the information there first. With questions only, they can also call our 1-800 number or use virtual chat found on www.worksourcewa.com .
When can I get my money from the federal CARES act?	The unemployment benefits from the Federal CARES act will go live on April 18th. Get prepared now by going to ESD.WA.GOV and sign up for the COVID-19 Action Alerts .
I can't sign-up for a SAW account	Please watch this video . If there are still problems, they will need to call our customer service center.
I'm an independent contractor, what do I need to do? What documentation will I need to submit?	I'm an independent contractor, what do I need to do? What documentation will I need to submit? Go to the ESD.WA.GOV website where there are instructions on what to do and what you need to be prepared to apply

Top issues/questions we receive cont.



Question / Issue	Answer / Response
I applied and haven't heard back. What's going on?	There is very high demand – with 1000% increase in call volumes since the crisis began. They are working hard to meet that demand so please check the status on the website and, if you haven't heard back in a couple of days, try calling.
I'm a gig-worker – what do I do?	Go to the ESD.WA.GOV website where there are instructions on what to do and what you need to be prepared to apply
I'm already on UI – am I eligible for the new benefits? Do I need to do anything to access them.	Yes – the Federal CARES act includes an additional \$600/week through the end of July and 13 additional weeks of benefits. Anyone on unemployment benefits will be eligible for those additional benefits. You do not need to do anything for the \$600 but will need to add the 13 weeks to your existing benefits. An email will be going out to existing UI recipients to explain the action they will need to take to access those 13 additional weeks. Please see the website for more information.
How long will it take when I'm approved to get my money?	It is taking 7-10 days – especially since we waived the waiting week
I was approved and got my first amount of money, but haven't since? What's up with that?	Once approved, Unemployment Benefits recipients need to file weekly claims

Independent contractors/self-employed



- The federal CARES Act expands unemployment benefits to those otherwise not eligible and who have been impacted by COVID-19
- This may include independent contractors and self-employed workers
- When they apply, they will need to submit wage documentation for the past year
- We will post very specific instructions on [ESD.WA.GOV](https://www.esd.wa.gov) for what they should do
- To get them their benefits as quickly as possible AND, at the same time, protect taxpayers from fraud, we will pay them right away the minimum weekly benefit amount designated from the federal CARES Act for this expanded unemployment assistance (\$235) plus the extra weekly \$600 also designated from the federal CARES Act. In other words – they will receive \$835 per week until we verify their wage documentation. When verified, we will pay them the full weekly benefit amount for which they're eligible – including any retroactive payments to the date of their eligibility.
- They can speed up that wage verification process by having their documentation ready before applying. We will have suggestions on document types in our instructions, but to give you an idea, the best forms include:
 - 2019 tax filing
 - 1099 forms
 - Other formal tax documentation

Emerging issues and mitigations



- For independent contractors/self-employed workers, the initial weekly benefit amount they will be paid may be different from what the calculator showed and what they expect
 - To get them their benefits as quickly as possible AND, at the same time, protect taxpayers from fraud, we will pay them right away a minimum weekly benefit amount plus the \$600. As soon as their wage documents are verified, we will pay them the full weekly benefit amount for which they're eligible – including any retroactive payments to the date of their eligibility.
 - We are both increasing staff as well as using staff time from across ESD for the first two weeks to address the surge of demand for wage verification that we'll need
- High demand may still cause performance issues on our phones, in our account sign-up system and through our online application
 - We have made our website instructions and Q&A much more robust and are trying to route all questions first to our website so we can reserve phones for claimant issues
 - We have increased our staffing levels for customer service to over 500 this week and 1000 next week
 - We have increased our bandwidth and server capacity
- Especially with the new laws, the application is still complex
 - We have posted extensive instructions. People should use them. There are many scenarios laid out that should address the majority of situations. If their questions are still not answered, they should call.
- It is going to be a 2 step process to apply for the expanded unemployment assistance. To make these new benefits available quickly, it builds on our existing system. Therefore, we first gauge regular eligibility and then, if not eligible, invite them to apply for the expanded benefits.
 - We have posted extensive instructions. People should use them. There are many scenarios laid out that should address the majority of situations. If their questions are still not answered, they should call.

Email templates



**Employment
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Email templates: general/proactive

Dear XXXXXX:

As you know, this COVID-19 crisis is a historic time. Thank you for playing your part in flattening the curve by **Staying Home and Staying Healthy!** I realize, however, that for many, this comes with economic hardship. While many have been able to obtain some relief through benefits such as Unemployment Insurance, many others are still waiting or have been ineligible.

For those still waiting:

- The Employment Security Department (ESD) has received an unprecedented flood of applications for assistance. They are doing the best they can to meet this need by hiring additional staff, expanding service hours and updating their technology.
- Many of the calls they are receiving and that we have received from constituents are now answered on their website ([ESD.WA.GOV](https://www.esd.wa.gov)) where they have been providing up to date information and resources directly addressing the current circumstances of Washingtonians.

Although it may be frustrating, if you have an issue that must be resolved by speaking to an agent, please continue to call. There are thousands of individuals getting through on the phones every day.

It is important to know that, regardless of when you get through you will receive retroactive payments back to your eligibility date.

For those who have been ineligible thus far but are impacted by COVID-19, I have good news and some instructions!

- This coming weekend, ESD is updating its technology to enable the new Federal CARES Act. This will
 - Expand unemployment benefits to those not previously eligible for unemployment insurance, for example, independent contractors, those who are self-employed and those with fewer than 680 hours worked in the past year.
 - Add \$600 on top of a person's weekly benefit amount
 - Add 13 more weeks to the someone's unemployment benefits

For everyone: In addition to reading the FAQs on their website, here are four things you can do right now to stay up to date and to prepare to apply for unemployment, if you haven't already:

- **Stay up to date.** If you haven't already, please sign up for ESD's COVID-19 action alerts. You can do so on the agency's COVID page ([esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19](https://www.esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19)).
- **Check your eligibility.** Learn more about your eligibility and when to apply for benefits using [the new eligibility checker](#). We are encouraging those eligible for regular unemployment to apply now, and newly eligible to wait until after April 18.
- **Get ready to apply.** [Download the application checklist](#).
- **Set up your account.** [Watch the tutorial video to set up your account correctly](#). It is nine minutes long but will likely save a lot of time.

Thank you for your understanding and patience through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXX

Email templates: 1099s



- Coming soon – we will be updating this by Wednesday, April 15th.



Email template: can't get through

Dear XXXXXX:

Thank you so much for contacting us regarding unemployment insurance benefits. I am so sorry that you are having difficulty getting assistance.

As you know, this is a historic time. The Employment Security Department has received an unprecedented flood of applications for assistance. They are doing the best they can to meet this need by hiring additional staff, expanding service hours and upgrading their technology.

Many of the calls they are receiving and that we have received from constituents are now answered on [their website](#) (ESD.WA.GOV) where they have been providing up to date information and resources directly addressing the current circumstances of Washingtonians. They also will be providing information and instructions on accessing unemployment assistance through their [new Action Alert newsletter found here](#)

Although it may be frustrating, if you have an issue that must be resolved by speaking to an agent, please continue to call. There are thousands of individuals getting through on the phones every day.

It is important to know that, regardless of when you get through you will receive retroactive payments back to your eligibility date.

Thank you for your understanding and patience through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXX

Email template: specific claim needs



Dear XXXXXX,

Thank you for your email and bringing this to our attention.

During these unprecedented times, the Employment Security Department is inundated with applications, claims, and inquiries. They are putting all their hearts, souls and hard work in to meet the needs of those we all serve.

Unfortunately, because of this exceptional demand, our office is not able to escalate specific claims at this time. To inquire about your claim, you will need to keep trying to reach their Claims Center agents by calling 800-318-6022 during the [assigned day\(s\) based on your question\(s\)](#) or by utilizing [eServices](#). ESD has expanded hours and is [hiring](#) more people to be able to serve you faster.

In the meantime, please visit their [COVID-19 Information page](#) for the most up-to-date information and [subscribe to email updates](#) about COVID-19 guidance so you receive their alerts as new guidance becomes available.

We ask for your patience and partnership as we adapt to these unprecedented times. We will get through this together.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXX

Social media and graphics



**Employment
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Social media suggestions for the week of 4/12



Subject	Proposed language and link	Images to include - see the subsequent pages
Launch of expanded benefits	Expanded unemployment benefits become available in WA April 18. Get an account set-up now & get prepared so that you can be ready! The more prepared, the sooner you'll get your benefits esd.wa.gov/unemployment	Expanded benefits graphic
Overall – get prepared	Need unemployment benefits? The more prepared you are, the more likely, you'll get them quickly! 4 things to do right now to prepare to apply esd.wa.gov/unemployment	4 step graphics
Overall	How to get your unemployment benefits more quickly: PREPARE! Here are 4 Steps to do now to get ready: esd.wa.gov/unemployment	4 steps graphic
First step	Make sure when you apply for Unemployment benefits that the first step is not a stumble! Sign up for your account NOW to be ready – watch the video 1 st and then sign-up! https://youtu.be/JgrLhgbtHQ4	SAW graphic
All those not currently eligible	Expanded unemployment benefits applications open up soon for those not previously eligible. Click here to get the eligibility checker to see if that's YOU and use our checklist to prepare. The more prepared you are, the sooner you get the money and benefits esd.wa.gov/unemployment	Eligibility checker image



Images to promote in social channels

- Please follow and share our posts:
 - Twitter @esdwaworks, FB @WashingtonESD, Instagram @washingtonecd
- If you want to share yourself – here are images to copy and past or drag and drop into your social media or your email templates

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**Extra \$600.
Coming soon.**

Learn more at
esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19

Employment Security Department
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**Benefits are
retroactive.**

Learn more at
esd.wa.gov/newsroom/retroactive-payments

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**Do you
qualify for
unemployment?**

Get the eligibility checker at
esd.wa.gov/unemployment

Employment Security Department
WASHINGTON STATE

Get ready to apply

Download our
checklist at
esd.wa.gov/unemployment

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**Expanded benefits
are coming**

**Independent contractors
Self-employed
Part-time workers**

Learn more → esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19

Other Useful Graphics



Expanded Unemployment Benefits

Coming April 18, 2020

4 Steps you can take to get ready



Weekly Benefit Amounts w/the Federal CARES act + \$600



Annual wage	quarterly wage	Weekly wage	Estimated weekly benefit	Benefit + Special \$600	% above/below their std weekly	\$ above/below their std weekly wage
\$ 30,000	\$ 7,500	\$ 577	\$ 288	\$ 888	154%	\$ 311
\$ 35,000	\$ 8,750	\$ 673	\$ 336	\$ 936	139%	\$ 263
\$ 40,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 769	\$ 385	\$ 985	128%	\$ 216
\$ 45,000	\$ 11,250	\$ 865	\$ 433	\$ 1,033	119%	\$ 168
\$ 50,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 962	\$ 481	\$ 1,081	112%	\$ 119
\$ 55,000	\$ 13,750	\$ 1,058	\$ 529	\$ 1,129	107%	\$ 71
\$ 60,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 1,154	\$ 577	\$ 1,177	102%	\$ 23
\$ 62,500	\$ 15,625	\$ 1,202	\$ 601	\$ 1,201	100%	\$ (1) BREAK EVEN
\$ 65,000	\$ 16,250	\$ 1,250	\$ 625	\$ 1,225	98%	\$ (25)
\$ 70,000	\$ 17,500	\$ 1,346	\$ 673	\$ 1,273	95%	\$ (73)
\$ 75,000	\$ 18,750	\$ 1,442	\$ 721	\$ 1,321	92%	\$ (121)
\$ 80,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 1,538	\$ 770	\$ 1,370	89%	\$ (168)
\$ 85,000	\$ 21,250	\$ 1,635	\$ 790	\$ 1,390	85%	\$ (245)
\$ 90,000	\$ 22,500	\$ 1,731	\$ 790	\$ 1,390	80%	\$ (341)
\$ 95,000	\$ 23,750	\$ 1,827	\$ 790	\$ 1,390	76%	\$ (437)
\$ 100,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 1,923	\$ 790	\$ 1,390	72%	\$ (533)

*Additional \$600 per week will be available to nearly everyone on unemployment from March 29 through weekending July 25.

- People can estimate their weekly benefit amount here: [benefit calculator on esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov/benefit-calculator)
- Note – this provides an estimate. For the actual weekly benefit amount, an individual has to apply