

# DC Unemployment Insurance (UI) Basics For COVID-19 Emergency

## Am I Eligible for UI?

**I just received a layoff notice or significant reduction of work hours from my DC-based employer. Should I apply for unemployment insurance?**

**YES.** Unemployment insurance is the best way to give you cash assistance at this time, and your employer has been paying in to what is known as the UI Trust Fund for this reason.

**I am an independent contractor, and I receive 1099 forms from my business clients. Should I apply for unemployment insurance?**

At this time, independent contractors – which can include gig workers – are **NOT ELIGIBLE** for UI. DC is setting up a grant fund to help DC-based small businesses and independent contractors meet obligations such as payroll, rent, and other costs. More information coming soon at [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov).

**I have been diagnosed with COVID-19, I have had contact with a COVID-19 case, I have been ordered to quarantine/isolate or I have decided to self-quarantine/isolate given possible exposure and that has led to temporary separation from work. Should I apply for unemployment insurance?**

**YES.** Emergency actions taken by the D.C. Council have expanded both UI eligibility and job protections under the District's Family and Medical Leave Act for these COVID-19 related circumstances.

## How Does It Work?

**How much will I receive and for how long?**

The maximum weekly benefit is **\$444 a week**. Your benefit amount is calculated based on a rough average of your earnings in the last year. Right now, the benefit lasts up to 26 weeks, but in other challenging economic times it has been extended.

**When will I start getting my benefits?**

UI cash assistance is given through **direct deposit or a benefit card** (like a debit card) and will start at least 15 days after you apply.

**Do I need to prove I am looking for work? And can I earn money while getting UI?**

DC has **waived the work search requirement** temporarily. There are restrictions on how much you can earn to still qualify for UI.

## How Do I Get Benefits?

🔗 Apply online at [dcnetworks.org](https://dcnetworks.org). (Click on Claim Unemployment Benefits at top.)

📞 If you don't have computer and internet access, call **202-724-7000**

## Who Can I Talk to About My Rights?

[Washington Lawyers' Committee Workers' Rights Clinic](#)  
**(202) 319-1000**

[Claimant Advocacy Program \(CAP\) of the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO](#)  
**202-974-8159**

[Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia](#)  
**202-628-1161**

More at: [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov)

