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## Common Questions and Answers Regarding the UI Program

### General Information regarding the Unemployment Insurance Program

**Q: The business where I work has temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic or due to the recent tornado in Jonesboro. Can I file a claim for unemployment insurance benefits?**

A: The unemployment insurance program is designed to assist workers who are laid off through no fault of their own, regardless of whether their separation from employment is the result of COVID-19, the Jonesboro tornado or some other factor impacting a business.

**Q: I was previously disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits or cannot monetarily establish a regular unemployment claim. Can I receive unemployment insurance benefits at this time because of the COVID-19 Pandemic or the Jonesboro tornado?**

A: Claimants who are under a disqualification from receiving unemployment insurance benefits must satisfy any disqualification prior to receiving regular unemployment insurance benefits. Federal programs may be made available to provide assistance to individuals who are not eligible for benefits through the regular unemployment insurance program. Please monitor DWS' webpage, press releases and social media posts as more information regarding these programs is made available.

**Workers being impacted by COVID-19 who cannot qualify for UI or are under a disqualification:** You might qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. The filing of an unemployment insurance claim is the first step. We are awaiting federal guidance on the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claim. Payments may be made retroactive to the first week eligible under the program. DWS will issue more information about the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance via press releases and social media posts when more information becomes available. Payments may be made retroactive to the first week eligible under the program.

**Workers being impacted by Jonesboro tornado who cannot qualify for UI or are under a disqualification:** You might qualify for a Disaster Unemployment Assistance claim. The filing of the unemployment claim is the first step. Disaster Unemployment Assistance will be available if the president issues a federal disaster declaration and authorizes Individual Assistance. Payments may be made retroactive to the first week eligible under the program. DWS will issue more information about the Disaster Unemployment Assistance via press releases, DWS' webpage and social media posts should such benefits become available.

**Q: I am self-employed (electrician, plumber, construction, etc.) Can I still file a claim for unemployment insurance benefits?**

A: The regular unemployment insurance program is not available to self-employed individuals unless they have wages from other covered employment. If you have not worked anywhere else in the past 18 months you might qualify for a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claim. Filing an unemployment claim is the first step.

**Self-Employed Individuals being impacted by COVID-19:** You might qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and filing an unemployment insurance claim is the first step. We are awaiting federal guidance on the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program. DWS will issue more information about the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance via press releases and social media posts when more information becomes available. Payments may be made retroactive to the first week eligible under the program.

**Self-Employed Individuals being impacted by the Jonesboro tornado:** You might qualify for Disaster Unemployment Assistance and filing an unemployment insurance claim is the first step. Disaster Unemployment Assistance will be available if the president issues a federal disaster declaration and authorizes Individual Assistance. Payments may be made retroactive to the first week eligible under the program. Should such benefits become available, DWS will issue more information about the Disaster Unemployment Assistance program via press releases, DWS' website and social media posts.

**Q: My employer is still open for business but I am not able to work at this time because I am in quarantine or providing care for someone as a result of COVID-19. Can I file for unemployment benefits?**

A: Yes, once you have received a separation notice from your employer, an affected worker may file for unemployment insurance benefits due to COVID-19 related quarantine. DWS will have to investigate the reasons for your temporary separation. This investigation may result in a slight delay in receiving benefits.

**Q: I received all of my regular unemployment insurance benefits, are there any extensions?**

A: Federal programs may become available to provide assistance to individuals who are not eligible for benefits through the regular unemployment insurance program. DWS will issue more information via DWS' website, press releases and social media posts when more information becomes available.

### **General Unemployment Insurance Claim Questions**

**Q: How much will I receive in weekly benefits?**

A: Generally, an individual will receive a weekly benefit amount ranging from \$81 to \$451 each week. This will be determined by the average of all wages in a worker's base period. Once a claim is filed, monetary eligibility will be established through the claim filing process. Generally, this information will not be known until that time. Federal programs may increase the amount of benefits one will receive.

**Q: How many weeks of benefits may I receive?**

A: DWS' unemployment insurance program makes 16 weeks of benefits available to claimants. Federal extensions may increase the number of available weeks.

**Q: What federal extensions or benefits are available?**

A: The CARES Act created several add-ons and extensions. We are currently waiting for federal guidance on these programs. DWS will issue more information about Disaster Unemployment Assistance via press releases, DWS' website and social media posts should such benefits become available.

**Q: Will an additional \$600 be added to my unemployment claim each week?**

A: The CARES Act created several add-ons and extensions, including the \$600 add-on to unemployment benefits. We are currently waiting for federal guidance on these programs. DWS will issue more information about the Disaster Unemployment Assistance via press releases, DWS' website and social media posts should such benefits become available.

**Q: I have questions regarding my unemployment insurance claim, must I contact my local office to obtain more information?**

A: It depends. Answers to the most common unemployment insurance questions may be found on DWS' website located at [www.dws.arkansas.gov](http://www.dws.arkansas.gov) by selecting the Unemployment Insurance tab. The full informational handbook for claimants is also available on our website. If you are unable to find an answer to your question on the DWS website or do not have access to the Internet, you may call your local office or the UI Hotline 1.844.908.2178 or 501.534.6304 Monday through Friday and Select Option 1.

**Post Claim Filing Questions**

**Q: My claim was filed; what do I do next?**

A: You will need to file weekly claims to receive benefits, either by ArkNet or ArkLine. You will need to begin filing your weekly claims on the Sunday following the day that you filed your initial claim for unemployment benefits.

1. To file your claim using ArkNet, go to [www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov](http://www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov). Follow the prompts and enter your answers for the questions that pertain to the dates outlined.
2. To file your claim using ArkLine, call (501) 907-2590. ArkLine is available for use, Sunday 12:01 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. Follow the prompts and enter your answers for the questions that pertain to the dates indicated.

Remember to file your claim each week that you are unemployed to claim benefits! Due to the high claims load, it is recommended that you file your weekly claim on Monday or Tuesday.

**Q: I've claimed my first week of unemployment. How long will I have to wait to receive my benefits?**

A: For claims filed on or after March 16, 2020, the valid waiting period requirement has been waived for thirty (30) days due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, claims that are "otherwise eligible," should expect payment of benefits the following week. However, different situations may exist that could delay receipt of benefits.

1. If your claim requires adjudication, it will require investigation and a written determination will be issued to you regarding your eligibility for unemployment benefits.
2. If you have out of state wages, there may be a delay in receiving benefits if you file a combined wage claim, which is where you combine your wages from all states.
3. There may also be a delay for those whose claim is based on federal wages.

**Q: How will I receive my unemployment benefits?**

A: Benefits are issued either Direct Deposit or by Debit Card.

1. Direct Deposit requires you to have a personal checking account or savings account. Payment for Direct Deposit takes about 2-3 days from the date the payment is processed. To select Direct

Deposit, you must enter your account and routing numbers after logging into your account on [www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov](http://www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov). Benefits will be deposited into your account when due, based upon your current eligibility and the weekly information you certify.

2. UI Debit Cards are issued to anyone who does not elect to receive UI benefits via Direct Deposit. These cards must be issued by a bank and mailed to you. Benefits will be deposited into your card account when due, based upon your current eligibility and the weekly information you certify. UI Debit Cards are convenient and easy and may be used wherever Visa is accepted.

**Q: I want to sign up for Direct Deposit, can you enter my banking information for me?**

A: No. To register for Direct Deposit, you must enter your account and routing numbers after logging into your account on [www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov](http://www.ArkNet.Arkansas.gov). No DWS employee may receive your banking information to register you for Direct Deposit.

**Q: Will I need to search for work after filing my claim for unemployment benefits?**

A: Effective for claims filed on or after March 16, 2020, work search requirements have been waived for a period of thirty (30) days, or through the week ending April 18, 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, you will not be required to register or search for work during the thirty (30) day waive period. If you will only be unemployed due to a temporary reduction in workforce for a period of ten (10) weeks or less, it is recommended that your employer provide a letter to you with a specific return to work date that is within ten (10) weeks of your last day of work. This letter will exempt you from work search and expedite the process.

**Q: What types of income do I need to report when filing my weekly claims?**

A: Gross earnings (before any deductions) for all work performed for the week being claimed must be reported when filing your weekly claim for benefits. Also:

1. Report gross income earned by participating in military drill during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
2. Report gross Holiday Pay if you were off work for a holiday during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
3. Report gross Vacation Pay if you were off work on vacation during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
4. Report gross Sick Pay if you were off work on sick leave during the week being claimed – whether you have received payment or not.
5. Report Paid Time Off (PTO) if you were off work on PTO during the week being claimed – whether you have received the PTO pay or not.
6. Report gross Bonus Pay for any bonus payment received during the week being claimed.

Also report any receipt of retirement pay or separation pay to your local office – as this may affect your eligibility for unemployment benefits.

**Q: I have questions regarding my unemployment insurance claim. Who do I contact?**

A: Answers to most unemployment insurance questions can be found on our website at [www.dws.arkansas.gov](http://www.dws.arkansas.gov). You may also contact your local office or call 1-855-225-4440.

**Q: I have a pending appeal, what is the status of my appeal?**

A: We do not have access to the Board of Review or the Appeal Tribunal's docketing system. You may contact the Board of Review at 501.683.4300 or the Arkansas Appeal Tribunal at 501.682.1063.