



# Alabama Department of Labor Alabama Career Center System PRESS RELEASE



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## News Release

For Immediate Release: March 16, 2020

### Alabama Announces Support for Workers Impacted by COVID-19

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington announced today that Alabama workers who are not able to work due to COVID-19 will be eligible to file for unemployment benefits.

Based on current guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Alabama Department of Labor is modifying existing unemployment compensation rules to allow workers to file a claim for unemployment compensation benefits who are affected in any of the following way:

- Those who are quarantined by a medical professional or a government agency,
- Those who are laid off or sent home without pay for an extended period by their employer due to COVID-19 concerns,
- Those who are diagnosed with COVID-19,
- Or, those who are caring for an immediate family member who is diagnosed with COVID-19.

The requirement that a laid-off worker be “able and available” to work while receiving unemployment compensation benefits has been modified for claimants who are affected by COVID-19 in any of the situations listed above. Additionally, claimants will also not have to search for other work provided they take reasonable steps to preserve their ability to come back to that job when the quarantine is lifted or the illness subsides. The waiting week, which is typically the first week of compensable benefits, will also be waived.

Certain criteria and exceptions may apply, and are subject to change. Verification of illness or quarantine may be required.

Workers can file for benefits online at [www.labor.alabama.gov](http://www.labor.alabama.gov) or by calling 1-866-234-5382. Online filing is encouraged.

People who are being paid to work from home, or those receiving paid sick or vacation leave are NOT eligible for unemployment compensation benefits, regardless if they experience any or all of the situations listed above.

Claimants can begin filing these claims on Monday, March 23, 2020.

“Many changes are happening quickly with regards to Alabama’s workforce, and it’s important to ensure that we are offering as many available options to those who find themselves in different employment situations,” said Governor Kay Ivey. “As always, we stand ready to assist Alabama’s workers in any way we possibly can.”

“We understand that we are entering a difficult time for workers and employers,” said Secretary Fitzgerald Washington. “We want to help those who may be temporarily financially impacted by helping them to replace some of their lost income while being unable to work. We are working with both federal and state government to ensure that we are doing all that we can to help ease the burden during a potentially trying time.”

Employers who decide to shut down due to causes related to COVID-19 should treat the shutdown as a temporary layoff.

These rules are subject to change pending congressional action.

Please see the attached Frequently Asked Questions for more details.

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*Members of the media seeking more information should contact Communications Director Tara Hutchison at (334) 309-9014.*

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# Coronavirus and Unemployment Insurance Benefits

## Alabama Department of Labor

### Questions and Answers

**Question 1: Will workers qualify for unemployment benefits if the coronavirus (COVID-19) causes an employer to shut down operations?**

**Answer:** Alabama unemployment benefits are available to individuals who are unemployed through no fault of their own. If an employer must shut down operations and no work is available, individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits.

**Question 2: If an employer lays off employees due to the loss of production caused by the coronavirus, will the employees be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits?**

**Answer:** Alabama unemployment benefits are available to any individual who is unemployed through no fault of their own. If an employer must lay off employees due to the loss of production caused by the coronavirus, individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits.

**Question 3: If an employee receives unemployment benefits as a result of a coronavirus-related business shutdown, will the employer's unemployment taxes increase?**

**Answer:** At this time, no further guidance has been issued. Until such a time, normal procedures will be followed.

**Question 4: If an employee receives unemployment benefits as a result of a coronavirus-related business shutdown, can the benefits be charged to the mutual account?**

**Answer:** At this time, no further guidance has been issued. Until such a time, normal procedures will be followed.

**Question 5: If an asymptomatic employee imposes a *self-quarantine* because of the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

**Answer:** In most cases, no. Unemployment benefits are available to individuals who are totally or partially unemployed due to no fault of their own. In this example, the individual—not the employer—is choosing not to work and, therefore, would be ineligible. However, the facts of each circumstance are important. If the employer allowed this individual to telework, they would not qualify for benefits because they would not be unemployed. If the employer required the individual to stay home but did not offer telework, the individual might be eligible for benefits if they met the monetary and weekly eligibility criteria.

**Question 6: If an employee is in mandatory quarantine because of suspicion of having the coronavirus, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

**Answer:** Yes, they will be eligible. Certain criteria and exceptions may apply, and are subject to change.

**Question 7: If an employee is ill because of the coronavirus and unable to work, will they be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

**Answer:** Yes, they will be eligible. Certain criteria and exceptions may apply, and are subject to change.

**Question 8: Is the coronavirus considered a disaster, and can I receive Disaster Unemployment Assistance?**

**Answer:** The president of the United States has declared the coronavirus a national disaster, but at this time there has been no Disaster Unemployment Assistance declaration.

**Question 9: What types of proof may be required to substantiate a COVID-19 claim?**

**Answer:** Proof of a medical diagnosis from a health care professional for the claimant and/or the immediate family member, and/or confirmation of quarantine by the employer or applicable government entity.

**Question 10: What is a partial claim?**

**Answer:** A partial claim is filed when an employee is laid off for a short period, but is expected to be rehired at the same job. For more information regarding partial claims, please visit <https://www.labor.alabama.gov/uc/Partials/uc-partials.aspx#facts>.

**Question 11: How long can I receive benefits?**

**Answer:** Generally, up to three weeks, subject to verification.