

Coronavirus and Unemployment Insurance Benefits

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

Answer: Wisconsin 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 if they meet the monetary criteria and the weekly eligibility criteria.

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: Wisconsin unemployment benefits are available to any individual who is unemployed through no fault of his/her 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 if they meet the monetary criteria and the weekly eligibility criteria.

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: Unemployment benefits are proportionately charged to each employer based on weeks worked and wages earned in each individual's base period. Contributory employers could see an increase in their tax rate, which would result in higher taxes. Reimbursable employers would be charged dollar for dollar for benefits paid, which could result in higher than expected unemployment costs.

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

Answer: No, Wisconsin law does not allow that.

Question 5: If an 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: They might meet the initial eligibility criteria but not the ongoing federal eligibility criteria, which require them to be able to work, available for work, and actively seeking suitable work.

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

Answer: No. The federal requirements mandate that claimants be able to work, available for work, and actively seeking suitable work. If someone is ill, they would not meet these criteria.

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

Answer: If the president of the United States declares the coronavirus a national disaster, if individuals experience a loss of work in Wisconsin as a result, and if the individual is not eligible for regular unemployment benefits, they may be eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

Question 9: What happens if the school I work at shuts down for coronavirus. Will I be eligible?

Answer: If this closure is not during a customary break period, or extends longer than the customary break period, individuals may be eligible for unemployment benefits if they meet the monetary and weekly eligibility criteria.

Question 10: I am required to attend a re-employment services session. I don't want to go to a public location until the coronavirus has run its course. What will happen if I miss my session?

Answer: If you fail to attend your mandatory session, you will be denied unemployment benefits unless it is determined you had good cause for missing the session.

DWD is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need assistance with this information, please dial 7-1-1 for Wisconsin Relay Service. Please contact the Unemployment Insurance Division at (414) 435-7069 or toll-free at (844) 910-3661 to request information in an alternate format, including translated to another language.