

Unemployment Insurance

What is Unemployment Insurance (UI)?

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a weekly cash benefit when you lose your job or your hours are cut and it's not your fault. You can get between \$50 and \$444 per week (about half of what you made while working). You can get UI for 26 weeks (sometimes longer if you are working part-time).

Can I get UI?

To get UI in DC, all these things must be true:

- You worked in DC. You don't need to live in DC.
- You earned enough money before you lost your job (usually at least \$1,950 in the last year or so and at least \$1,300 in one quarter). Learn more at unemployment.dc.gov
- You worked for an employer. If you are self-employed or an independent contractor, you can't get UI.
- You lost or quit your job for a reason that doesn't disqualify you. See explanation to the right. →
- You're physically able and available for work.

What kind of job loss would disqualify me for UI?

Termination. If you were fired for "misconduct," you may not get full UI benefits. Misconduct means you knew you were doing something wrong at work.

Quitting Work. Generally, you can't get UI if you voluntarily quit your job unless you had "good cause" for quitting.

"Good cause" means a very good reason to quit that's related to your job (like unsafe working conditions, discrimination, moving for a spouse's job, needing to care for an ill or disabled family member, or if your job made your illness or disability worse, as long as you give your employer a doctor's note before you quit).

Can I apply if I don't speak English well?

Yes. The law says the government has to help you in your language. Tell the agency you want help in your language.

I'm not a U.S. citizen. Can I get UI?

Yes, as long as you have authorization to work in the U.S. Have proof of your work authorization with you when you apply.

If you don't have work authorization, or are otherwise undocumented, you can't get UI.

How do I apply for UI?

Apply for UI with the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES) online at dcnetworks.org.

Is there a deadline for applying for UI?

No, there is no formal deadline. However, your wages start to “expire” if you wait too long after your job loss to apply.

It is usually best to apply for UI as soon as possible after losing your job. You get benefits based on the date you apply for UI, not based on your last day at work.

How long does it take for my benefits to start?

DOES tries to respond to applications within three weeks of filing. If you haven't gotten any letters, phone calls, or emails (including in your spam filter) from DOES for four weeks or more, contact DOES by phone at (202) 724-7000.

What happens after I'm found eligible for UI?

Every week, you have to submit a Weekly Claim Card online, by telephone, or by mail (mail is not recommended). On these cards, you have to say whether:

- You're physically able to work and available for work; and
- You're actively looking for work (at least twice per week) and will accept work offered to you.

If you don't fill out your claims cards or you aren't able and willing to work and looking for work, you can't get UI.

What if I am denied UI?

If you are denied UI, you can request a hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) within 15 days of the date on your Claims Examiner Determination (although the deadline can be extended if you have a very good reason).

You can file an appeal online at ecourt.oah.dc.gov/public-portal.

You can also file an appeal by email, in person, or mail. There are three steps for these methods:

Step 1: Get the appeal form

Get the form online at oah.dc.gov/publication/unemployment-benefits-appeal-form or by calling OAH at (202) 442-9094.

Step 2: Fill out the appeal form.

Step 3: File the form in one of these ways:

- Email** it to oah.filing@dc.gov.
- Bring it **in person** to the Office of Administrative Hearings
441 Fourth Street NW, Suite 450N, Washington, DC 20001. **Keep a copy of the form.**
- Filing by email or in person is preferred, but you can also **mail** the form to the address above.

To follow up on your appeal, you can call OAH at (202) 442-9094.