

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROCEDURES TO FILE OR RE-OPEN A CLAIM

Q. How should I file a claim for unemployment insurance benefits?

A. There are two primary steps to receiving unemployment insurance. First you must file an application to establish or reopen a claim. If you are out of work due to the Coronavirus crisis then you will select **“Lack of Work”** as the reason for separation. Secondly, you access the program each week to claim unemployment insurance payment.

You should file your application or reopen your previous claim by visiting our website at www.vec.virginia.gov . This method is the preferred way to access the unemployment insurance application during this time of very heavy claim activity.

If you utilized the online system previously, the user name and passwords will remain the same.

Unemployment Insurance Learn more about UI >

Unemployment Insurance Benefits

File your initial or continued claim online:

- English >
- Español >

You may also file by telephone:

- For **initial claims**, call between 8:15am and 4:30pm, Monday - Friday (closed state holidays): 1-866-832-2363
- For **continuing claims**, call: 1-800-897-5630

To view a comprehensive list of everything you need to get started with your application including special forms and telephone numbers for the hearing impaired, please visit our [Claimant Resources page](#).

I'm Unemployed! Now What?

It might have happened this way: Your boss just told you that within the next two weeks the company is closing its doors forever. Or, perhaps the company is downsizing and you just lost the only job you've had for the past decade or more.

However it occurred, it may be your first time to be "out of work." So, what do you do now?

[Here are some basics on how to deal with being unemployed >](#)

You may file your claim through our Customer Contact Center by calling 866-832-2363. (Monday through Friday 8:15am – 4:30pm.) ** Please be aware of long wait times at our Customer Contact Center as a result of the Coronavirus crisis. If you must file by telephone, please continue to call back if lines are busy.

Q. What happens after I complete my unemployment insurance application or re-open my previous claim?

A. If this is your first time filing a claim you will receive three important documents. The Benefit Rights document explains eligibility requirements and what you need to do each week to claim your benefits. The Monetary Determination document shows how much money you may be eligible to receive. You will also receive a PIN. You need the PIN to claim weekly benefits and to make inquiries about your claim.

Q. How soon before I can expect a benefit payment?

A. This answer speaks to the second of the two primary steps mentioned that need to be taken to receive payment of benefits. The week must have ended before you can seek payment. Your first payment will be for the week after the effective date of your claim.

For example, I lost my job on March 17, 2020 and I filed my application for UI benefits. All claims filed that week have the effective date of March 15, 2020. The first week I can claim for payment is the week beginning March 15, 2020 and ending March 21, 2020. You will need to go online www.vec.virginia.gov or call the interactive voice response system 800-897-5630 to claim that week and receive payment after the week is complete. *** **Note:** Governor Northam has directed that the one week waiting period be **suspended**, as well as the requirement to conduct a weekly job search by those receiving unemployment insurance benefits. If you are eligible for benefits, a payment should be processed shortly after you claim this first full week.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Virginia’s SNAP Program to Issue Emergency Benefits Today
Existing clients will receive additional benefits in March and April

Richmond, VA (March 25, 2020) – Emergency benefits will be made available to Virginia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants during the months of March and April, as part of a provision set forth by the Families First Coronavirus Responses Act of 2020. Under this provision, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) will issue the emergency benefits to any household not already receiving the maximum benefits. The emergency benefits will allow the household’s current monthly allotment to increase to the maximum allotment for a household of that size as follows:

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
MAXIMUM MONTHLY ALLOTMENTS
OCTOBER 1, 2019 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2020
Maximum SNAP Allotments for 48 States and D.C.
Table with 2 columns: Household Size, 48 States and DC. Rows include household sizes 1 through 8 and 'Each additional person'.

“We must make sure that no Virginian goes hungry during this time of crisis,” said VDSS Commissioner S. Duke Storen. “Increasing the resources available to low-income Virginians to purchase food is vital to fighting hunger.”

The emergency benefits for March will be released this evening and automatically load to recipients’ SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. SNAP households will receive their regular April benefits on their usual issuance date, with emergency benefits added on April 16.

Currently, over 680,000 individuals receive SNAP benefits within the Commonwealth. On average, the monthly SNAP benefit per participant is \$119.

Individuals seeking to apply for SNAP benefits may apply online through CommonHelp at https://commonhelp.virginia.gov or by phone to (855) 635-4370.

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General Information

This pamphlet contains information about some of the benefits offered through the VDSS, along with information about your rights and responsibilities. This pamphlet addresses the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medical Assistance Programs and Energy Assistance Program (EAP).

How to Apply for Assistance

- Complete an application
 - Apply online for benefits at <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/>;
 - Apply for SNAP, TANF, EAP, and Medical Assistance over the phone by calling 855-635-4370;
 - Apply for Medical Assistance only over the phone by calling 855-242-8282;
 - Get an application during office hours at your local department of social services (LDSS);
 - Ask the LDSS to mail an application to you; or
 - Print a copy of the application off the internet at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/> under each program under Assistance or at www.coverva.org for Medical Assistance.
- File the application
 - Leave the printed application at the LDSS; or
 - Mail or fax the application to your LDSS.
- Depending on the type of assistance you are requesting, you may need to be interviewed.

Time Standards

Action must generally be taken on applications:

- within 10 work days for Medical Assistance for a pregnant woman;
- within 45 days of application for Medical Assistance (may take up to 90 days if a disability determination is needed);
- within 30 days of application for TANF;
- within 30 days of application for SNAP benefits (7 days if you qualify for emergency service);
- as soon as possible but no later than the last day designated for processing for Fuel Assistance;
- within three working days of all information being received for Crisis Assistance;
- by the close of the application period for Cooling Assistance.

General Eligibility Requirements

- To be eligible for most programs, you must:
 - Live in Virginia;
 - Be a U.S. citizen or meet certain requirements if you are an immigrant;
 - Apply at the agency that serves the city or county where you live;
 - Meet specific requirements of each program for which you are applying;
 - Apply for other benefits that you may be entitled to receive, such as Social Security, Worker's or Unemployment Compensation.
- Before we can determine if you are eligible, some of the information you give must be verified. See the VERIFICATION section of this pamphlet for more information
- Depending on the program, eligibility and the amount of benefits may be based on:
 - Your income;
 - The number of people in the family;
 - Resources; and
 - Certain household expenses.
- As soon as a decision about your application is made, we will send you a written notice. This notice will tell you if you are eligible and the amount of benefits you will receive.

Confidentiality

Information you provide is confidential. We will only give information to someone directly connected with administering or enforcing provisions of the programs for which you applied, other federal assistance programs, or programs that assist low income individuals. Information may also be disclosed to:

- Law enforcement officials who are investigating program violations or, in some instances, law enforcement officials who are investigating persons fleeing prosecution or punishment for a felony.
- The Child Support Enforcement Program to help locate absent parents.
- Persons connected with verifying status of immigrants.
- Agencies that provide employment-related services for TANF recipients or to local school divisions for school age children who get TANF benefits.

Verification

Each program has its own verification requirements. You must provide any information requested to establish your eligibility. Your worker will tell you what you need to provide and the deadline to provide it. Please ask for assistance if you need help. Examples of items the agency may need to verify and some suggested ways you may verify the items include:

Identity, Residence

- Driver's license, alien registration card, voter registration card, work or school ID, library card, and birth certificates;
- Social Security Numbers for everyone for whom you are requesting assistance.

Expenses

- Lease or mortgage agreement, rent receipts;
- Most recent utility and phone bills;
- Bills for the care of children, or elderly or disabled adults;
- Bills for medical expenses;
- Child support paid by a member of the household.

Resources

- Most recent statements for bank accounts such as checking and savings accounts;
- Proof of stocks and bonds;
- Information about burial trusts, burial arrangements, and burial plots;
- Registration or title for all motor vehicles;
- Medical insurance policies or medical cards;
- Life insurance policies that may be cashed.

Income

- Pay stubs for this month and last month for everyone working;
- Records of tips, bonuses, or commissions;
- Divorce decrees or support orders;
- Award letters or notices.

Rights and Responsibilities

- You must give correct information.
- You must cooperate.
- You must report changes that occur in your situation. Your worker will explain which changes need to be reported.
- You may appeal decisions or actions if you are dissatisfied.
- You may review your case record during the agency's business hours.
- You may review program regulations and manuals during the agency's normal business hours. Manuals are also available online at www.dss.virginia.gov.

Authorized Representative

If you would like someone else to act on your behalf, you may select a trusted friend, relative or neighbor to be your representative. The representative may:

- Apply for benefits for you.
- Receive your notices and correspondence.
- Use benefits on your behalf.

You may name a representative on the application form. If you want to name an authorized representative at any time after you have submitted your application, write a note for that person to take to the local social services department. In the note:

- List the name, address and phone number of the person you are naming;
- List the duties you want that person to perform;
- Sign and date the note.

Nondiscrimination

DSS will provide benefits and services without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, sex, age, political beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, marital or family status. If you believe you have been discriminated against, you may file a written complaint with state or federal agencies.

If you have a disability or if you have difficulty with English, you may get extra help to make sure you get the assistance or services you need.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF provides temporary financial assistance to eligible families with children. To be eligible, a family must be financially needy and meet certain other requirements. An eligible child must be under age 18, or if 18, expected to graduate from high school before age 19; going to school regularly if between the ages of 5 and 18; living with a parent or other relative; and a U.S. citizen or eligible immigrant.

An applicant must cooperate in naming the parents of all eligible children and must help establish paternity for each child.

The amount of the TANF benefit is based on the size of the family. A family may still be eligible to receive TANF while receiving money from other sources.

TANF debit cards may not be used to buy lottery tickets, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or sexually explicit materials. In addition, TANF debit cards may not be used in liquor stores, tattoo or body-piercing businesses, businesses that provide adult-oriented entertainment, casinos, or places where gaming is conducted.

If you receive TANF, you may be required to participate in the Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) program. Families in the VIEW program may earn income and receive TANF. However, the total income cannot be more than the federal poverty level for the family size.

A family with someone in VIEW may receive TANF for no longer than 24 months followed by a period of 24 months ineligibility. A family may receive TANF no more than a total of 60 months in a lifetime.

Additional information regarding the TANF program, application, forms and manual is available at www.dss.virginia.gov.

Medical Assistance Programs—Medicaid, FAMIS Plus, and FAMIS (Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan)

Medicaid and the Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan (FAMIS) are Medical Assistance programs that make direct payments to health care service providers for eligible individuals and families who are unable to pay for needed medical services. Medicaid for children is called FAMIS Plus.

To be eligible for Medicaid, you must have income and resources (assets) within specified limits and meet one of the following covered groups:

- children under age 19 years;
- parents with dependent children under age 18 years living in the home;
- pregnant women;
- adults age 19-64 years;
- adults age 65 years and older;
- blind individuals; or
- disabled individuals based on standards adopted by the Social Security Administration.

Plan First is a limited-coverage group that covers family planning services and is available to those who do not meet other full-coverage Medical Assistance groups. FAMIS, and its program for pregnant women, FAMIS MOMS, covers uninsured children under age 19 years and pregnant women with income that is too high for FAMIS Plus/Medicaid but is under the income limit for FAMIS/FAMIS MOMS.

Medicaid/FAMIS Plus and FAMIS have different income limits and nonfinancial requirements. When someone applies for Medical Assistance, the eligibility worker will determine if the person is eligible for a program. Medicaid and FAMIS pay for a variety of medical services, including prescription drugs, doctor visits, nursing facility care and hospital care.

Information about Medicaid/FAMIS Plus is available online from the Virginia Department of Social Services at www.dss.virginia.gov and from Cover Virginia at www.coverva.org. Contact the local department of social services or call 1-855-242-8282 for information about FAMIS or visit www.coverva.org.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly the Food Stamp Program

SNAP benefits will help you buy nutritious food for your household. You may also buy seeds or plants to grow your own food.

You may not use SNAP benefits to:

- Buy alcoholic beverages, tobacco, soap, paper products, or other nonfood items;
- Buy hot food ready to be eaten on the store premises.

SNAP benefits are issued electronically to eligible households. You will get a card that is similar to a credit or debit card to use at the authorized retailers to buy food. You must select a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and use that PIN when you swipe the card at the store. SNAP benefits will be added to your account each month you are approved for benefits.

Additional information about SNAP benefits is available at www.dss.virginia.gov.

Energy Assistance Program (EAP) - EAP consists of three components: Fuel Assistance, Crisis Assistance, and Cooling Assistance.

Fuel Assistance assists low-income, eligible households by supplementing home energy costs. Applications are accepted the second Tuesday in October through the second Friday in November. Crisis Assistance assists low-income households with energy related emergencies. Applications are accepted November 1st through March 15th. Cooling Assistance assists households in acquiring or repairing cooling equipment and/or payment of electric bills to operate cooling equipment. Applications are accepted June 15th through August 15th.

Additional information about the EAP is available at www.dss.virginia.gov.



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Benefit Programs