



# Unemployment Insurance Top Frequently Asked Questions

## TOP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Unemployment Insurance

## Benefits: Filing for, receiving, and claiming

#### 1. Can I estimate my weekly Unemployment Insurance benefit amount?

Yes, you can use the [benefit rate calculator \(https://ux.labor.ny.gov/benefit-rate-calculator/\)](https://ux.labor.ny.gov/benefit-rate-calculator/), on our website. Please note that the tool gives an estimate only. It does not guarantee that you will be eligible for benefits or a specific amount of benefits. You must file an Unemployment Insurance claim to find out if you are eligible and learn your actual benefit amount.

#### 2. When will I receive my first payment? I applied for Unemployment Insurance benefits more than a week ago and haven't heard anything. What should I do?

It takes three to six weeks from the time you file your claim to when you receive your first payment, because we have to review and process your application for benefits. You will not receive benefits during this time period. If you are found eligible, you will receive any back weeks of benefits owed with your first payment.

During this time there are two things you should do:

- Complete and return any questionnaires and return any phone calls you receive from the Department of Labor right away; and
- Continue to claim weekly benefits as long as you are unemployed and meet the eligibility requirements. If you are found to be eligible for benefits, any back weeks owed will be paid to you.

#### 3. Is "claiming weekly benefits" or "certifying for benefits" the same as "filing for benefits" or "filing a claim?"

No. "Filing for benefits" or "filing a claim" means to apply for Unemployment Insurance benefits; you are filing a claim for Unemployment Insurance, similar to filing a claim with an insurance company. You provide us information about yourself, your employer and how you came to lose your job and we decide if you meet the requirements to receive Unemployment Insurance benefits. You can apply for Unemployment Insurance either on our website at [unemployment.labor.ny.gov \(https://unemployment.labor.ny.gov/login\)](https://unemployment.labor.ny.gov), or toll-free by phone at (888) 209-8124 during the hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. The best way to file is online.

Please see the next question for a definition of "claim weekly benefits" or "certify for benefits."

#### 4. What does "claim weekly benefits" mean? Also, what does "certify for benefits" mean?

Both "claim weekly benefits" and "certify for benefits" refer to the way you tell the Department of Labor that you are still unemployed, ready and able to work, looking for a job, and in need of Unemployment Insurance benefits. You do this each week either online at <http://www.labor.ny.gov/> (<http://www.labor.ny.gov/>) or by calling our Tel-Service toll-free phone line at (888) 581-5812.

When you claim weekly benefits, you will be asked a series of questions. It is important to answer truthfully, as you are certifying to the Department of Labor that your answers are true and correct. That is why the process is also called "certifying for benefits."

#### 5. I need to travel out of the country. How do I claim benefits?

If you will be traveling for vacation or personal reasons, you cannot claim and receive benefits for the time you are gone. If you try to claim weekly benefits from outside the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands, your certification will be blocked and your benefits will be held. **Important:** Do not give someone else your PIN and have them certify for benefits for you. This can lead to severe penalties, including loss of benefits, criminal prosecution and prison.

Please contact us before you travel, even if you are traveling to look for work or for a job interview. You can send us a secure message or call the Telephone Claims Center toll-free at (888) 209-8124 during the hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. To send a secure message, sign in to your account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin \(http://www.labor.ny.gov/signin\)](http://www.labor.ny.gov/signin). Then, click on the envelope icon at the upper right of the My Online Services page. Be sure to tell us your travel dates and reason for traveling. By giving us this information before your trip, your benefits may be held while you are away, but will resume when you return.

#### 6. If a worker refuses to get vaccinated, will they be eligible for UI benefits?

Like all UI claims, eligibility will depend on the circumstances as each claim is unique and reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Workers in a healthcare facility, nursing home, or school who voluntarily quit or are terminated for refusing an employer-mandated vaccination will be ineligible for UI absent a valid request for accommodation because these are workplaces where an employer has a compelling interest in such a mandate, especially if they already require other immunizations. Similarly, a public employee who works in a public setting and is subject to a local government mandate to submit proof of vaccination or negative testing may be disqualified from the receipt of UI if they refuse to get vaccinated or tested. In contrast, a worker who refuses an employer's directive to get vaccinated may be eligible for UI in some cases, if that person's work has no public exposure and the worker has a compelling reason for refusing to comply with the directive.

## Benefits: Issues

#### 7. I was receiving benefits, but they stopped. I haven't missed any meetings. What's going on? Should I call the Telephone Claims Center?

Most likely the Department of Labor received information that may affect your eligibility for benefits. That information may have come from a former employer, a questionnaire you returned, or you may have tried to certify for benefits from outside the United States (please see question 4 above). When this happens, we are required to investigate. Your benefits will be held while we do that.

This investigation can take several weeks. There is nothing you can do except respond to any questionnaires, messages, or phone calls from us as quickly as possible. The Telephone Claims Center cannot authorize the payment of benefits while an investigation is going on. When the investigation is complete, you will either receive all benefits due or receive a Notice of Determination<sup>1</sup> from us in the mail.

If your benefits have been held for **less** than 10 days and you have heard nothing, do not call the Telephone Claims Center. The investigation is still underway. However, if it has been **more** than 10 days and you have not heard anything, you can send us a secure message from your online account. Sign in at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>), and click on the envelope icon on your My Online Services page. You can also call the Telephone Claims Center toll-free at (888) 209-8124. Call during the hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm.

***Important: While the investigation continues, please continue to claim weekly benefits as long as you are unemployed.***

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of the Unemployment Insurance program, a determination is the formal name for a decision the Department of Labor makes concerning your claim. It is important to read, understand and keep any notice you receive from us that has "determination" in its title.

**8. I tried to claim weekly benefits, but the online/phone system will not allow me to certify. I get a message that I have to call a certain phone number. What is going on?**

If you tried to claim weekly benefits, but the online or phone system doesn't allow you to certify, we most likely received information from a business saying that you worked while you certified that you were not working. When this happens, we must review and confirm that you are indeed unemployed.

If you are not working, or are working only part time, the quickest way to resolve this is to answer our secure online questionnaire and then certify for benefits on our website at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>).

If you do not have access to a computer, you may contact the Integrity Unit at (877) 280-4541 for assistance. Please be ready to tell us all dates you have worked (if any), as well as names, addresses, and telephone numbers of any employers you may have worked for (if any) since the beginning of your claim. You will also have to tell us the hours you worked and your weekly earnings.

**9. I received a questionnaire from the Department of Labor that doesn't seem to pertain to my situation. I think I made a mistake when I certified for benefits. What do I do?**

Return the questionnaire anyway. Write on the top or end of the questionnaire that you think a mistake was made and provide appropriate details. Then return it by secure message: go to [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>), and click on the envelope icon on the My Online Services page. Or, fax or mail to the fax number or address shown on the questionnaire. We will review and correct the mistake if appropriate. If we need more information, we will contact you by phone or secure message through your online account with us. You do not need to call the Telephone Claims Center; they will not be able to address this type of concern.

**10. What if I have a question about my benefits and I can't get through to the Telephone Claims Center?**

The COVID-19 emergency has placed an unprecedented demand on the Telephone Claims Center phone lines. Please try one of the options below.

First, check the [claimant handbook \(/unemployment/file-your-first-claim-benefits#claimant-handbook\)](#). Many questions received by our Telephone Claims Center are answered in the booklet. You can also check the FAQs -- Frequently Asked Questions -- below.

You can also send us a secure message. Sign into your online account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>), and click on the envelope icon on the My Online Services page.

## Managing your account: Payment histories and methods, questionnaires, and address/phone/name changes

**11. How do I check my payment history and/or payment status?**

For a complete record of your Unemployment Insurance benefit payments, sign in to your online account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>). On the My Online Services page, click on "Unemployment Services," then "View Payment History."

You can also call our Tel-Service line at (888) 581-5812. Follow the prompts to check your payment history and payment status.

**12. How do I change my benefit payment method?**

For security reasons, changes from a debit card to direct deposit or direct deposit to a debit card can **only** be done online. Sign in to your online account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>), and click on "Unemployment Services" on the My Online Services page. This brings you to the Unemployment Insurance Benefits Online page. Click on "Payment and Tax Withholding Options," and "View/Print 1099G" button. Follow the directions to change to direct deposit or cancel direct deposit and receive your benefits via a debit card. If you are changing to direct deposit, be sure you have a check handy, since you will need important numbers from the check. Be sure to enter your checking account information accurately and print a copy of the Direct Deposit Information Review page for your records. Allow five business days for changes to take effect.

For more information, please see Chapter 3 of the [claimant handbook \(/unemployment/file-your-first-claim-benefits#claimant-handbook\)](#), "Receiving your benefits: Your PIN, NY.gov ID, direct deposit and the direct payment card."

**13. I misplaced the questionnaire/form/letter the Department of Labor sent me. What should I do?**

You can request another copy of the questionnaire/form/letter via secure message through your online account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>). Sign in to your account; then click on the envelope icon on the My Online Services page. Or, you can call the Telephone Claims Center toll-free at (888) 209-8124. Call during the hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. **Important: Please request a replacement promptly.** Many items have due dates. These due dates are not adjusted, even if a replacement is issued.

**14. How do I change my address or phone number with the Department of Labor?**

The easiest way to update your address and/or telephone number is online. Sign in to your online account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>), and click on "Unemployment Services." This brings you to the Unemployment Insurance Benefits Online page. Click the "Claim Weekly Benefits" button, which brings you to the Benefit Payments page. Click the "Continue" button at the bottom of that page, which will bring you to the Claim Weekly Benefits page. Click the "Change Address/Telephone Number" button to change your address and/or phone number.

You can also call the Telephone Claims Center toll-free at (888)209-8124 and select the menu option for "PIN or Address Changes" to change your address or phone number. Call during the hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm.

You also must call KeyBank Customer Service at (866) 295-2955 to update your contact information (if you receive benefits via a direct payment card) or your bank (if you use direct deposit).

**15. What should I do if my name changes?**

You must send us a letter with legal documentation (such as a copy of a marriage certificate, certified record of divorce, certified court order or a valid, unexpired United States passport issued in your current name) that verifies the name change and mail it to:

New York State Department of Labor  
P.O. Box 15130  
Albany, NY 12212-5130

You can also send a name change request via secure message through your online account. Sign in at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>). On the My Online Services page, click on the envelope icon to send us a secure message. Attach a pdf of your legal documentation to your request.

## If you disagree with our determination: Requesting a Hearing

### 16. I received a decision ("determination") in the mail from the Department of Labor that I disagree with. What can I do?

If you disagree with any determination that denies you benefits or affects the amount of benefits you can receive, you have the right to request a hearing. The hearing will be held before an impartial Administrative Law Judge.

You can request a hearing through your online account at [www.labor.ny.gov/signin](https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin) (<https://www.labor.ny.gov/signin>). Sign in to your account and click on the envelope icon on the My Online Services page. Then, from the drop-down choices:

- Select "Hearings and Appeals" as the first subject line. Then:
- Select "I want to request a hearing" as the second subject line.

If you do not have an online account with us, please see Chapter 3 of the [claimant handbook: \(/unemployment/file-your-first-claim-benefits#claimant-handbook\)](#) "Receiving your benefits: your PIN, NY.gov ID, direct deposit and the direct payment card" for instructions on how to set one up.

You may also make your request in writing, sign it and mail it to:

NYS Department of Labor  
PO Box 15131  
Albany, NY 12212-5131

***\*Important: Your online or mail request must be made or postmarked no later than 30 days from the date of the determination notice that you disagree with. If your request is after 30 days have passed, you must state why your request is late. Include your full name, the last four digits of your Social Security number, the mailing date of the determination, and the reason(s) you disagree with our decision in your request.***

For more information about the hearing and appeal process, please see Chapter 10 of the [claimant handbook: \(/unemployment/file-your-first-claim-benefits#claimant-handbook\)](#), "Hearing and Appeal Process." The video "Preparing for your UI Hearing" may also be helpful. To view it, go to the [Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board website \(https://uiappeals.ny.gov/\)](#), and select "Hearing Preparation Video" from the menu. Also, check our [Frequently Asked Questions about hearings \(/hearing-process\)](#).

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[Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board](#)

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[Paid Family Leave](#)  
[Regional Economic Development Councils](#)  
[Ride Safe NY](#)  
[Shared Work](#)  
[Twitter en español](#)

#### RESOURCES

[Accessibility Policy](#)  
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#### LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

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