

# Unemployment can help if virus affects your job

**Jessie Balmert**  
Cincinnati Enquirer  
USA TODAY NETWORK

If you're a bartender, server, retail worker or someone else affected by closures caused by the coronavirus, you can apply for unemployment assistance in Ohio.

Gov. Mike DeWine announced Sunday that the state would ease some restrictions on applying for unemployment compensation because of his decision to close restaurants and bars (except for drive-through, carryout and delivery options).

On Sunday night, about 12,000 applied for unemployment benefits online. To put that in perspective, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services received 562 online applications the Sunday before that. Here's some information that might help those whose jobs were hurt by the virus:

## **Am I eligible for unemployment?**

You are eligible if you lost a job because of closures for coronavirus. You're also eligible if were required to be isolated or quarantined by a medical professional, local health authority or employer because of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. You do not need to actually be diagnosed with COVID-19 to receive benefits.

## **Am I eligible for benefits if I self-quarantine?**

In most cases, no. Those who are working from home are not eligible for unemployment. If an employer required workers to stay home, but did not offer an option to work remotely or online, the employees might be eligible for unemployment.

## **How much financial assistance will I receive?**

You are eligible for up to half of your average weekly wage over 20 weeks. Ohioans are eligible for a maximum of \$480 a week.

You must have made at least \$269 a week to be eligible.

## **Part of my wage comes from tips.**

## **How do I calculate my weekly wage for unemployment?**

Tips are wages and should be reported as earnings.

Employers report quarterly earnings, which include the tips reported by employees for each pay period.

Those employer reports are used to determine your average weekly wage.

If you think your employer did not report tips accurately or at all, you might need to file an affidavit with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to review.

## **I am working fewer hours because restaurants are providing carryout and drive-through only. Can I apply for benefits?**

If you are partially unemployed because of a lack of work, you might be eligible for benefits. However, you would probably receive less money.

Earnings over 20% of the weekly benefit amount will reduce the benefit payment dollar for dollar.

## **Do I need to try to find another job to receive unemployment compensation?**

No. This requirement was waived by the governor.

## **How long can I receive benefits?**

Individuals can qualify for up to 26 weeks of full benefits.

## **How do I apply for unemployment?**

You can apply online at <http://unemployment.ohio.gov> or via phone at 1-877-644-6562 or TTY 1-614-387-8408.

The phone lines are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, but state officials recommend filing online if you are able.

## **What documents will I need to apply for unemployment?**

You will need:

- Your Social Security number
- Your driver's license or state identification number
- Your name, address, telephone number and email address
- Name, address, telephone number and dates of employment for each place you worked in the past six weeks
- The reason you became unemployed
- Dependents' names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth
- If you are not a U.S. citizen, your alien registration number and expiration date
- Your regular occupation and job skills
- If you worked out-of-state or for the federal government, you might need a DD-214 member 4 copy (military service) or SF-8 or SF-50 form (for federal government employment).