



Frequently Asked Claimant Questions

Version 1

[Issued April 6, 2020]

As further federal guidance becomes available, this document will be updated to reflect the changes and updates to unemployment insurance as they relate to the administration of the program and required actions by claimants.

Contents

Department of Labor Contact Information	3
Things to Keep in Mind	4
Trying to Connect with Claimant Assistance	5
CARES Act (Federal Legislation)	7
Webform Issues	8
Commonly Asked Questions	9
Benefit Process	10
Additional Resources	12

Department of Labor Contact Information

Vermont Department of Labor Contact Numbers:

Establish an Initial Claim: 877-214-3330 or 888-807-7072

File a Weekly Claim (Automated): 800-983-2300

Claimant Assistance: 877-214-3332

Employer Services: 802-828-4344

Call Center Hours:

Monday – Friday 8:15 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday – 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Lines are closed on Sunday, but staff will be working to resolve issues on claims. If claimants receive a call from VDOL on Sunday, it is not fraud

Things to Keep in Mind

1. Just because an initial electronic claim was received by the department, it does not mean that claim has been processed yet. It can take up to 72 hours for an initial claim to be processed.
2. Not all claims are created equal. Fifty percent of all claims have some 'issue' attached to them that require special handling of the claim. This slows the process and can result in the Department following up with the claimant directly. Many times, issues are created because incorrect information is provided on the claims form.
3. Initial claims are filed during the week of separation from employment, but a claimant cannot file his or her weekly claim for that week until the following week. (Example: If I was laid off on Monday, April 6th and I file my initial claims form on Tuesday, April 7th, I cannot file my weekly claim for the week of April 6-10 until the week of April 12th).
4. The following information is specific to Unemployment Insurance claimants.

Trying to Connect with Claimant Assistance

I keep calling the claimant assistance line and can't get through. What do I do?

- **What is the purpose of the call? There are other methods that may help resolve claims issues instead of calling Claimant Assistance. This will help reduce call hold times, as well as unnecessary calls to the Claims Center.**
- Reopening a Claim
 - Claims can be reopened through the online portal; the claimant must know their PIN.
 - <https://uipublic01.labor.vermont.gov/Claimantportal/portal/login.aspx>
 - If the claimant can't remember their pin, they will need to contact claimant assistance at 877-214-3332 to have their PIN reset.
- Return to Work Date
 - Claimants do not need to go into the Claimant Portal to update their return to work date because work searches have been waived. This includes claimants who filed for benefits prior to COVID-19.
 - VDOL will notify claimants when the return to work date requirement is reinstated.
- Update/Add Email
 - If a claimant did not add their email to the initial application, we are unable to attach it after-the-fact. The only automated email communication the claimant will receive is a confirmation number after establishing the initial claim. In the event the Department needs to contact the claimant, the claimant will be contacted at the phone number provided on the initial claims form.
- Confirmation the claim was established
 - Claimants will receive an automated email response with a confirmation number after submitted an electronic initial claims form. In some cases, claimants may need to check their spam email box. After the claim is processed, they will also receive a monetary determination letter in the mail which will serve as a second form of confirmation. This conformation will likely be received in 3-4 days.
- Direct Deposit Changes
 - Changes to direct deposit can be made when the claimant goes into the online Claimant Portal to file their weekly claim. If the claimant chooses

to have a check mailed to them instead of direct deposit, their check will be mailed to the address they provided. If incorrect information was entered, the claimant will need to call claimant assistance at 877-214-3332

- After receiving the first payment by check, claimants can change their desired method of payment in the online Claimant Portal
- Changing Address/Phone Number
 - This can be done through the online Claimant Portal
- Can't File Weekly Claim
 - Weekly claims can be filed through the automated phone system at 800-983-2300 (preferred method) or on the website at <https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance>.
 - Weekly claims **must be filed each week for the week prior** to receive weekly benefits.
 - The initial claim must be established and processed in the system before a claimant may file a weekly claim. Claimants may file their weekly claim beginning each Sunday following their initial claim through 4:00p.m. on Friday.

*Most common issues that **do** require claimants to call the assistance line:*

- PIN reset.
- If claimant receives notification that there is an issue on the claim and the claimant must call to resolve the claim issue.
- If claimant misses their weekly filing deadline of Friday at 4:00p.m.

*Most common issues that **cannot be answered** by calling the claimant assistance line:*

- Guidance for self-employed
 - The Department is awaiting federal guidance to implement the program
 - Further information for Self-Employed individuals can be found at https://labor.vermont.gov/CARESact_Vermont/SelfEmployed.
- Questions about another individual's claims
 - Individuals cannot call on behalf of a claimant for information (i.e. spouse, family member, close friend, etc.). Information can **only** be given to the claimant.

CARES Act (Federal Legislation)

Extended Benefits (Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation)

My 26 weeks is up, and I still can't find work, is there additional UI for me?

- Extended Benefits are now available to claimants who have had their benefit year expire or have exhausted their 26 weeks of benefits.
- Claimants in this situation do not need to do anything additional, just continue to file weekly benefits as they have been.

Additional \$600 Benefit (Pandemic Unemployment Compensation)

How do I get the additional \$600 payment?

- Claimants will automatically receive the additional \$600 in their benefit check, there is no further action required by the claimant to receive the additional benefit beyond filing their weekly claim.
- This applies to claims beginning the week of **March 29, 2020** and is **NOT retroactive**.

Self-Employed Benefits (Pandemic Unemployment Insurance)

I'm self-employed, when will I be able to open a UI claim?

- The Department of Labor is currently implementing the self-employed benefit system. This will take time, but claims will be retroactive, so self-employed individuals will be paid for each week they are unemployed beginning on March 29, 2020.
 - If Self-Employed individuals file for Unemployment Insurance, they will be denied, as the current system will default to denying benefits (before the CARES Act, self-employed individuals were not eligible).
 - Individuals can sign up for email notification of when the self-employed system goes live at: labor.vermont.gov/CARESact_Vermont/SelfEmployed.
 - Self-Employed individuals can establish their initial claim, and while they may be denied under the existing UI provisions, their claim will be in the system and we can separate them out as "self-employed," so when the system goes live, we already have their claim on file.

I'm an independent contractor, can I apply?

- Yes. This program covers self-employed, independent contractors and workers with insufficient employment history to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits through Pandemic Unemployment Insurance.

Webform Issues

I got a 505 error after I submitted my claim, but before I got a confirmation number. Did my claim go through?

- If you received a confirmation email, your claim was received.
- The '505 Error' message is displayed when the site is overloaded with traffic. If this happens, simply try again in an hour or so. Refreshing the page may also help with this issue.

Someone is calling frustrated because they can't get in to file their weekly claim?

- Remind them to be patient, assure them that we will be able to fix the claim in the system so they will be paid eventually.
- Recommend that they try the automated 1-800-983-2300 (suggested method to file weekly claim)
- File weekly claim on the web: <https://labor.vermont.gov/unemployment-insurance>

It says 'SSN not found,' but I established my initial claim. What do I do?

- Most Claimants are experiencing this for one of three reasons:
 - The claim has not yet been processed. After establishing the claim, it can take up to 72 hours for the claim to be processed into the system.
 - The claimant has already filed for the week and is trying to log back in to check their status and they are receiving the error message because their claim has already been completed.
 - The claimant is attempting to file a claim too early. Claimants must file beginning on Sunday for the previous week. Claimants have from Sunday until Saturday to file the claim for the previous week.

My PIN isn't being recognized when I try to log into the online portal?

- If you are not able to get your PIN to be accepted, this is most likely due to a technical issue. You can call claimant assistance to get it reset at 877-214-3332.
- Other issues include:
 - The claimant has not yet set up a profile and established a PIN in the Claimant Portal.
 - The person's claim has an 'issue' attached to it that is needing to be resolved by the UI Division.

Commonly Asked Questions

My claim has been in the adjudication process since before COVID-19, what do I do?

- Adjudications are still taking place, and claimants will be notified when their claim has been adjudicated. If claimants call the claims center, they will not receive a determination. That determination will be mailed to them.

Does military separation pay affect Unemployment Insurance benefits?

- Military separation pay may be disqualifying if the remuneration is military wages in the claimant's base period.
 - Claimants are still encouraged to file, and eligibility can be determined going forward

Individuals that initiated their claim to find out that it did not go through because they already had a claim open. People don't understand what that means or how that is different.

- This means claimants can bypass establishing an initial claim, they will be re-opening an existing claim that has already been filed previously.
 - Claimants are encouraged to use the online Claimant Portal and enter their login information

My direct deposit hasn't gone through, why?

- Claimants may experience delay in payment due to the high volume of claims

How do I change my return to work date?

- You do not need to change your return to work date. All return to work dates have been waived until reinstated by the Commissioner of Labor

I forgot to report one of my employers when I established my claim, what do I do?

- Claimants do not need to do anything, the Department is able to review all past employers

What is the difference between voluntary furlough and being laid off? Am I eligible for benefits?

- If an individual works for an essential business and quits, they are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits
- If an individual quit due to a COVID-19 reason, they **may be** eligible. They can apply and an eligibility determination will be made

Benefit Process

I called and filed on the phone 800-983-2300 and did not get a confirmation number, is there a way I could find out if my claim went through?

- There is no confirmation number when you file your weekly claim via the automated system.

Can someone file before getting the handbook?

- Yes. The Department is no longer able to send out copies of the claimant handbook due to the high volume of claims.
 - The handbook is accessible on our website and claimants will need to certify they have read and understand their rights and responsibilities outlined in the handbook: <https://labor.vermont.gov/document/b-11-claimant-handbook-2019>
- Claimants also will receive the link to the handbook in the confirmation email they will receive, following their submission of the establishing a claim form.

When will I know that my initial claim has been processed?

- After initial claims are submitted, they are generally processed within two days. However, with the high volume of claims, this may be delayed. Claimants can expect to be able to begin filing their weekly claims the Sunday following their initial claim. If the claimant establishes their initial claim on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday they will not be able to file their weekly claim until Wednesday or Thursday, when the data is entered into the system.

My determination says 'zero,' but I know this is wrong. What do I do?

- The determination can report 'zero' for a variety of reasons:
 - The initial form was filled out incorrectly.
 - There are issues with wages and the Department is reaching out to the employer to get more information.
 - The claimant is ineligible for benefits based on a lack of wages in their base period.
 - The claimant is self-employed. The claimant will be eligible under the CARES Act, and the self-employed benefits system is currently be worked on.

The Unemployment Insurance Benefit Process for Claimants

Please note we are experiencing unprecedented numbers of initial claims. Any delays in processing on our end will not impact your eligibility or benefit amount.

1. You are laid off from your employer and need to file for Unemployment Insurance benefits. Choose one of the methods below to establish your claim
 1. Establish your initial claim online: www.labor.vermont.gov
 2. Establish your claim by calling: 1-877-214-3330 or 1-888-807-7072
2. After establishing your initial claim, you will receive a confirmation number in an email that your claim has been filed. The email contains the information listed below in #3 & #4 regarding next steps.
3. Your claim will be processed into the system. After processing, your monetary eligibility determination will be mailed to you via USPS. You should receive this within 3 to 4 days after processing. This monetary determination letter will serve as your only confirmation notification that your claim has been processed.
 - a. You will be required to certify that you have read your “Rights and Responsibilities” prior to filing your first weekly claim. This information can be found in the Department’s claimant handbook which can be accessed here https://labor.vermont.gov/sites/labor/files/doc_library/B-11Claimant%20handbook%202019.pdf
 - b. The additional \$600 benefit, from the federal CARES Act, will not be included in your monetary determination letter but will be added to your weekly payment for claims beginning the week of March 29, 2020. You do not need to do anything to receive the additional federal benefit other than continuing to file your weekly claims.
4. Once your claim is processed, you can begin filing for unemployment insurance benefits. You must file your weekly claim each week you wish to receive benefits. When you file, remember you are filing for the previous week. You may file each weekly claim beginning each Sunday at midnight through each Friday at 4:00 p.m. Please note, if you establish your **initial** claim on a given Friday, you cannot file for your first weekly benefit until the following Wednesday, as opposed to the usual Sunday. File for your weekly benefits using one of the methods below:
 1. Calling the automated weekly claims line: 800-983-2300
 2. Logging on to the online portal:
<https://uipublic01.labor.vermont.gov/Claimantportal/portal/login.aspx>
5. Continue filing for your weekly benefit for subsequent weeks as needed

Additional Resources

I have no money for food or rent or gas, what other help can I get and from whom?

- Vermont 211 (dial 211 on phone)
 - Free, confidential service for Vermonters to give information and resources
- Economic Services Department
 - Oversees various programs including 3SquaresVT, fuel assistance, energy assistance, etc.
 - Benefit Service Center: 800-479-6151
 - <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits>

The Community Action Agencies are starting to receive the UI calls asking for assistance on how to file UI?

- Direct individuals to our website for additional information: www.labor.vermont.gov

Where can I get health insurance coverage if I used to get it through my job and haven't elected or don't have access to continuing coverage?

- You may be eligible for Medicaid or financial assistance to pay for private health insurance. To apply, visit the Vermont Health Connect homepage at: <https://portal.healthconnect.vermont.gov> or call the customer service center at: 855-899-9600. Please note: Calling the customer service center will have longer than usual hold times.