

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CHANGES TO UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS 1/11/10

How are changes made to unemployment compensation benefits?

Unemployment compensation benefits are established by federal law. There have been several federal changes to benefits in the past 18 months. Most of these changes are intended to provide extended support for claimants during this economic downturn.

WorkForce West Virginia has worked very hard to implement the federal changes so that we are able to provide prompt service to our claimants and report all expenditures accurately as required by federal mandates.

There have been news reports that 1,400 West Virginians will have their benefits delayed. Will my unemployment compensation benefits be affected?

This delay applies to a very small percentage of the approximately 40,000 West Virginians currently receiving unemployment compensation, and only to claimants who have already exhausted 79 weeks of benefits. Once the programming to process additional payments for those recipients is completed, eligible claimants will be notified of the additional weeks of benefits available to them and will be paid retroactively to the week in which they exhausted the last available benefits.

When will the delayed payments be provided?

WorkForce West Virginia expects the programming to implement the additional benefits will be completed in the next few weeks. After programming is implemented, claimants will be notified of their availability for additional weeks of benefits.

How can I keep up with changes in unemployment compensation?

WorkForce West Virginia is required by law to notify recipients of changes in their benefits. You can get more information on federal changes to unemployment compensation on the U. S. Department of Labor's Web site at www.dol.gov. Information about WorkForce West Virginia is available online at www.workforcewv.org.

INFORMATION ON EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION AND EXTENDED BENEFITS

1/11/10

- In July 2008, Congress passed legislation to provide an additional 13 weeks of unemployment compensation benefits to claimants who had exhausted their regular state unemployment compensation benefits of 26 weeks. The additional 13 weeks were titled Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC08). The benefits were federally funded.
- In November 2008, Congress expanded the EUC08 program by adding an additional seven weeks of benefits for claimants who had exhausted their original 13 weeks of benefits under the EUC08 program for a total of 20 weeks which were then titled EUC08 – Tier 1.
- Also in November 2008, Congress passed legislation to provide an additional 13 weeks of benefits to claimants who had exhausted all entitlement to EUC08 – Tier 1 benefits in states which had an insured unemployment rate in excess of 4 percent or a total unemployment rate in excess of 6 percent. The additional 13 weeks of benefits were entitled EUC08 – Tier 2. West Virginia activated Tier 2 benefits in April 2009 when the insured unemployment rate exceeded 4 percent. This brought the total of EUC08 benefit weeks available to 33.
- Under provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) passed in February 2009, states could qualify for 100 percent federal funding for 20 weeks of extended benefits if the state had a provision in their state law to trigger extended benefits based on their total unemployment rate. Since West Virginia law did not contain such a provision, the Legislature met during a special session in August 2009 and passed the necessary legislation to qualify the state to provide the additional 20 weeks of extended benefits. These benefits were made available to claimants who had exhausted their regular benefits (26 weeks) and their available EUC08 benefits (33 weeks). West Virginia began paying the extended benefits in July 2009 to qualifying claimants.
- On Nov. 7, 2009 President Obama signed into law an extension to the EUC08 program. The extension provided for one additional week of benefits under EUC08 – Tier 2; an extension of an additional 13 weeks of benefits entitled EUC08 – Tier 3, if the total unemployment rate in the state was in excess of six percent; and an additional six weeks of benefits entitled EUC08 – Tier 4, if the total unemployment rate in the state would be in excess of 8.5 percent. However, under this legislation, the ending date of the EUC08 program was not changed and remained at Dec. 31, 2009.

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INFORMATION ON EUC AND EXTENDED BENEFITS CONTINUED

1/11/10

- On Dec. 19, 2009, Congress approved an extension of the EUC08 program and the federally funded extended benefits program until Feb. 28, 2010.
- All of these changes have created numerous challenges for our IT staff as they try to apply the provisions of these congressional actions to our existing unemployment compensation system. The changes required to be made to our system are necessary not only to enable us to pay our claimants but to account for and report all expenditures accurately as required by federal mandates.
- To better service our clients, West Virginia made the decision to begin paying extended benefits to claimants who have exhausted their EUC08-Tier 1 and 2 benefits so there would be no interruptions to their payments while the new tiers of the EUC08 program were being implemented.
- Claimants who are not currently receiving benefits while the necessary programming is being completed for the expansion of the EUC08 program are those who have received and exhausted 26 weeks of regular unemployment compensation, 33 weeks of EUC08- Tiers 1 and 2, and 20 weeks of federally funded extended benefits or, in sum, those who have exhausted 79 weeks of benefits. Once the programming is completed, the eligible claimants will be notified of the additional weeks of benefits available to them and will be paid retroactively to the week in which they exhausted the last available benefits.
- The programming necessary to implement the additional week of EUC08 – Tier 2, the additional 13 weeks of EUC08 – Tier 3 and 6 weeks of EUC08 – Tier 4 is projected to be completed in the next few weeks. After programming is implemented, claimants will be notified of their availability for additional weeks of benefits.

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