PRESS RELEASES

State extends eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits to workers affected by COVID-19

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Eligible employees include those with reduced hours or subject to temporary layoffs

SANTA FE – The state of New Mexico this week began assisting workers whose hours are reduced or who are laid off because of the COVID-19 public health emergency with applications for unemployment insurance benefits. Under a previously announced emergency provision to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) rules, **the work search requirement for affected workers has been waived for up to four weeks** by the Department of Workforce Solutions. This allows employees at businesses that close temporarily to access benefits without having to search for a new position while they wait for their employers to restart operations.

The public health emergency has resulted in individuals being dismissed or suspended from work through no fault of their own. Many businesses have seen rapid declines in customer traffic and sales, as customers heed federal and state public health authorities' guidance to stay home. Businesses that are forced to temporarily close, permanently close, or significantly reduce operations are encouraged to **inform affected employees of their eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits.**

"We want to give businesses every opportunity to retain employees during this time of significant economic disruption," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "These new

unemployment insurance guidelines will allow employers to simultaneously reduce payroll expenses, avoid permanent layoffs, and ensure employees continue receiving income."

There are two ways to file an initial claim:

- **Online** by going to the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System at **www.jobs.state.nm.us**. Individuals can then access the UI Tax & Claims System. The online system is available to take initial claims and weekly certifications 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **By phone** at **1-877-664-6984**. The UI Operations Center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

A claimant may be eligible for benefits if their hours are reduced significantly even if the claimant was not a full-time employee prior to the reduction. This is an exception to the regular UI partial benefits provisions and will only apply to claimants affected by COVID-19 during the time the state is under a state of emergency.

A claimant that is directed to self-isolate or is caring for an immediate family member that is self-isolated will be eligible for these provisions, even if they are eventually not diagnosed with COVID-19.

When applying for benefits, claimants must file a weekly certification for each week they are applying. The first eligible week of any new claim is a "waiting week." Claimants will not receive benefits for this week, and it is not included in their weeks of payment.

If a claimant is receiving sick leave, annual leave, personal time off, or administrative leave, they may not be eligible for unemployment benefits.

For more information on Unemployment Insurance please refer to the **UI fact sheet** or watch an explanatory video **here**.

For more general information on the state's response to COVID-19 and accommodating workers affected by the fallout, visit **www.newmexico.gov**.

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