

# Applying for Benefits Online for COVID-19 Claims Only

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## You Can Apply Online 24 Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week

Most people can apply for benefits and manage their unemployment claims online through Unemployment Benefits Services at [ui.texasworkforce.org](https://ui.texasworkforce.org).

However, if you worked in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, or Puerto Rico in the past 18 months, you must call the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Tele-Center at **800-939-6631** instead. Our Tele-Center is open from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. daily.

Having difficulty applying online or by telephone because of the high volume of users? You will not lose benefits because you could not file your claim immediately. We will backdate your claim to the week you became unemployed because of the pandemic. We will do this automatically. You do not need to take any action.

When you apply for benefits, you will need your:

- Social Security number (SSN) — Entering the wrong SSN is a common mistake. Please doublecheck your SSN before submitting your application.
- Last employer's business name, address, and phone number.
- First and last dates (month, day, and year) you worked for your last employer.
- If you worked during the week you apply (including Sunday), you will need the number of hours you worked and your pay rate.

- Military employment (service) start/end dates and a copy of your DD Form 214(s)(member copy 4 through 8), if you served in the military during the past 18 months.
- Alien Registration number (if not a U.S. citizen or national).

### **Important**

Your information **will not be saved** if you log off before you submit and receive a confirmation number.

Make sure you:

- Read all instructions carefully.
- Complete each screen from top to bottom.
- Red asterisks\* identify required information. You must answer these questions.
- The system will log you out if you have not selected any action button such as **Next**, **Previous**, or **Submit** within 30 minutes. *Your information will not be saved.* If this happens, you must log back on and re-enter your information on your application.
- Your application is **not complete** until you submit it and receive a confirmation number.

### **Truth in Filing**

All information you give must be true and complete. There are penalties for withholding information or giving false information, including penalties for perjury regarding citizenship or immigration status. The information you submit will create a record for you in our system.

## **Unemployment Benefit Services**

To apply for unemployment insurance (UI) online, log on to **Unemployment Benefits Services** (UBS) at [ui.texasworkforce.org](https://ui.texasworkforce.org).

Select the link that says, "Log on with your existing TWC User ID or create a new User ID."

You will need a user ID and password to apply for benefits online. For help with creating, retrieving, or resetting a user ID see our tutorial at <https://twc.texas.gov/files/jobseekers/create-user-id-password-twc.pdf>.

**Need more help?** If you are a returning claimant and cannot remember your user ID and password, call TWC's Tele-Center at **800-939-6631**.

## Apply for Benefits: Initial Questions

### Important

You must enter your Social Security number (SSN) to apply for benefits. Enter your SSN with or without dashes. Make sure you entered it correctly.

You will be asked to answer some initial questions about yourself. Your answers to these questions determine whether you can apply for benefits using the Internet, or if you must call the TWC Tele-Center at **800-939-6631**.

## Are you unemployed because of COVID-19?

Under the Affected by the Disaster section, you will see two options:

- Coronavirus, (COVID-19)
- Not Applicable

If you are unemployed because of COVID-19, select **Coronavirus, (COVID-19)** after the question, "Are you out of work as a direct result of a disaster?"

## Apply for Benefits: Personal Information

In this part of the application, you must complete these sections:

- Personal Information
- Dates Worked for Last Employer
- Identification Review
- Contact Information
- Statistical Information
- Citizenship Information
- Labor Union Information
- Pension Information
- Additional Information
- Correspondence
- Withholding Option

### Tax Withholding Option

#### Unemployment Benefits Are Taxable Income

You must report all the unemployment benefits you receive on your federal tax return.

You can ask TWC to withhold federal income taxes from your benefits and pay them to the IRS for you. The choice is up to you. TWC will not withhold benefits unless you choose the **Withholding Option**.

You will find the Withholding Option at the end of the Personal Information section. To ask TWC to withhold federal income taxes from your benefits, check the box that says, "I authorize TWC to withhold federal income tax from my unemployment benefits at the rate of 10 percent of the gross amount for each benefit week."

## **Apply for Benefits: Last Employer**

Complete these sections:

- Last Employer Identification
- Last Employer Location

Information about your employer or your business may already be in our system (such as a street address). If it is not, you may need to enter your employment information manually.

## **Apply for Benefits: Last Employer Details**

Complete these sections:

- Last Employer Information
- Job Information
- Dates Worked for Last Employer
- Salary and Work Hours — If the pay rate defaults to \$7.25 an hour and you cannot change it, you should continue with the claim process. It will not affect your eligibility.
- Reason No Longer Working

## **Apply for Benefits: Continuing Unemployment Service Information**

### **Personal Identification Number (PIN)**

You must create a four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN). It is your secret passcode. Keep a record of this number. You need it to access all TWC Tele-Serv services and some TWC Internet services.

A PIN has the same legal authority as your signature.

## Important

Never give your PIN to anyone, not even a TWC employee or family member

## Apply for Benefits: Payment Option

There are two ways to receive unemployment benefits:

- Debit card
- Direct deposit to your United States bank or credit union account

**New Claimants.** For *new* claimants, the default payment method is TWC's debit card. If you opt to receive your benefit payments by debit card, TWC will deposit your payments to your debit card every two weeks as long as you are eligible. For more information, see **Receiving Benefit Payments by Debit Card** at <https://twc.texas.gov/receiving-benefit-payments-debit-card>.

To change your payment method to direct deposit, select **No** on the Payment Option page, and you will be directed to the Change Payment Option screen. For more information, see **Receiving Benefit Payments by Direct Deposit** at <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/receiving-benefit-payments-direct-deposit>

**Returning Claimants.** For *returning* claimants, the Payment Option screen shows the payment method we have on file for you. Verify that the bank information for direct deposit is still valid. To change your payment method or update your bank information, select **Yes** and complete the Change Payment Option screen.

## Verify Your Payment Method

Returning claimants must verify their payment method, and change it if necessary, or they may have difficulty receiving their benefit payments.

## Apply for Benefits: Change Payment Option

You will only see this screen if you indicated you need to change your payment option. To change your payment option to direct deposit, you must provide:

- The nine-digit routing number for your United States bank or credit union
- Your account number and account type (checking or savings) as printed on a check, not a deposit slip.

**Note:** If you are not sure about your routing and account numbers, contact your bank or credit union before you try to sign up for direct deposit.

## Sign up for Electronic Correspondence

When you apply for benefits online, you are automatically enrolled for Electronic Correspondence (EC). You will receive most, but not all, of your unemployment benefits correspondence in a secure, online inbox, including:

- Time-sensitive determinations
- Claim information
- Instructional materials

**Warning!** Check your U.S. Postal Service mailbox regularly. Not all documents are sent electronically.

We send these documents **only** by regular mail:

- Appeals correspondence
- Information about applying for benefits from special programs, such as Trade Adjustment Assistance

We send emails to notify you when we send correspondence to your online inbox. To learn more, see our Electronic Correspondence tutorial at <https://twc.texas.gov/files/jobseekers/electronic-correspondence-claimants-twc.pdf>.

## **Apply for Benefits: Additional Questions related to COVID-19**

You will answer additional questions if you indicated that you were impacted by COVID-19, or your job separation was a result of COVID-19.

You should select the statement that best describes your situation due to COVID-19:

- My place of employment closed
- Unable to reach my place of employment because of a quarantine or shelter-in-place order
- Ordered by medical provider or health official to self-quarantine
- Diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
- Unable to begin or reach my new job due to the closure or shelter-in-place order
- Quit my job due to COVID-19
- Family member was diagnosed with COVID-19
- Providing care to family or member of my household who was diagnosed with COVID-19
- Unable to work due to closure of my child's school or childcare facility
- Became breadwinner or major support of household due to death of the head of household



- None of the above.

You will also be asked:

- Are you currently receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave?
- Are you currently working from home (telework) with pay?
- Are you considered an essential worker or is your job considered essential work for the COVID-19 public health emergency?

## Apply for Benefits: Review and Submit

The Review and Submit section:

- Shows all the answers and information you entered
- Allows you to make changes by selecting the **Edit Information** link at the end of each section

### Important

You cannot change your application using the Internet after you have submitted it.

Review your application carefully. Make sure all your answers are correct *before* you select **Submit**. In particular, you should verify:

- Your SSN
- The tax withholding option you selected
- The payment option you selected, including all account numbers
- Your email address

You must select **Submit** when you have finished reviewing your answers or your claim will not be processed. **Your application is not complete until you submit it and receive a confirmation number.**

## Apply for Benefits: Claim Confirmation

After you submit your application, the program will display your Claim Confirmation. Print the confirmation page or write down your confirmation number.

You cannot make changes online after you have submitted your application. However, if you need to change any information on your application, call the Tele-Center the next business day at **800-939-6631** to discuss your situation.

When you have finished reviewing the Claim Confirmation page, select **Next** to go to the Next Steps, Requirements, and Instructions section. You must complete the Next Steps section, or you may delay or lose your benefits.

## Apply for Benefits: Next Steps, Requirements, and Instructions

Read the Next Steps, Requirements, and Instructions section carefully to understand your continuing eligibility requirements. For example, to remain eligible you must:

- Request payment every 2 weeks. The day you should request payment is listed on the **Instructions: Requesting Benefit Payments** document you received. You must report all earnings and hours worked for each week you request benefit payment.
- Respond to any requests from TWC or a Workforce Solutions office.
- Be physically and mentally able to work, if no longer impacted by COVID-19.
- Be able and available for full-time work, if no longer impacted by COVID-19.
- Apply for and accept suitable full-time work, if no longer impacted by COVID-19.

Work search is currently exempt but you can still register for work online at [WorkInTexas.com](http://WorkInTexas.com) or in the state where you live.

When work search is reinstated you must search for work and document your work search activities. TWC will send you a letter telling you how many work search activities you must complete each week.

## **Send TWC Your 2019 IRS Income Tax Return IF ...**

If you are an independent contractor, self-employed, or a 1099 worker, you must send TWC your completed 2019 Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Income Tax Return AND Schedule C, F, or SE. You can send this information any time before December 26, 2020, by:

- **Fax: 512-936-3250**
- **Mail:** Texas Workforce Commission, P.O. Box 149137, Austin, TX 78714
- **Email:** San Antonio UI Mail: [sanantonio.uimail@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:sanantonio.uimail@twc.state.tx.us)

## **Waiting Week**

Regular unemployment benefit claimants will not receive payment for their first payable week, the “waiting week,” until they have been paid two times their weekly benefit amount and have returned to full-time work or exhausted their benefits.

TWC has waived the waiting week requirement for claimants affected by COVID-19.

## **Request Payment**

Request benefit payment every two weeks on your designated filing day either online or by phone. Do not wait for TWC to determine your eligibility.

Because we are experiencing such an exceptionally high volume of customers attempting to request payment, we need you to make your payment request on your designated filing day, which is listed on your filing instructions. Assigned filing days are Sunday through Wednesday. If you miss your designated filing day in any given week, you can submit your payment request on our open filing days, which are Thursday through Saturday.

To request payment:

- Log on to Unemployment Benefits Services at <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/unemployment-benefits-services> and select Request a Payment.
- Call Tele-Serv at **800-558-8321** from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time daily and select Option 1.

For more information, see:

- Request Benefit Payments at <https://twc.texas.gov/jobseekers/request-benefit-payments>
- Our tutorial, **How to Request Benefit Payments Online**, at <https://twc.texas.gov/files/jobseekers/request-benefit-payments-twc.pdf>

## You Completed Your Application — Now What?

It takes approximately four weeks from the date you apply for benefits to know if you are eligible. Make sure to read all the materials we send you and respond promptly to any contact requests.

One of the documents we will send you is the **Statement of Wages and Potential Benefit Amounts**. It shows the wages your employers reported paying you, and whether you had enough wages to qualify for benefits. Check the reported wages carefully. Sometimes employers report wages under the wrong SSN. If you disagree with the reported

wages, or the statement has wages that are not yours, you can request a wage investigation by calling our Tele-Center at **800-939-6631**.

Please do not call our Tele-Center to check the status of your claim. You can check your claim status online at [Unemployment Benefits Services](#) or call Tele-Serv at **800-558-8321** and select option 2.

If you qualify, TWC will pay you on a TWC debit card unless you signed up for direct deposit into your personal checking or savings account at any bank or credit union chartered in the United States.

To change your payment option after you have completed your online application:

- Log on to [ui.texasworkforce.org](http://ui.texasworkforce.org)
- Select Payment Option, then Change Payment Option

## Still Need Help?

Call the TWC Tele-Center at **800-939-6631** to speak with one of our customer service representatives. We have expanded our Tele-Center operating hours to 7 a.m.-7 p.m. every day but are still experiencing high call volume. Please be patient and keep trying!