

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Reemployment Assistance Process Guide



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# Frequently Asked Questions

## Reemployment Assistance Process Guide

### General Questions

**Q: What is Reemployment Assistance?**

A: Reemployment assistance is just Florida's way of saying unemployment compensation.

**Q: My employer has temporarily closed their business due to COVID-19. The date I was supposed to return to work is within 8 weeks from the date I was laid off. How do I request Reemployment Assistance benefits?**

A: You may be eligible for Reemployment Assistance benefits due to a temporary layoff. File your application online at [FloridaJobs.org](https://FloridaJobs.org).

**Q: What if my layoff is permanent and my employer has closed their business due to COVID19?**

A: You may be eligible for Reemployment Assistance benefits if your employer has no work available, the business closed, your position was eliminated due to budget cuts, or if you have not been given a return date.

**Q: My employer has shut down operations temporarily because an employee is sick, and we have been asked to isolate or quarantine as a result of COVID-19. Am I eligible for Reemployment Assistance benefits?**

A: If your employer shuts down operations and no work is available, you may be eligible for Reemployment Assistance benefits. You can file an application online at [FloridaJobs.org](https://FloridaJobs.org) to determine if you are eligible to receive benefits.

**Q: Do I have to look for other work if my employer temporarily closes because of COVID-19?**

A: You do not have to look for work if you have a return to work date within eight weeks of your layoff date.

**Q: My employer just called me back to work. How do I end my benefits?**

A: If you currently receive Reemployment Assistance benefits and no longer wish to receive benefits, do not request benefit payments, and payments on your account will stop.

**Q: I'm going back to work but will be working reduced hours. Will I lose my benefits?**

A: Any wages you earn may affect your eligibility to receive benefits or may reduce your weekly benefit amount. If you earn more than your weekly state benefit amount, you will not be eligible for benefits. You must continue to request benefit payments in CONNECT and report any wages you earn. Remember, you must report wages for the week in which you earned them, not the week in which you are paid.

**Q: How will I know if I am eligible or ineligible?**

A: If you are eligible, you will receive a written determination stating your eligibility. If you are not eligible, the written determination will explain the reason your claim was denied and will explain your appeal rights. If you disagree with a determination that denies benefits, you may request an appeal hearing.

**Q: Will I receive confirmation after my application is submitted and received?**

A: After your Reemployment Assistance application has been processed, you will be notified of your eligibility.

- If you submitted a paper application: You will receive a temporary PIN by email or mail after your application has been processed so you can access your account and see the status of your claim.
- If you submitted an online application through FloridaJobs.org: You will receive a temporary PIN by email or mail after your application has been processed so you can access your account and see the status of your claim.
- If you submitted an online application through CONNECT: You will receive confirmation in the CONNECT system that your application has been submitted. Once your application has been processed and your eligibility has been determined, you may receive benefits. You have the option to appeal your determination if it negatively impacts you.

**Q: I made a mistake on my claim. How do I edit?**

A: Unfortunately, once an application is submitted, you are not able to make changes yourself. You will need to contact DEO at 833-352-7759 for assistance.

**Q: I am missing a piece of information; should I still file?**

A: Yes. DEO's goal is to assist you in receiving the benefits for which you may be eligible. Missing information may create additional delays in determining your eligibility. However, if missing information is unavoidable, your claim may still be processed.

**Q: What do I do once I complete my application?**

A: You are required to complete a few additional items after completing your application.

- Request Benefit Payment: You are scheduled to return to the CONNECT system every two weeks to request your benefits. Completing this process submits your request for payment during your weeks of unemployment, even when your claim is pending for review. It is important that you request your benefits within 7 days of your scheduled date regardless of your claim status.
- Workforce Registration: You are required to register with Employ Florida. When creating (or updating) your Employ Florida profile, you must provide a valid e-mail address, upload or create a current resume, and complete background history on your profile.
- Work Search: Generally, you are required to provide five work search contacts for every week of benefits you request from DEO.
- Any incomplete fact-findings: During the initial processing of your claim, many reviews of your eligibility for benefits occur. You will be mailed correspondence or sent an email reminder to check your Reemployment Assistance inbox based on your selected contact method. Please complete any requests for information as soon as possible to avoid any delays in determining your eligibility. Any correspondence received via mail can be completed online. You may also fax completed forms to 1-877-934-1504.
- Watch for your notice of monetary determination: The monetary determination notice will provide details on the amount of benefits you can receive per week (weekly benefit amount), the total balance your claim (maximum benefit amount), as well as the history of wages that was established your claim.
- Appointment with your local CareerSource office: You may be selected and scheduled for a mandatory appointment with your local CareerSource office. It will provide one-on-one services to help create a reemployment plan. Your appointment notice will be mailed to you, so please ensure your

address in both CONNECT and Employ Florida are up-to-date. Failure to participate in your scheduled appointment will result in a review of your eligibility and potentially delay or deny your benefits.

**Q: I have filed a Reemployment Assistance claim previously (more than 12 months ago); do I need to file another claim?**

A: Yes, you will need to file another Reemployment Assistance claim. However, you will need to file your claim in the CONNECT system because you have an account that has been previously created.

**Q: I have already filed within the last year; do I need to file another claim?**

A: If your previous claim has a remaining balance and has not expired, you need to file a “Reopen” request after logging into your CONNECT account. This is a shortened application to update your work history since your original application was filed. Once completed, any recent employment will be reviewed, and weeks of benefits will be scheduled for you to claim.

**Q: What if my employer fails to respond?**

A: If your employer fails to respond to a request for information by their deadline, a determination will be made with the available information provided in your application.

**Q: Why are you asking about my previous employer? I have worked somewhere else, and I am not filing against them.**

A: All employers during the last 18 months are reviewed and contacted regarding your employment.

**Q: What is considered being “able and available” for work?**

A: Being able to seek and accept full-time work as well as having the availability to accept a full-time schedule. Below are some related examples that could impact your eligibility:

- Any illness or injury during the majority of a week (including hospital stays).
- Travel without the intent of seeking work and relocating.
- A lack of childcare that interrupts your ability to find work.
- Your school schedule conflicts with your ability to work full-time.

**Q: Are Reemployment Assistance benefits taxed?**

A: Yes, benefits are taxable income. Although the state of Florida does not tax personal income, the federal government does. You can ask DEO to withhold 10% of your weekly benefits due to the IRS. This can be handled after logging into your claim under "View and Maintain Account Information" and selecting "Payment Method and Tax Withholding Options."

**Q: How do I check the status of my application?**

A: After your Reemployment Assistance application has been processed, you will be notified of your eligibility. See below for the communication methods for each application.

- If you submitted a paper application: You will receive a temporary PIN by email or mail after your application has been processed so you can access your account and see the status of your claim.
- If you submitted an online application through FloridaJobs.org: You will receive a temporary PIN by email or mail after your application has been processed so you can access your account and see the status of your claim.
- If you submitted an online application through CONNECT: You will receive confirmation in the CONNECT system that your application has been submitted. Once your application has been processed and your eligibility has been determined, you may receive benefits. You have the option to appeal your determination if it negatively impacts you.

**Q: Why is my claim still pending?**

A: If your status says pending, the department is still reviewing and processing your application. You do not need to take any action on your account at this time.

**Q: When does a claim end?**

A: The claim expires after 365 days. Payments end when the balance runs out or the end date passes. Your monetary determination will notify you of your maximum balance available as well as the end date of your claim. The maximum number of weeks of assistance available is 12 weeks.

**Q: I have returned to work. How do I close/cancel my claim?**

A: You may continue to request benefit weeks up to the week when you started working. When you request the week overlapping with your job, please indicate that you have worked and earned money during the week. If you expect to work

full-time and/or earn over \$275 in gross earnings during the week of overlap, you do not need to request benefits for that week.

## **CONNECT**

### **Q: What is CONNECT?**

A: CONNECT is Florida's Reemployment Assistance claims system. CONNECT offers access to apply, file, manage, and review your claim details.

### **Q: Are there certain requirements or criteria for creating my PIN?**

A: Yes, please make sure your PIN meets the following criteria:

- Your PIN must be four digits.
- Your PIN can only be numbers. Letters and symbols are not allowed.
- Your PIN cannot be the numbers 1111, 9999, 0000, or 1234.
- Your PIN cannot be the last 4 digits of your social security number.

### **Q: Are there any restrictions for the security question answers?**

A: Yes, please make sure your security question answers meet the following criteria:

- Your answers must use letters and numbers.
- Special characters are not allowed. (i.e.: \$%#@)
- Your answers must be between 5 and 35 characters in length.

### **Q: Will I be paid for my waiting week? Do I have to serve a waiting week each time I reactivate my claim?**

A: You are not paid for the waiting week. You serve only one waiting week per benefit claim year.

### **Q: What information is needed for a valid work search contact?**

A: You are required to provide the following details for each job contact:

- Date of contact.
- Method of contact (in person, online, fax, phone, etc.)
- Business name including telephone number and complete address, website URL or an e-mail.
- Results of your search.
- Type of work sought.

**Q: How many work search contacts do I need to provide to the department per benefit week?**

A: You are required to provide five work search contacts per week. The following are exceptions and exemptions:

- If you reside in a low-population county, you are required to submit three contacts weekly.
- If you are a union member, you are required to remain in good standing and maintain regular contact with your union.
- If you are on a temporary layoff and will return to the same employer within 8 weeks, you are exempt from work search requirements.
- If you are a part of an approved training program, you are exempt from work search requirements.

If you qualify for one of these exemptions and still receive a request for full work search information, please contact DEO at 833-352-7759 for assistance.

**Q: I haven't been able to claim my weeks because I can't log-on to CONNECT. Will I lose my benefits for that week?**

A: If you miss the deadline shown in CONNECT to request benefits for Reemployment Assistance, you still have the opportunity to request your benefits. However, if a claimant was late requesting their benefits, they should be aware it could lead to a delay in payment. DEO encourages claimants to log-into CONNECT and check their account regularly and take action when prompted. If a claimant was late requesting benefits, they can contact the Customer Service Center at 833-352-7759 and an agent will be able to assist you.

**Q: My claim says it is under review; what does this mean?**

A: Under review means the claim is being authenticated or your identity is being confirmed.

**Q: My claim still says pending. What does this mean?**

A: Pending means that a determination has not been made on your claim.

**Q: What does active versus pending mean for my claims?**

A: Active is referring to your claim status and that your benefit year has been established. Pending means a determination has not been made.



**Q: How do I know when to file my weeks? What should I do if I cannot log-on to file my weeks? I missed my deadline to file a claim because CONNECT was down. What should I do?**

A: At the end of your application, it will tell you what dates you need to log-in to CONNECT and request your benefits. You are scheduled to return to the CONNECT system every two weeks to request your benefits. Completing this process submits your request for payment during your weeks of unemployment, even when your claim is pending for review. It is important that you request your benefits regardless of your claim status.

**Q: How often will I receive Reemployment Assistance benefit payments?**

A: Reemployment Assistance is paid on a biweekly basis.

**Q: Why do I have a negative balance on my debit card?**

A: The debit card provider has certain fees associated with the card. This includes a limited number of contacts to their phone lines per month. Please review the information issued with your card for more details surrounding these fees. The Way2Go card provides additional methods to check your balance including text messages, checking at approved ATMs, as well as a website to view your balance information. Please visit [www.goprogram.com](http://www.goprogram.com) for more information.

**Q: Why isn't my CONNECT PIN working for my debit card?**

A: Your CONNECT PIN is separate from the debit card PIN. You will need to follow the instructions included with the debit card in order to activate and establish a PIN.

**Q: Why can't I enter my banking information on CONNECT?**

A: There are several reasons your banking information may be rejected:

- The information you entered is incorrect.
- The interface to verify the information is currently down.
- Your bank is not approved for direct deposit.
- You are attempting to use a prepaid card for direct deposit purposes.

Please note, not every financial institution is accepted; your bank may not be eligible for direct deposit. Please select debit card if you have no other financial institution.

**Q: What is the duration and maximum amount of benefits I can receive?**

A: Florida's duration of benefits may adjust based on the state's unemployment rate, but the maximum amount of benefits remains the same.

2020 Claim Maximums: 12 weeks  
Weekly Benefit Amount (WBA): \$275  
Maximum Benefit Amount (MBA): \$3300

2021 Claim Maximums: 19 weeks  
Weekly Benefit Amount (WBA): \$275  
Maximum Benefit Amount (MBA): \$5225

**Q: When can I expect to get paid?**

A: Prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, it took three to four weeks (assuming there were no issues with the claim) to process a claim. DEO does not currently have an exact timeframe of when individuals will get paid.

**Q: What is the adjudication process?**

A: The department will review the details surrounding an issue to determine your eligibility for benefits. Involved parties will receive a fact-finding to request the necessary information to make a determination. An adjudicator may contact you or an employer to clarify any received details before making a determination. This contact may be by phone, e-mail, or through your CONNECT Inbox.

**Q: Why does my claim say it is pending for adjudication or pending eligibility?**

A: Anytime your claim has a pending item for resolution, you will have a message indicating that your claim is pending for adjudication. While this frequently means payments must remain on hold until after the review is completed, some issues do not hold benefit payment and are merely background reviews or verifications.

**Q: How long is the adjudication process?**

A: Time frames vary based on several factors including the depth of the issue being reviewed. Usually, adjudication time frames fluctuate between three to six weeks. Due to the high volume of claims, some cases may take longer than six weeks to resolve.

**Q: I received eligible determinations; why haven't I been paid yet?**

A: Issues are reviewed separately. While you may receive an eligible determination, you may still have additional issues pending for review or issues that are disqualifying. Payments cannot process until all determinations have been completed and you have no disqualifications.

**Q: Why have I not received a determination after completing my fact-finding?**

A: Responding to a fact-finding does not complete the review on an issue. The employer must respond (or fail to respond by their deadline) and an adjudicator must be available to review all submitted forms.

**Q: Can I speak with an adjudicator?**

A: Most issues under review do not require direct contact with an adjudicator for a determination to be made. Adjudicators review the fact-finding responses regarding the issues they review and will make a determination based on the available information. It is important that you complete any fact-findings as thoroughly as possible. An adjudicator will contact you if they need more information.

**Q: I missed a call from an adjudicator. What should I do?**

A: Please review their voicemail carefully. They may request that you speak with them directly and set a return call deadline. Other times they may request that you log into CONNECT and complete additional fact-finding questions so they can render a determination.

**Q: I have disqualified weeks. What does that mean?**

A: Disqualified weeks will not release payment because of an adjudicator's determination. Verify the related disqualification by checking the "Determination, Pending Issues and Decision Summary" section of CONNECT or the CONNECT Inbox. If you disagree with the Notice of Disqualification you have the right to appeal.

## **Appeals**

**Q: I disagree with my adjudication determination; what should I do?**

A: You have the right to appeal the determination if you disagree with the "Reasoning and Findings" of the determination.

**Q: What if I don't agree with my Reemployment Assistance benefit determination?**

A: You have the option to request an appeal within 20 calendar days after the distributed date of the determination.

**Q: What is an appeal hearing?**

A: An appeal hearing is scheduled when you or an employer disagree with a determination and wish to have a hearing with an appeals referee. To protect your rights, participating in the hearing is important, even if the other party filed the appeal. The decision from this hearing will replace the determination that was appealed.

**Q: How do I file an appeal?**

A: You must request an appeal hearing within 20 calendar days after the distributed date of the determination. If the 20th day falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday you may file the appeal the next business day. You may submit your request for an appeal by mail, fax, email, or online through CONNECT.

**Q: How do I know an appeal was filed?**

A: You will receive notification in your CONNECT inbox or by mail depending on your correspondence preference.

**Q: Should I continue to request benefit payment?**

A: Yes, you should continue to request benefit payments as long as you are unemployed, even if a hearing was requested or held, a decision was issued, or an appeal was made to the Reemployment Assistance Appeals Commission or Judicial Court. Be sure that you continue to follow all other instructions for Reemployment Assistance benefits.

**Q: Where are hearings held?**

A: Appeal hearings are held by telephone. You will receive a Notice of Hearing indicating the date and time an appeals referee will be calling you for your hearing.

**Q: How is the appeal hearing conducted?**

A: The hearing officer will call you on the day and time of your scheduled hearing. The hearing is your opportunity to present all information, including verbal statements and documentation. During the hearing, you will have an opportunity to respond to questions and provide information about the noticed issue. If there are other parties or witnesses present during the hearing, you will also be able to hear their testimony and ask them questions. If you provided or received documents for the hearing, the documents may be discussed during the hearing.

**Q: What happens if I don't participate?**

A: If the party who filed the appeal participates, a hearing will be held. The decision will be based on the evidence presented. If you do not participate, your evidence will not be considered. If you filed the appeal and do not participate, your case will be dismissed.

**Q: How can I arrange for witnesses?**

A: Contact and ask the witness to testify. The best witness is one with personal knowledge of the facts. A witness who was present at an event is much better than one who was told about it by someone else. If possible, you and your witness(es) should be at the same location for the hearing. If a witness cannot be at your location and must be contacted at a different telephone number, provide the witness' name and telephone number to the Office of Appeals by phone, fax, or mail. Instruct the witness to be available at the scheduled hearing time and to remain available until dismissed by you or the appeals referee. If a witness refuses to testify voluntarily, a subpoena can be requested by writing to the address on the Notice of Hearing.

**Q: What if I need to change my hearing date?**

A: A postponement may be requested if there is a compelling reason why you cannot participate as scheduled. The request can be made in writing before the hearing or on the record during the hearing. The referee will let you know in writing if the request is granted. If a written reply is not received, assume the request was denied. Be available for the hearing and prepared to present your case.

**Q: What if I missed the hearing?**

A: If you missed a hearing you must exercise due diligence in requesting re-opening. Any request for rehearing must be filed online through your CONNECT account or by mailing, emailing or faxing a written request to the address or fax number on the Notice of Hearing or Decision. An appeals referee decision will only be rescinded if good cause for nonappearance is shown. Only compelling and necessary reasons constitute good cause. If your rehearing request is granted, you must present evidence of good cause at the new hearing and show due diligence in trying to re-arrange your schedule or requesting postponement. If good cause is not shown, the prior decision will be reinstated.

**Q: Can I withdraw my appeal?**

A: You may withdraw an appeal by submitting a written withdrawal request in CONNECT, by mail or fax to the Appeals Office address or fax number on the Notice of Hearing.

**Q: When will I receive a decision?**

A: You will receive a decision electronically or in the mail as soon as possible after the hearing. The decision will include findings of fact, conclusions of law, and the result, which will affirm, reverse, or modify the determination or dismiss the appeal. An appeal decision can be viewed in your CONNECT inbox or by selecting the Determination, Pending Issues and Decision Summary page in your CONNECT account.

**Q: What if I disagree with the decision?**

A: If you disagree with the decision, you can request a review by the RA Appeals Commission. Instructions for requesting review are on the decision document. Any request for review must be filed within 20 calendar days after the decision was distributed. Generally, the Appeals Commission will not hold another hearing; its decision will be based on the testimony and other evidence presented to the referee and how the referee used that evidence to reach a decision. Therefore, presenting all of your evidence at the appeal hearing is very important. Upon completing its review, the Appeals Commission will mail a written order to all parties.

**Q: Will the case record be confidential?**

A: Only final decisions are disclosable along with any exhibits that are offered into evidence and used by the Appeals Referee in rendering their decision.

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## **Need More Help?**

**Public Library:** Libraries can help with many things, including letting you use a computer, printer, copier, scanner, or fax machine. Some libraries also have staff available who may be able to help guide you through the application process.

Find your local library at <https://myfloridalibrary.com/find/>.

**Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO):** You can contact DEO (<https://floridajobs.org>) in several ways:

### **Online Contact Form**

To contact DEO through their online contact form, go to their website at <https://www.floridajobs.org> and choose **Reemployment Assistance Resources**. Then choose **? Reemployment Assistance Help Center**. Complete the form based on your question.

### **Call DEO**

You can call the Reemployment Assistance Customer Service Center at 833-352-7759 or 850-245-7105.

DEO offers special assistance to people who do not speak English as their primary language and those who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. They also provide special assistance to people who need help filing a claim online because of legal reasons, computer illiteracy, language barriers, or disabilities.

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*We hope that you found this information helpful. Visit our YouTube channel at <https://tinyurl.com/2naxd95v> for more videos on applying for reemployment assistance benefits in Florida.*

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