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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

COVID-19 ADVISORY

March 25, 2020 | RE: TWC RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS, JOB SEEKERS & CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

TWC is providing guidance for employers, job seekers, and child care facilities who participate in their subsidized child care program during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This information can be found by visiting www.twc.texas.gov and clicking on the red banner at the top of the webpage.

The following information was provided by TWC for members to share with their constituents and help guide them through unemployment benefit claims and other services. To access local Workforce Solutions Boards in your district, visit <https://twc.texas.gov/partners/workforce-development-boards-websites#texasWorkforceDevelopmentBoardWebsites>

Resources For Employers:

Legal Options & Work-From-Home Policies: Call TWC at 1-800-832-9394 or email employerinfo@twx.state.tx.us

Unemployment Benefit Claim Self-Service for Employers: TWC can help businesses affected by COVID-19 with managing layoffs and unemployment benefit claims. Claims can be managed online at any time by using TWC's online unemployment portal, [Employer Benefits Services](#), or by calling TWC's Tele-Center employers' line at 866-274-1722 from 8AM - 6PM CT Monday through Friday.

Texas Unemployment Insurance (UI): TWC will be waiving work search requirements for all claimants and the waiting week for those claimants affected by COVID-19. Extended Benefits (EB) and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) are NOT available at this time. The Texas Unemployment Insurance (UI) program pays benefits to those individuals who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. TWC determines benefit eligibility based on past wages, why someone lost their job, and ongoing eligibility requirements.

Mass Claims & Shared Work Programs

The Mass Claims program streamlines the unemployment benefit claims process for employers faced with either temporary or permanent layoffs. Employers can submit basic worker information on behalf of their employees to initiate claims for unemployment benefits and submit a mass claim request on [Employer Benefits Services](#).

If business has slowed down due to the pandemic and an employer needs to reduce employee working hours, they may be able to avoid laying off employees by submitting a shared work plan. The Shared Work program provides Texas employers with an alternative to layoffs. TWC developed this voluntary program to help Texas employers and employees withstand a slowdown in business.

Shared Work allows employers to:

- Supplement their employees' wages lost because of reduced work hours with partial unemployment benefits.
- Reduce normal weekly work hours for employees in an affected unit by at least 10 percent but not more than 40 percent; the reduction must affect at least 10 percent of the employees in that unit.

Shared Work unemployment benefits are payable to employees who qualify for and participate in an approved Shared Work Plan. Workers may choose not to participate. Employees who qualify will receive both wages and Shared Work unemployment benefits. For more information, see TWC's [Shared Work](#) web page.

Online Tax Services & Resources: Employers may visit TWC's [Unemployment Tax Services](#) to submit their state unemployment tax reports, make payments, change an on-file mailing address, close their account, adjust previous reports, and more.

Resources For Jobseekers:

Unemployment Benefit Claims & Employment Insurance: Call 1-800-832-2829 or email laborinfo@twx.state.tx.us

If an individual's employment has been affected by COVID-19, they can apply for benefits either online at any time using [Unemployment Benefits Services](#) or by calling TWC's Tele-Center at 800-939-6631 from 8AM - 6PM CT Monday through Friday.

Resources For Child Care Services:

Many families and child care programs that participate in the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) subsidized child care program have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. On Tuesday, March 17, 2020, TWC's three-member Commission approved the following actions to mitigate the impact:

- Effective March 1, 2020, children may accrue absences without impacting ongoing eligibility for services or provider reimbursements. TWC will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and make a future determination on when this absence policy will conclude. Providers will continue to be paid, if children are absent, or if the provider is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.
- Workforce development boards are authorized to make supplemental payments to child care programs to cover lost parent share of cost payments. TWC will issue further guidance on calculating supplemental payments.

TWC will be issuing additional guidance to local Workforce Solutions staff shortly to address the following issues:

- Interruptions in parents' ongoing participation in work, education, or training
- Child care eligibility redeterminations
- Continued payments to child care programs
- Texas Rising Star processes

COVID-19 Essential Workers Child Care Category

TWC created a new child care eligibility category that covers those deemed "essential" workers (i.e. pharmacists, doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, first responders, critical infrastructure, mail and delivery workers, nursing home and other direct-care workers, grocery and gas station employees, bank employees, employees of restaurants with drive-thru services, and military personnel).

TWC is in the process of rolling out the application system online and is seeking waivers from the federal government so that they can limit the program to only the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency.