



COVID-19 and Short-Time Compensation FAQs for Employees

What is Short-Time Compensation?

The Short-Time Compensation (STC) program preserves jobs and an employer's skilled workforce during declines in regular business. Rather than being laid off, eligible employees work a reduced number of hours in the work weeks and receive a portion of their weekly unemployment compensation payment based on the percentage of the reduction in hours. STC cushions the adverse effect of the reduction in business activity and keeps employees on the job for when business demand increases. STC allows an employee to maintain their health and retirement benefits.

Great Plains Health has applied to participate in the Short-Time Compensation program through the Nebraska Department of Labor. It may take up to 30 days before we receive confirmation if we are approved. If approved, employees will be paid retroactively.

Key Items:

- Must be available for all your usual hours of work with your STC employer, and are not required to look for other work.
- Your employer submits a weekly claim for benefits, reporting the number of hours of work offered, hours worked + any approved leave for the prior week. Employees do not need to file weekly claims.
- Your unemployment benefits will be paid based on a percentage equal to the percentage by which your hours have been reduced.

Specific to COVID-19, if any of these scenarios relate to you, you should register and may be eligible:

- Your employer temporarily ceased operations with the expectation you will return to work.
- You are quarantined, but not showing symptoms, and will return to work.
- You are able and available (not showing any symptoms of COVID-19), but are unable to go to work because your place of employment has been quarantined.

What if I am still working but my hours are reduced?

If you see your hours reduced due to COVID-19, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits.

How do I apply for unemployment benefits?

You will need to register for unemployment benefits online at NEworks.nebraska.gov

Who does not qualify for unemployment benefits due to COVID-19?

You may not be eligible for unemployment benefits if:

- You are on paid leave, as you are still considered employed.
- You are not able and available, including if you have COVID-19; however, you should still file a claim.

What does “able and available” mean?

In the context of unemployment benefits, being “able and available” is a federal requirement intended to ensure that individuals filing for benefits remain attached to the labor market by being *able* to work and *available* to work for their employer after a temporary separation, or to a new employer if an individual is not attached to a former employer.

What if I have paid leave?

If you are on paid leave, you are not considered unemployed since you are still receiving income from your employer.

What if I need to take time off work because I contract COVID-19?

If you are not receiving paid leave, then you may be eligible for unemployment benefits, provided you meet the eligibility requirements described above. If you are receiving paid leave while taking time off from work, you are not eligible for unemployment benefits.

If I become seriously ill and I need to quit my job as a result of COVID-19, will I qualify for unemployment benefits?

Depending on your situation, you may not be denied unemployment benefits if you have to quit your job without any alternative to retain your position. However, each separation is unique and would have to be dealt with individually before eligibility can be assessed.

What if I am asked by a medical professional or public health official to quarantine as a result of COVID-19, but I am not sick?

Once you stop working, you should apply for unemployment benefits as soon as possible at NEworks.nebraska.gov. Generally, your employer should be working with you to follow the advice of your health care professional or health official. If you are employed and expect to return to work following the quarantine, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits for the duration of the quarantine.

What if I am temporarily laid off work because business has slowed down as a result of COVID-19?

If you are job attached and expect to return to work following the quarantine, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits while you are in quarantine. If you lose your job as a result of the quarantine, then eligibility from the separation will need to be decided along with your ability and availability to work while in quarantine.

I am a part-time employee. Am I eligible for standby?

Part-time employees can be eligible for unemployment benefits, as long as you meet all other eligibility requirements.

Is there a waiting week for unemployment benefits if the reason for the claim is due to COVID-19?

Great Plains Health has already applied for and is waiting for approval to participate in the STC program. It may take up to 30 days before we hear back from the NE Department of Labor. Once we receive approval under the COVID-19 plan, the requirement to wait a week before unemployment benefits begin will be waived.

When can employees expect to see their first payment?

Until Great Plains is approved for the STC program, no payments will be made to employees.

It can take several weeks to process an initial claim or a re-opened claim. If necessary, the Nebraska Department of Labor will call the employer or employees to get information needed to determine eligibility. There is no need to contact the Department of Labor during this time unless you have questions or are asked to do so.

Do I need to wait a week before receiving payments?

In response to the COVID-19, from March 22-May 2, the Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) will waive the requirement to search for work, as well as the requirement to serve an unpaid waiting week, once eligibility is determined.

Will I be required to exhaust my PTO before I am eligible for STC?

At this time, the Nebraska Department of Labor has not required exhaustion of PTO in order to receive the STC pay. Other states have mandated that it must be exhausted.

If you are questioning whether you qualify for unemployment benefits, we encourage you to **register** at [NEworks.nebraska.gov](https://neworks.nebraska.gov). You should not have to do the complete application, unless instructed to do so.