

Unemployment Insurance Provisions in Stimulus to Benefit One Million New Yorkers

According to an estimate from the New York State Department of Labor, one million New York State residents will benefit from legislative changes that were made to unemployment insurance in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*, popularly known as the federal stimulus law. The following are common questions about unemployment insurance and the new changes. Most of the responses are based on information obtained from the New York State Department of Labor's website—www.labor.state.ny.us

What is Unemployment Insurance (UI)?

Unemployment Insurance is protection for people who are out of work through no fault of their own and who are ready, willing, and able to work.

Generally, in order to qualify for benefits, you must have worked and been paid wages in at least two calendar quarters and you earned at least \$1,600 in one of the calendar quarters.

More information about obtaining unemployment insurance is available in the *NYSUT Handbook for Laid-off School Employees*, which is available on the NYSUT website— www.nysut.org

What information is needed to file a UI claim?

The following information is needed to file a claim:

- Social Security number
- Valid New York State Driver's License or Non-Driver Photo Identification Card number
- Your complete mailing address and telephone number
- Employer identification number (this is usually found on W-2 forms),
- Complete name, address and phone number of your most recent employer.

What improvements were made to UI in the new federal stimulus law?

According to the New York State Department of Labor, there are four provisions in the stimulus bill that will improve UI:

- 1) Allowing new claims for *extended* unemployment benefits to be made through December 31, 2009, with benefits payable through May 31, 2010.

Previously, the deadline to apply for extended benefits was March 31, 2009, and no payments could be made beyond August 2009.

It is estimated that this extension will help 352,000 people statewide.

New Yorkers are currently eligible to receive 26 weeks of regular unemployment insurance benefits and 33 weeks of extended benefits.

- 2) Increasing unemployment insurance benefits by \$25 per week through December 31, 2009. The increase applies to individuals who are collecting both regular and extended unemployment insurance benefits.

The additional payments will be made retroactive to the week ending March 1, 2009.

- 3) Suspending the federal income tax on the first \$2,400 of unemployment insurance benefits per recipient.

This provision is expected to result in an estimated federal tax savings of \$215 per beneficiary in 2009.

- 4) Providing \$412 million to New York State to replenish the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, and \$29.5 million in administrative funds to help improve claims processing, add staff to field calls and resolve claims, and improve the Shared Work program.

How does a laid-off employee file a claim for UI?

Claims for UI can be made either online at www.labor.state.ny.us or by calling the Tel-Claim Center at 1-888-209-8124.

How are UI payments made to recipients?

Unemployment Insurance benefit payments can either be issued to a single Direct Payment Card or directly deposited into a checking account.