



Dear Colleague,

The Arc of New Jersey is pleased to provide some information that we hope will be helpful for families and staff:

1. **Unemployment Insurance Fact Sheet**, developed by The Arc of the US, which provides important information for everyone with I/DD who lost their job due to the coronavirus. The fact sheet explains the Unemployment Insurance policy changes for people who receive SSI, Social Security (including Social Security Disability Insurance, SSDI), and Medicaid. These changes occurred recently, after the passage of the CARES Act at the federal level. Please note that there is a difference in the Unemployment Insurance policy for SSI beneficiaries compared to those who receive Social Security benefits. See the Fact Sheet here:



April 16, 2020

COVID-19, Unemployment Insurance, and People with Disabilities

This fact sheet details common questions that we have received about Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid and Unemployment Insurance. Because Unemployment Insurance is a state-federal partnership, state unemployment programs vary substantially, and this fact sheet does not attempt to provide details on different state systems.

What is Unemployment Insurance?

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is a joint federal-state program that temporarily pays people who have lost their job through no fault of their own (i.e., not for grounds that constitute misconduct and not voluntarily quitting) while they look for a new job. Many UI programs require that people are looking for full-time work to be eligible for UI.

Who is eligible for UI benefits?

State UI eligibility varies. We would recommend reviewing materials from the state UI agency to learn more. Generally, an individual needs to have been laid off from his or her job (or have quit for good cause connected to the job) and be available for and actively seeking work. Many states require even part-time workers to seek full-time work, meaning many people with disabilities who can only work part time are not eligible. However, in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Congress made policy changes that broadened the UI eligibility criteria and more people with disabilities may be eligible for UI.

What are the new UI policies that Congress passed?

The CARES Act (the third Coronavirus response bill) included three major UI policy changes.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

The new PUA program provides emergency unemployment assistance to workers who usually are not covered by state UI, including part time workers. Applicants will need to provide self-certification that they are (1) partially or fully unemployed, OR (2) unable and unavailable to work because of a particular circumstance, including:

- They have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have symptoms of it and are seeking diagnosis
- They are providing care for someone diagnosed with COVID-19
- They are providing care for a child or other household member who can't attend school or work because it is closed due to COVID-19
- They had to quit their job as a direct result of COVID-19
- Their place of employment is closed as a direct result of COVID-19

2. **NJ Helps:** The New Jersey Department of Human Services has an easy-to-navigate website, www.njhelps.org that may be helpful for individuals with I/DD living independently and for families who are struggling financially due to the coronavirus pandemic and lost income. Potential applicants can do an online screening that takes just 5 to 10 minutes, to find out if they may be eligible for food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); financial assistance; or NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid (health insurance). After the brief online screening, applications for these programs can be completed and submitted online.

3. **NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid helpline:** The best way to apply for NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid is online, and the application can be accessed from the www.njhelps.org website (see #2 above). New Jersey Medicaid has a helpline for questions about applying for NJ FamilyCare/Medicaid; inquiring about the start date after an application was

submitted; and asking about health care services after coverage has started. The phone number is **1-800-701-0710** and these are the hours of operation:

- **Monday and Thursday - 8 am to 8 pm**
- **Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday - 8 am to 5 pm**

4. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Jersey's public electric and gas utilities have agreed to suspend service shutoffs. Click below for further information for utility customers, including eligibility for home energy assistance and how to apply.

All utility customers who have questions about their service are encouraged to contact their utility. A list of all public gas and electricity utility company phone numbers is [available here](#).

How to Apply for Home Energy Assistance:

1. Find out if you are eligible for the program
[Review the Energy Assistance Program Fact Sheet and Income Guidelines](#)
2. If you are eligible, fill out an application
[Download, print and complete the Home Energy/USF/Weatherization Program Application](#) [pdf 389kB]
3. Submit a completed application via email, fax, or mail to your Local Community Action Agency
[Choose from the list of Local Application Agency's contact information](#)

Additional Information:

- ["Do You Need Help With Your Home Energy Bills?" - Brochure](#)
- ["Do You Need Help With Your Home Energy Bills?" - Brochure - Spanish](#)
- [Energy Assistance Program Fact Sheet for 2020](#)
- [Spanish Translation - Energy Assistance Program Fact Sheet for 2020](#)
- ["HEA - Heating System Improvement Dealer/Service Contract Assurances Forms](#)
- [USF/HEA Contractor's Assurances Letter](#)
- [2020 LIHEAP Benefit Amounts Table](#)

This is one of many emails that The Arc of New Jersey is distributing in an effort to help individuals with I/DD, their families, and staff to be safe and healthy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. To see other emails that The Arc of New Jersey has distributed on this topic, please go to <https://www.arcnj.org/information/covid-19-updates-information.html>.

Thank you.
Bev

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