

Waiver of Work Search Requirements for Unemployment Insurance Claimants March 19, 2020

By the authority vested in me as the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Administrator of the Unemployment Compensation Act, Conn. Gen. Stat. chapter 567, I am waiving the work search requirement for all individuals who are in receipt of unemployment benefits until such time as the Governor terminates the public health emergency and the civil preparedness emergency.

Under conditions of the federal grant from the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), the Connecticut Department of Labor's Unemployment Compensation Program, outlined in Chapter 567 and implementing regulations, mirrors federal law in requiring individuals receiving unemployment benefits to be able and available for work, and making reasonable efforts to obtain work.

Recently, USDOL issued guidance to states that makes a point of recognizing that states have *significant flexibility* in implementing these requirements, as well as in determining the type of work that may be suitable given the individual's circumstances. (Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) No. 10-20 (March 12, 2020))

The Department has already determined that work search efforts may be waived for individuals with a specific return to work date (even if that date continues to be extended by the employer).

Now, the Department has determined that, under existing law, the work search efforts requirement (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-235(a)(2)) may be waived for all individuals filing for unemployment benefits during the pandemic crisis, so long as such individuals remain ready to return to work once the pandemic crisis measures have been lifted. The Department's position is based on the following:

- Due to emergency pandemic containment measures that severely limit suitable employment opportunities, the Department finds sufficient cause to temporarily suspend the requirement that claimants apply for available opportunities.
- Under Connecticut law, employment is not suitable if it would risk the individual's health or safety; and
- Alternate efforts such as attendance at job fairs, resume workshops at American Job Centers, etc. are non-existent due to the closure of our American Job Centers in accordance with public health officials' guidance regarding social distancing.

Kurt Westby
Connecticut Labor Commissioner