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L A W F I R M PLLC

COVID-19 and Unemployment Benefits



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| THE OVERVIEW |

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact, not only on the health of its victims, but on communities, social circles, and workplaces across the globe. As businesses restrict their hours and the scope of their services, employees by the millions are finding themselves in a difficult financial situation. All levels of government are scrambling to create solutions, as is the private sector. The State of North Carolina is no exception.

On March 17, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper enacted Executive Order 118 (what we'll call "EO118") in response to the COVID-19 crisis. One of the provisions of EO118 pertains to access to unemployment benefits; specifically, it eliminates the traditional one-week waiting period and loosens the requirements for an applicant to become eligible to receive benefits.

Specifically, EO118 directs the Department of Commerce to "interpret flexibly" or waive entirely the requirement that the applicant be ready, able, and actively seeking work in order to receive benefits.

This change makes it far easier for those affected by COVID-19, or its impact on their work status, to qualify for unemployment benefits.



| WHAT YOU'LL NEED |

In order to apply for unemployment benefits, you'll need the following:

1. Your social security number;
2. Information from your former employer regarding the circumstances of your separation, including any PTO or severance pay that you've received or will receive;
3. Details about your work history for the two years preceding the application; and
4. Your bank routing and account number, if you want your benefits to be deposited directly into your account.

If you're a non-citizen, former federal employee (within the two years preceding the application) or military member, there are additional documents that you'll need. Call our office for more information.



| ELIGIBILITY |

Traditionally, you have to meet four criteria in order to qualify for unemployment benefits:

1. You have become unemployed by no fault of your own;
2. You earned sufficient wages at your previous job to establish a claim;
3. You are physically fit, willing, and actively seeking work; and
4. You have registered to work with the appropriate entity; in the case of North Carolina, NCWorks Online.

Again, EO118 loosens these requirements. As we stated previously, the third requirement has been loosened if not outright done away with. In addition, the first requirement has been expanded significantly. Under EO118, you qualify not only if you have become unemployed, but also if you've seen your work hours reduced or if you've become unable to work due to a medical condition or a direct quarantine order.



| HOW TO APPLY |

The easiest way to apply is online, at des.nc.gov/apply-unemployment.

You'll need to click on the "Create a New Account" on the right side of the page. You'll be prompted to enter your Social Security Number, followed by your contact information, and you'll be asked to create a username and passcode. Once that's done, you'll receive an email to activate your account.

Once your account is activated, you'll be able to sign in and complete your application. If you don't have access to a computer, you can also apply by phone at (888) 737-0259.

If you have questions or need help, please give our office a call. We'll help to walk you through the application process, completely free of charge.

Please note that this information is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship, but for the sole purpose of educating and edifying the reader.

