



# WomanView

Volume 12, Issue 1

July 15, 2008

## President Signs Emergency Unemployment Compensation into Law; Benefits Available to Illinois Workers as of July 6, 2008

The President signed, on June 30, a war supplemental bill that includes Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC)—an extension of jobless benefits for long-term unemployed workers. EUC provides up to 13 weeks of extended benefits for workers still unable to find jobs after having exhausted their regular state benefits (26 weeks of benefits in Illinois). In Illinois the first compensable week to claim the new federal extended benefits is the week beginning on Sunday, July 6. The program will remain in effect for workers exhausting their state benefits through March 2009. However, if still eligible, individuals with amounts remaining in their EUC account as of March 31 may collect EUC through the week ending June 27, 2009. The federal bill also includes \$110 million in administrative funding, which most state programs desperately need. This money is in addition to the funding that states will receive to process extended benefits claims.

### Eligibility for EUC

The EUC is payable to workers who have exhausted all rights to regular compensation and whose benefit year ended on or after May 1, 2007. (A benefit year is the one year following the Sunday effective date of the claim for regular state unemployment compensation benefits.) Such workers must be legally authorized to work in the United States. They must have been employed for 20 weeks of full-time insured employment or must have earned the equivalent in wages. This federal requirement means that not all workers eligible for regular state benefits are eligible for the EUC. According to estimates, one out of 10 regular state unemployment beneficiaries will be excluded from receiving EUC because of this requirement. There is also concern that this requirement will disproportionately affect low-wage workers. The state law determines the requirements for continuing eligibility; there are no federal requirements.

Individuals are considered to have exhausted their rights to regular compensation in two instances. The first is when payments of regular compensation are not allowed to be made because all regular compensation has been received by the worker based on her employment or wages. The second is when rights to regular compensation are terminated due to the expiration of the benefit year. If a worker can establish a valid new benefit year, the worker should receive regular state benefits rather than EUC. That worker may qualify for EUC if she meets the exhaustion requirements before March 31, 2009.

### Applying for Benefits

For Illinois workers, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the state agency that administers the unemployment compensation insurance program, has begun to notify by letter anyone who may be potentially eligible for the extended benefits. IDES expects to reach out to 130,000 individuals. IDES will automatically establish, when possible, the extended benefits claim—this is for workers whose benefit year is still active. Those workers will be notified regarding how to certify for benefits (providing updated information about your unemployment status). For workers

whose benefit year has ended, IDES is sending letters about EUC and instructions for filing a claim. IDES wants people to wait until they receive a letter and are told to report to their local office to file an application before doing so.

The weekly dollar amount of EUC will be the same amount of regular compensation; this includes dependents' allowances. Just as for regular compensation, certification for extended benefit payments will take place at the end of the weeks for which the benefits are claimed. Workers who receive benefits by direct deposit or debit card may receive the first payment within two days of certification. Checks sent through the mail may take somewhat longer. Illinois employers will not be charged for the extended benefit costs; EUC is 100 percent federally funded. This extension comes at a much-needed time. EUC will help more than 3.5 million workers and help drive more money back into our economy, according to projections.

To view the full version of the U.S. Department of Labor's guidelines, go to <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/UIPL/UIPL23-08.pdf>. For more information on Emergency Unemployment Compensation in Illinois, go to <http://www.ides.state.il.us/>.

For more information, contact [Wendy Pollack](#), director, Women's Law and Policy Project, Shriver Center, at 312.263.3830 ext. 238 or [wendypollack@povertylaw.org](mailto:wendypollack@povertylaw.org).

Published by the SARGENT SHRIVER NATIONAL CENTER ON POVERTY LAW. Funded in part by generous grants from the Chicago Foundation for Women and the Jo & Art Moore Family Fund.