



Training Benefits Program

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Training Benefits Program created in 2000

Dislocated workers get up to one year of unemployment benefits while being retrained

Program is targeted to workers who cannot find work in their previous occupations

The Training Benefits Program was created by the Washington State Legislature in 2000. The program provides extended unemployment benefits to dislocated workers whose occupations are in decline and who need training to obtain a new job. Training benefits provide income support while the dislocated workers are in training; the benefits are paid out of the State Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Direct costs of training (tuition, books, transportation, etc.) must be funded through other sources.

Duration of training benefits

Training benefits are available to eligible unemployment-insurance recipients for up to a year, including the recipient's regular unemployment benefits. For example, if an unemployment-insurance recipient receives 26 weeks of regular unemployment benefits, he/she may receive up to 26 additional weeks of benefits under the Training Benefits Program. People enrolled in the program are not required to look for work while they are in training and are receiving unemployment and/or training benefits.

Applying for training benefits

All unemployment-insurance applicants receive an unemployment claims kit that includes information about the Training Benefits Program. Information also is available at WorkSource offices, at local community and technical colleges, and on the Employment Security Department's Web site, esd.wa.gov.

Applicants for training benefits must develop a training plan describing the proposed training, where the training is offered and the proposed new occupation or skills. Applicants can get help with developing their training plans at a local WorkSource office or through the worker-retraining office at community and technical colleges. Training institutions must certify that the training plan is full-time and must provide information on whether the applicant is making progress toward the training goal.

Eligibility

Training-benefits users must meet specific requirements to qualify for the program.

Prior to September 7, 2009, participants must:

- Be "dislocated workers" – unable to find work in their past occupation or industry within their local labor market.
- Have worked in their occupation or worked using specific skills for at least the majority of the last year and two of the four prior years.
- Need training to qualify for a job that is in high demand in the local economy.
- Have worked in a declining occupation or have obsolete job skills.

Eligibility being expanded beyond dislocated workers

Beginning Sept. 7, 2009, several more categories of unemployed workers will have access to training benefits. Eligibility will be expanded to include unemployed workers who:

- Are disabled by an injury or illness and need training for a new occupation.
- Earned less than 130 percent of the state's minimum wage in their qualifying year and need training to get a higher-paying job.
- Were honorably discharged from the military or the Washington National Guard in the 12 months before applying for the program and need training to find suitable work in their community.
- Are serving in the Washington National Guard and need training to find a suitable job locally.

To receive training benefits, the person cannot:

- Be on standby or have a recall date to his/her past job within the next six months.
- Be unemployed due to seasonal layoffs.
- Have received training benefits within the past five years.

Application deadlines and other requirements

In addition, the applicant must:

- Submit a training plan within 60 days after the applicant is officially notified about the eligibility requirements for the Training Benefits Program. (Beginning April 5, 2009, applicants will have 90 days to submit a training plan.)
- Be enrolled in approved training within 90 days after the applicant is officially notified about the eligibility requirements for the Training Benefits Program, or begin the training as soon as it is available. (Beginning April 5, 2009, applicants will have 120 days to enroll in approved training.)
- Be in training full time.
- Make satisfactory progress in training.

Timeline for developing training plans is being lengthened

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