

Governor's Office Daily COVID-19 Q & A

April 13, 2020

Helplines and Webpages

General Resources and a list of Executive Orders: visit coronavirus.illinois.gov

PPE Equipment:

- Donations: PPE.donations@Illinois.gov
- To Manufacture PPE in Illinois: ima@ima-net.org

Small Business Assistance:

- Essential Business inquiries: contact 1-800-252-2923 or CEO.support@illinois.gov
- State: [click here](#). Federal: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov>.
- Business insurance coverage: <https://mc.insurance.illinois.gov/messagecenter.nsf>.

Unemployment Assistance: IDES set the following guidelines for applicants:

- **FOR ON-LINE APPLICATIONS**, [click here](#). If your last name begins with letters:
 - **A through M** file your claim on **Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays**.
 - **N through Z** file your claim online on **Mondays, Wednesday, Fridays**.

***Saturdays** – anyone who missed their window can apply.
- **FOR PHONE APPLICATIONS**, call (800) 244-5631. If your last name begins with letters:
 - **A through M** call between 7:30am – 6pm on **Tuesdays and Thursdays**.
 - **N through Z** call between 7:30am – 6pm on **Mondays and Wednesdays**.

***Fridays (7am-6pm) & Saturdays (8am-noon)** – those who missed their window can call.

Individual Assistance:

- Employee workplace rights complaints: (844) 740-5076 or submit a complaint [online](#).
- Resources for people with disabilities: visit www.DDD.Illinois.gov.
- Consumer guidance on debts due and regulated financial sectors: [click here](#).
- Airbnb Housing opportunities for first responders and medical professionals: [click here](#).
- For insurance coverage guidance from the Department of Insurance, [click here](#).
- Medication Affordability Assistance: visit: <https://abe.illinois.gov/abe/access/>
- Illinois taxpayer information: visit DOR's [resource page here](#).
- Call4Calm: Text "TALK" to 5-5-2-0-2-0; for Spanish, text "HABLAR" to 5-5-2-0-2-0

Other Resources:

- Federal Stimulus Package Unemployment Benefits Q&A: [click here](#).
- IDFPR list of licensees and consumers impacted by COVID-19: [click here](#).
- School related inquiries: visit <https://www.isbe.net/covid19>
- COVID19 cases by county: visit dph.illinois.gov
- To volunteer: visit serve.illinois.gov or email dph.serveillinois@illinois.gov
- COVID-19 Symptom guidelines: visit DPH website, [click here](#).
- Emergency Day Care Provider Search: visit <https://emergencycare.inccrra.org>
- To report price gouging: submit a complaint [online](#).

Department of Human Services

Q: What is the Statewide Referral Network (SRN)?

A: SRN links vulnerable populations, who are already connected to services, to affordable, available, supportive housing. It is managed by the Statewide Housing Coordinator for Long Term Care Reform. Social Service Providers assist eligible households to get their name on the waiting list by using the Pre-Screening, Assessment, Intake and Referral (PAIR) module. The waiting list manager verifies eligibility and when an SRN unit becomes eligible matches the eligible waiting list participants with the unit.

Eligible SRN supportive housing populations include persons with disabilities, persons experiencing homelessness, and persons at-risk of homelessness. In addition, a person or family must have income at 30% of Area Median Income or below.

Q: How does a consumer access the SRN?

A: Case managers, care coordinators, housing locators, transition coordinators, and other staff assisting persons with disabilities and households at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness place interested persons on the online waiting list using the PAIR module within the housing locator website, www.IIHousingSearch.org.

Q: What is the Section 811 Rental Assistance Program?

A: The Section 811 Project-Based Rental Assistance Program provides supportive housing to persons with disabilities and is funded and monitored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program assists the lowest income people with disabilities to live independently in the community, providing affordable housing linked with voluntary services and supports (e.g., Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports, or State Plan Services).

Housing

Q: What is the guidance for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

A: State Operated Developmental Centers, Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and Community Integrated Living Arrangements will continue to provide care. All in-home direct care staff are considered essential staff and should continue to support individuals in the home setting.

If you have any specific questions about your support and services, please reach out to your provider or Individual Service Coordination (ISC) Agency. To receive updated information on DDD services, please sign up for our email database, or to update your contact and service information, please visit ICDD.Illinois.gov.

Seniors

Q: Where can seniors find shopping hours for stores?

A: Please visit: <https://irma.org/covid-19-senior-shopping/>

Healthcare

Q: Will Medicaid redeterminations also be suspended for people with Medicaid Spenddowns?

A: Yes, and if someone meets their Spenddown for even one month, beginning with March 2020, they remain in met status for the remainder of the emergency period.

Business Compliance

Q: My business falls within one of the essential categories. Can I require my employees come to work? What if they refuse?

A: The intent of the Executive Order 10 and as extended by Executive Order 18 is to ensure that the maximum number of people self-isolate in their places of residence. Even essential businesses and operations should promote telecommuting whenever possible. Consider

alternating work schedules to minimize the number of employees in the office at the same time. To the greatest extent feasible, essential businesses and operations shall comply with social distancing requirements, including maintaining six-foot social distancing for both employees and members of the public at all times. All essential businesses must also take the following practice measures wherever possible:

1. Designating with signage, tape, or by other means six-foot spacing for employees and customers in line to maintain appropriate distance;
2. Having hand sanitizer and sanitizing products readily available for employees and customers;
3. Implementing separate operating hours for elderly and vulnerable customers; or Posting online whether a facility is open and how best to reach the facility and continue services by phone or remotely.

Businesses and employees with questions can call DCEO's helpline at 1-800-252-2923 or CEO.support@illinois.gov or review their [one pager](#).

Taxes

Q: Will there be a change to the Municipal Telecommunications Tax Rate?

A: Effective July 1, 2020, Breese and Homer municipalities are imposing a Simplified Municipal Telecommunications Tax or changing their rate. To view a chart that outlines the combined state and local telecommunications tax rate for each municipality listed, [click here](#).

For a complete listing of statewide telecommunications tax rates, see the Department of Revenue's [Tax Rate Database](#).

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Q: How many UI claims have been filed?

A: Through the last five weeks ending April 4th, there have been 513,173 initial unemployment claims filed.

Industries contributing the heaviest to the increase in initial claims in the last three weeks (in no order) are construction, wholesale trade, temp help, healthcare offices, childcare, recreation, hotels, and restaurants.

Q: How many benefits claims have been paid?

A: From March 1- March 31, 2020, there have been a total of 270,424 claims successfully paid, which total to \$198,382,549 over the course of 22 business days.

Q: How is IDES maintaining the health and safety of their staff?

A: IDES deployed 476 employees to work remotely from home, while 539 employees have been deemed essential and continue to report to the office for work. Of the 539 employees still physically returning to work:

- 273 working to process claims
- 173 working in the call center, including 30 non-essential employees brought back to work in the call center
- 93 administrative and support staff, including the in mailroom

Collectively, all these employees have put in nearly 6,500 hours of overtime and many are working Saturdays and Sundays to complete the claims that were not processed during the business week.

Q: What improvements has IDES made to its call center?

A: IDES updated its phone system to increase capacity by 40%, substantially reducing wait times and eliminating claimants receiving a busy signal. Additionally, the daily call center hours have been extended to respond to those waiting in the queue after closure.

Additionally, IDES is in the process of establishing an outside call center with an additional 200 agents who will assist in the application and certification process.

Q: How is IDES addressing their website difficulties?

A: IDES has worked closely with DoIT to monitor and improve the performance and capabilities of the website by implementing the following:

- I. Early on, the website was moved to new hardware infrastructure to with more capacity to handle increased demand.
- II. IDES then increased the processing capacity and storage and implemented a maintenance window each evening to allow batch files to process without the additional competition for resources from filers.
- III. To help move registrations faster for first-time filers, the requirement of identification validation was removed and replaced with other identity validation methods.
- IV. IDES procured third party support such as, Applications Dynamics, a performance monitoring tool, which installed and operationalize monitoring of the website while adding additional server capacity.
- V. IBM (third-party support) and DoIT have also established a virtual war room staffed to monitor the application performance during peak hours and respond quickly if needed.

Ongoing efforts: DoIT has engaged IBM to design the quickest path forward to implement additional capacity to manage the unprecedented load on the system. Additionally, Accenture, the originally developer of the Illinois Benefit Information System (IBIS) system, offered support and assistance with the system.

Currently, transaction times are averaging well **below one second**, and server/mainframe utilization has remained **below fifty percent**. The application performance has been solid, with minor hiccups.

Q: Will IDES expand the UI benefits during the pandemic?

A: IDES is currently exploring legislative options to extend and expand unemployment benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:

- I. Extended Benefits Trigger, which would change Section 409 of the UI Act to tie into Families First Coronavirus Response Act and CARES to receive 100% federal funding if extended benefits are triggered in Illinois.
- II. Suspend the waiting week beyond the Proclamation of Disaster by tying it to the CARES Act to continue to receive 100% federal funding for the waiting week.