# **ESD Logo**

# **Assisting Claims Center Customers**

## October 2017 through February 2018

This guide is intended to aid Employment Security Department (ESD) employees and other agencies who might assist unemployment claimants unable to reach the Claims Center by phone or by accessing eServices.

## **General information**

November through February is the Claims Center’s peak workload season. Phone customers often experience lengthy wait times. Whenever possible, ESD and other agencies should refer claimants to the [*Handbook for Unemployed Workers*](https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment) available on the home page of [esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov/). It’s the sixth link on the upper left.

The[*Customer service one-stop*](https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/UI-one-stop) page on the [esd.wa.gov](http://esd.wa.gov) home page also offers useful information for customers, such as frequently asked questions.

### **Hours of operation**

The Claims Center answers telephone calls from customers between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, with the exception of state holidays. Between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., agents assist customers who called prior to 4 p.m. and are already waiting in the phone queue. On Tuesday and Thursday, agents are responding to requests submitted via electronic means. The tips on the next page show the best times and days to call for specific customer needs.

Claims Center telephone number: 800-318-6022

### **Applying for benefits**

Instruct customers to access [ESD’s website](https://esd.wa.gov) at esd.wa.gov to apply for benefits or look for answers to their questions.

**Online**
The online application is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. While most of eServices is available on mobile devices, the application for benefits is NOT currently mobile friendly. Instruct customers to use a desktop or laptop computer to file a new claim, but not a tablet or smartphone.

Customers who want to apply online will need to [create a SecureAccess Washington account](https://secure.esd.wa.gov/home/) if they haven’t already. Select *Sign in or create account* on the [esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov/) home page. User guides for both [claimants](https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/eServices-user-guide-CLAIMANT.pdf) and [employers](https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/eServices-user-guide-EMPLOYER.pdf) are also posted there. Customers may use a SAW account they set up for a different State agency such as DSHS, Department of Licensing, etc. Customers will also need to have an email account that they have access to.

If customers have trouble signing in to their SAW account, refer them to a special help line: **855-682-0785. This number is not for UI related needs.**

**By phone**
No new benefit applications can be submitted by phone on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Thursdays. Customers can call from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays, except on state holidays, if they need assistance applying for benefits over the phone.

Applying for unemployment benefits later in the week will not delay benefit payments.

**Questions from customers**Customers can call Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays, but the Claims Center dedicates 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each Monday to answer questions only.

**Claims Center call schedule:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

**Monday:** No new UI applications are accepted. This allows for questions and weekly claims.

**Tuesday:** Customers use on-line services only.

**Wednesday:** New UI applications, reopens, and questions accepted by anyone.

**Thursday:** Customers use on-line services only.

**Friday:** New UI applications, reopens, and questions accepted by anyone.

**Tips**

* Busiest hours – 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day, and Friday afternoons
* Busiest months – November to February each year.
* Best times to call:–
	+ Before 11 am
	+ After 2 p.m., except Fridays
* Call-back option – Customers can receive a call back from the Claims Center instead of waiting on hold. It holds their place in line while allowing them to disconnect from the phone. Customers should choose this phone option if prompted. It’s typically offered from 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m., although times may periodically shift.

### **Troubleshooting customer needs**

Customers can find answers to many questions on the [Customer service one-stop](https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/UI-one-stop) page or on the [Unemployment page](https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/).

Computers are available at all WorkSource offices and most libraries to allow customers to apply for benefits, submit weekly claims or search the ESD website for answers to their questions.

Customers need to sign in to or create a SecureAccess Washington account to manage and find information about their claim. A user guide for [claimants](https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/eServices-user-guide-CLAIMANT.pdf) is posted on the home page of esd.wa.gov.

If customers have trouble signing in for online services, two special help lines are available:

* For customers having trouble signing in to Unemployment eServices (UTAB), including the SecureAccess Washington process and identity verification, refer to: **855-682-0785.**
* For customers having trouble with WorksourceWA.com refer to: **888-316-5627.**

If a customer has general questions about the claims process or specific questions about their claim, first refer them to [esd.wa.gov](http://www.esd.wa.gov/) and tell them to select the link to the “[Handbook for Unemployed Workers](https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/ESD-Handbook-for-Unemployed-Workers.pdf).”

Customers also can submit questions online.

Instruct them to:

1. Select the *Sign in or create account* button on the home page of esd.wa.gov.
2. Sign in to their SecureAccess Washington account or create a new account.
3. Select *Send us a secure message* from either the eServices entry page or from within their eServices account.

**Self-service options online**

The self-service options on eServices allow customers to avoid lengthy wait times they can experience when calling the Claims Center. Claimants can sign up online at [esd.wa.gov](http://www.esd.wa.gov/).

For help signing in, call: 855-682-0785.

**Using eServices, customers can:**

* Apply for benefits 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This includes customers who have military or federal wages.
* Restart claims 24 hours most days (beginning Sunday at 12:01 a.m. through Friday at 3 p.m., except holidays and Saturdays).
* Submit weekly claims 24 hours a day, starting Sunday at 12:01 a.m. through Friday (or the last business day of the week). Customers should submit by 4 p.m. in order for the claim to be processed that evening. (Customers must have submitted a weekly claim, restarted an existing claim or applied for benefits the week before.)
* Get benefit payment information (such as payment balance or when their check was processed) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
* Submit address changes 24 hours a day. However, we recommend they submit changes starting Sunday at 12:01 a.m. through 4 p.m. Wednesday to ensure that their next check goes to the right address.
	+ *Please note: The post office does not forward unemployment insurance mail, including checks.*
* Get income tax/1099 information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from mid-January through April 30.
* Get overpayment information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
* Update or request direct deposit 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ESD employees cannot help claimants with direct deposit tasks.
* Claimants can request standby or update their union information.

***Two important changes with eServices!***

* ***Customers who have worked in Washington and another state can now apply for benefits online.***
* ***Customers can no longer set up direct deposit on esd.wa.gov or through a Claims Center agent. They have to go through eServices if they wish to receive benefits via direct deposit.***

## **Self-service options by telephone**

Claimants do not have to wait on hold to use these options. Instruct claimants to call the Claims Center at 800-318-6022 and listen carefully to the telephone prompts to access the following self-service features:

* Weekly claims: Available 24 hours a day, from 12:01 a.m. Sunday through Friday (or the last business day of the week). Customers should submit by 4 p.m. in order for the claim to be processed that evening. (Customers must have applied for benefits, submitted a weekly claim or restarted an existing claim the previous week to use this function.)
* Restart claims for benefits: File 24 hours a day from 12:01 a.m. Sunday through Friday (or the last business day of the week) at 3 p.m. (Must have at least a one-week break in claiming to restart a claim using the phone.)
* Benefit payment information: Customers can find out their balance or when their check was processed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Encourage customers to use direct deposit or debit cards for the fastest, most secure payment.
* Make address changes: Available 24 hours a day, through 3 p.m. on the last business day of the week. However, we recommend that customers submit changes starting Sunday at 12:01 a.m. through 4 p.m. Wednesday to ensure that their next check goes to the right address.
	+ *Please note: The post office does not forward unemployment insurance mail, including checks. Another good reason to recommend direct deposit or debit cards for the customer.*
* Income tax/1099 information: Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from mid-January through April 30.
* Overpayment information: Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (only available to customers with overpayments).

### **Filing appeals**

Claimants can file appeals online or in writing by fax or mail. The most efficient appeal process is by using their eServices account. Otherwise, tell customers to go to the [Benefit denials and appeals page](https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment/benefit-denials-and-appeals) on esd.wa.gov or use the available [template](https://esdorchardstorage.blob.core.windows.net/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/Unemployment/ESD-Benefits-Appeal-Form-English.pdf) online.

**Online:** Once a customer sets up a SecureAccess Washington account and can access eServices, the system will lead them through the process of filing an appeal.

**By fax or mail, include:**

1. Their full name;
2. Their signature;
3. Their SSN or claim ID;
4. The date of the decision they are appealing;
5. A statement indicating that they disagree with the decision made;
6. The reason why they disagree with the decision and any new information they wish to include;
7. For late appeals, the customer must include an explanation for the tardiness of the appeal.

Customers should fax or mail their appeal to the number or address listed on the decision letter (faxing their appeal is preferred). After ESD receives the request, the Office of Administrative Hearings, a separate state agency, will mail them an appointment for a telephone hearing.  This appointment letter normally arrives 10-14 days after they filed their appeal.

For more information about appeals, customers can refer to the section on appeals in the “Handbook for Unemployed Workers.” Customers can find more information — including the appeal process, continued claiming and legal resources — online at [esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov/). Type "appeal" in the search box.

### **Customers with special needs**

Customers who are unable to use the telephone or Internet to apply for benefits or submit weekly claims can, in special circumstances, go to their local WorkSource Office to get help in connecting to UI services.

WorkSource offices and the Unemployment Claims Center have auxiliary aids and services available upon request to people with disabilities. Auxiliary aids may include telecommunication devices such as Washington Relay Service 711 for hearing- or speech-impaired individuals.

# **Customers with limited English proficiency**

At the bottom of the [esd.wa.gov](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cahartman%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CTemporary%20Internet%20Files%5CContent.Outlook%5CJ9IM80KL%5Cesd.wa.gov) home page, customers can select their desired language to find available resources in that language. Or, claimants can select *Other Languages* to display a map of the world. They can select their country for available resources in their language. Resources include:

* An audio link explaining how to contact the claims center.
* Information about how to file an appeal.
* Videos.

### **Copies of records**

Instruct customers to select “Records office” under “Quick links” at the bottom of the [esd.wa.gov](https://esd.wa.gov/) home page for instructions and links to forms. This page also informs customers that they can access their wage and benefits history through eServices.