

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

201 East Washington Avenue

P.O. Box 7946

Madison, WI 53707-7946

Telephone: (608) 266-3131

Fax: (608) 266-1784

<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>

e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

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Contact: Dick Jones, Agency Liaison, 608-267-4780

Secretary Gassman Outlines Services for Wisconsin Residents Struggling in Challenging Economic Times

Labor Secretary urges dislocated workers to retool for recovery, adds staff to handle unprecedented unemployment claims, assures benefit checks to all eligible workers

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today outlined services available to Wisconsin's working families and dislocated workers.

"We stand ready to help displaced workers across the state," Secretary Gassman said. "The country's economic crisis has created very serious challenges for Wisconsin. If you just lost your job, unemployment insurance can help pay your bills. We can help you find a new job and get back on your feet. If you need job training, we can help you explore training options and career opportunities. Together, we will get through these hard times."

Secretary Roberta Gassman said the national economic crisis is unprecedented in recent decades. The rate and number of unemployment insurance claims this fall likewise are unprecedented, she said. DWD staff have been working hard to process claims for regular state benefits and federal extended benefits. DWD is hiring 83 individuals to expedite claims.

"We have extended UI Call Center hours, and we are adding staff to keep pace with the increasing number of claims," Secretary Gassman said. "We very much appreciate the patience and cooperation of unemployed workers, and we want them to know we are doing all that we can to expedite claims and ensure benefits are paid promptly to all who are eligible."

Secretary Gassman urged Wisconsin working families, affected by the national economic crisis, to contact the DWD and its partners in workforce development for assistance. Many of the employment services, such as skills assessment, job search and career planning, are available at no cost to dislocated workers. Depending on the program, individuals can receive job training at little or no cost.

"Overcoming challenges in this prolonged economic crisis will require persistence, but good jobs are available for workers with the right skills," Secretary Gassman said. "A number of dislocated workers are currently in training for new careers in health care, information technology, and advanced manufacturing."

Secretary Gassman listed the following DWD programs and services:

- **Unemployment Insurance** -- Individuals who lost their job can apply for unemployment insurance benefits, either online at the following Internet site, www.ucclaim-wi.org, or by calling Wisconsin's automatic Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, 800-822-5246. Claims specialists can be reached at (608) 232-0678 in Madison, (414) 438-7700 in Milwaukee, or toll free, either the general number, 800-822-5246, or the TTY number, 888-393-8914

Regular unemployment insurance benefits are available for up to 26 weeks with a maximum payment of \$355 per week. Up to 20 weeks of additional federal benefits are available to Wisconsin citizens who have exhausted their regular state benefits.

- **Employment and Training Services** – Job seekers can find employment opportunities by going to the state’s new Job Center of Wisconsin site, <https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/>, a free, user-friendly Internet site accessible around the clock. Job seekers can post resumes and search job listings. Employers can post job openings.
- **Veterans Services** – Veterans seeking employment opportunities can find help at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/veterans/>. Veterans can find a resource center nearest them by visiting, <http://dva.state.wi.us/CVSO.asp>. They should also use the new Job Center of Wisconsin site, <https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/>.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** – Resources are also available for people with disabilities. They can learn about these services by visiting <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr>, or calling the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, (608) 261-0050 in Madison. DVR’s toll free numbers are: 800-442-3477, and 888-877-5939 TTY.
- **Older Workers** – Older workers or retirees who want to return to work, either part time or full time, can find helpful information available at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/olderworker/>. Employment opportunities can be found on the new Job Cent of Wisconsin site, <https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/>.

All job seekers, including dislocated workers, the unemployed and underemployed, can get help finding a job or a better job at local job centers. At job centers, individuals can get help writing a resume, searching for jobs, preparing for interviews, exploring other career options and developing job training plan to pursue a new occupation. To find the job center nearest them, workers can visit www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory or call toll free at 888-258-9966.

- **Transportation Assistance** – Low-income workers facing transportation barriers to getting or keeping a job can get help through the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). Information is available at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/transportation/>, or by calling (608) 266-5138.
- **Apprenticeship Opportunities** – Individuals seeking careers in skilled trades can explore apprenticeship opportunities and learn about programs in their area by visiting: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/>.
- **Labor Standards** – Dislocated workers laid off without sufficient notice can file a complaint by visiting, http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/labor_standards_bureau. Wage claims can also be filed at this site.