

Your Question:

You asked if states include enrollment in training or postsecondary education — in lieu of submitting job applications — as eligible requirements for maintaining unemployment benefits.

Our Response:

All states provide an exemption from the requirement — to be able and available for work and conducting an active work search — for any week a person is in approved training. Based on a [2019 U.S. Department of Labor comparison of state unemployment insurance laws](#), if a person enrolls in approved training, they cannot be denied benefits. However, the process for allowing an individual to enroll and participate in education and training programs while collecting unemployment benefits varies from state to state. The location and type of program allowed under state unemployment policies can range from degree or certification programs at a postsecondary institution to training provided by a trade association.

Education and Training While Collecting Unemployment

The criteria for allowing individuals to participate in education and training programs while collecting unemployment benefits vary. In states where education and training are allowed while an individual collects unemployment benefits, an individual approved to attend an education or training program has their job-seeking requirement waived. Generally, the state programs that allow and support individuals seeking education and training while collecting unemployment benefits do not fund the individual's educational program costs.

States Examples

California: State policy allows individuals to engage in education and training while receiving unemployment benefits. Individuals who are eligible for unemployment benefits are eligible for [California Training Benefits](#). The program allows an individual to continue their education or build new skills through [eligible training](#). If an approved individual for the California Training Benefits program by the California Employment Development Department, they are excused from requirements to be actively available for work. The department does not pay for education or training expenses, and individuals are encouraged to seek state and federal aid to fund their education and training. Approved individuals must provide certification that they are enrolled and satisfactorily pursuing the training or retraining to continue receiving their benefits.

Illinois: Statute allows an individual to be eligible for unemployment benefits if they are enrolled in and regularly attend a training course approved by the director of the department of employment security. The individual must complete and submit a [School/Training Questionnaire](#) outlining the type of education or training they are enrolled in. Individuals can pursue certificates, licenses or degrees that are approved by the director. In their application, the individual must indicate how the training is funded.

Massachusetts: State statute allows an individual to be eligible for unemployment benefits while enrolled in an approved training program. The department of unemployment assistance provides the [Training Opportunities Program](#) that waives an [eligible](#) individual's active-search-for-work requirement. Eligible [individuals can receive up to 26 weeks of additional benefits](#) if the training extends beyond the duration of an individual initial unemployment claim. Individuals can pursue vocational or industrial training. The department does not fund the training costs for the individual.

Additional Resources

[United States Department of Labor Comparison of State Unemployment Law 2019](#): The section on [Nonmonetary Eligibility](#) (p. 29) may be most relevant to the question.

[National Conference of State Legislatures COVID-19 Unemployment Benefits Resource Page](#)