



News Release

Pat Quinn, Governor

Jay Rowell, Director

**For Immediate Release
March 21, 2012**

Greg Rivara
Phone: 312.814.0095
www.ides.illinois.gov

Enhanced Rules to be Eligible for Unemployment Benefits

Recent Filers Risk Benefits if They Refuse Training, Skills Exam

CHICAGO - The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) announced today new federal rules for individuals receiving unemployment insurance benefits. The enhanced rules require individuals to comply with measures to ensure that they are updating their jobs skills and looking for work. Those who do not comply risk losing their weekly unemployment insurance benefit payment.

The federal government included the enhanced requirements when it passed the latest benefit extension. In-person interviews with IDES staff will be required for workers transitioning from the state Regular Benefit program to the federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program. Interviews also will be required for those transitioning from the first round of federal benefits to the second if they had not previously been interviewed. These mandates are in addition to job-training services and interviews IDES already requires. The interviews will ensure individuals are aware of skills assessment and job training programs designed to help them find work or identify a new career path. Individuals who do not participate or do not show examples of their work search will no longer be eligible for benefits. IDES will notify individuals of the enhanced requirement primarily through the media, mail and e-mail.

“The renewed emphasis is designed to ensure individuals are doing everything possible to update their skills and are prepared to re-enter the workforce,” IDES Director Jay Rowell said. “The federal directive is very specific about what is needed to receive federal benefits.”

Individuals will be mailed specific paperwork regarding a skills assessment and work search history. This paperwork must be completed and brought to the interview. Individuals who do not complete the paperwork prior to the interview risk losing benefits.

The deep national recession prompted Congress to ask Presidents Obama and Bush to enact unemployment insurance programs beyond the regular benefit program offered in each state. There are six programs in Illinois: Regular Benefits, Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) Tiers I, II, III and IV and Extended Benefits (EB). In February, Congress extended the EUC programs through the end of 2012. EB, which was set to expire March 10, also was extended. When EB ends in Illinois depends on how swiftly the state unemployment rate declines. Up to 99 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits remain potentially available for Illinois claimants. Congress also required that these new services be provided within 30 days of the legislation taking effect.

-END-

