COVID-19 Work Refusals: Information for Employers

During this unprecedented time, many employers have been forced to lay off employees, in response to stay-at-home orders, social distancing restrictions, lack of available work, and concerns about contracting COVID-19. In response, the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provided expanded unemployment benefits to impacted individuals. The CARES Act provides additional weekly supplement payments, additional weeks of benefits, and a new program, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, for those who traditionally have not qualified for unemployment benefits.

As employers begin reopening their doors to a “new normal,” in compliance with the [Responsible RestartOhio](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/responsible-restart-ohio/responsible-protocols/responsible-protocols) requirements, many employees are expected to return to their previous employment.

Ohio law prohibits individuals from receiving unemployment benefits if they refuse to accept offers of suitable work, or quit work, without good cause.

If you have employees who refuse to return to work or quit work, it’s important that you let the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) know so we can make accurate eligibility determinations.

To report these occurrences, please visit [unemployment.ohio.gov](https://unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/employer)/employer and click on “Report COVID-19 Work Refusals.” This will take you to a web page to report these employees for investigation by ODJFS. Based on an individual examination of the facts from both parties, our claims examiners will then determine whether good cause exists for the individuals in question to continue receiving unemployment benefits.

Next week, the full policy that ODJFS will use to determine individuals’ continued eligibility for unemployment benefits after refusing to return to work will be posted here: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ouio/UIPolicy/index.stm>. This policy will underscore the presumption that if an individual’s job is available for them to work again, they will not be eligible for unemployment benefits.