

Work Sharing - A Smart Alternative to Layoffs Employee's Frequently Asked Questions

What is Work Sharing? Work Sharing (WS) is a voluntary unemployment insurance program that provides employers with an alternative to layoffs when they face a temporary and unexpected downturn in business. It allows employers to divide available hours of work among a group of employees instead of implementing a full layoff to a few employees. It allows employees to keep working but with fewer hours. While you are working fewer hours, you will receive a percentage of your regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. You may choose not to participate.

Can I apply for WS benefits if my employer reduced my hours? Only your employer can establish a WS Plan (Plan). Individual employees cannot. You can notify your employer about the availability of the WS program. If your employer is not eligible or does not want to participate in WS and you are working reduced hours, you may be eligible for partial regular UI benefits.

Are there ever any reasons my employer cannot participate in WS? Yes.

- WS is not intended to be a means for employers to address problems such as seasonal or cyclical shutdowns, inventory control, model changeovers, or equipment maintenance.
- WS is also not intended to allow an employer to use UI benefits to supplement the payroll on a continued basis.

Am I eligible for WS benefit payments? To be eligible you must;

- Be monetarily eligible for regular UI benefits in Maryland and not have exhausted your entitlement to regular UI benefits;
- Meet all the requirements of the law for us to pay UI benefits; you must be able and available for work but in the case of WS it means you must be able and available to work for your current employer and you do not have to look for work with another employer;
- Be able and available to work your normal work hours;
- Have worked at least three months for an employer with an approved WS Plan; **and**
- Have been hired on a full-time or permanent part-time basis. Temporary or seasonal workers cannot participate.

How much money will I receive each week? This depends on how many hours a week you work with the WS employer and your weekly UI benefit amount.

- You will receive wages equal to the number of hours you work each week. If for example, your employer reduces your hours by 20 % and you work 80% of your regular hours, you will receive 80% of your regular wages from your employer.
- Your WS benefit payment is calculated using the percentage of the reduction of your working hours. If your working hours are reduced by 20%, then your WS benefit is 20% of your UI benefit amount.

Here's an example:

- You regularly work 40 hours a week and earn \$500. Your employer is reducing hours by 20%. You will receive 80% of your wages from your employer - \$400 a week
 - Your UI weekly benefit amount is \$250. WS benefits are 20% of the UI benefit - \$50 a week
 - Total for the week = \$450
- If you have dependent children as defined for UI, you may also be eligible for an additional \$8 dependency allowance for up to 5 dependents.

How are benefits paid? Payments are issued through a debit card.

WS benefits will not be released to an employee/WS claimant until the employer and the claimant certify the hours worked. The employer must submit the certifying information to the Administrator on a weekly basis.

When would I be eligible to be paid regular UI benefits instead of WS benefits?

- When you do not work any hours in a week because your WS employer has no work available; or
- When you work more hours or less hours than your approved plan.

Because regular UI benefits are calculated differently than WS UI benefits, you may or may not receive benefits for that week.

What type of UI benefits will I get if I go on vacation for a week? If you do not work any hours for your WS employer and you are not available for work during the week (vacation), you are not eligible for any type of UI benefits.

What happens if I use a day of paid leave (sick, vacation, personal) during a WS week? What about unpaid time off?

- If you miss any time during a week and receive paid leave, those hours count as worked time for calculating WS benefits. However, you must do some work for the employer in that week.
- If you take leave that is unpaid or you fail to work all available hours, you may not be eligible for unemployment benefits during that week. For instance, if you are two hours late for work and are not paid for those two hours, you will not receive WS benefits for that week.

What happens if I am in a Union? If you are represented by a union, the Plan must have the agreement of the collective bargaining agent. Your employer must seek the agreement of the employees covered under the Plan.

What happens to my health, retirement or other benefits while my hours are reduced on WS? It is a requirement that benefits continue to be provided to affected employees as though their workweeks have not been reduced. However, if the employer reduces the level of benefits for its employees who are not in the WS program, the level of benefits may be reduced by a like amount for the employer's WS employees.

What do I do if my employer has been approved for WS? The UI office will provide instructions to your employer when your Plan begins. Your employer will then provide you with instructions for filing a claim. You do not need to contact the UI office to file for your weekly WS benefits. If you are filing for regular UI benefits, you must contact a local office.

While the Plan is in effect, your employer is responsible for ensuring that employees in the same affected group have the same number of reduced work hours each week. If the DUI discovers a discrepancy in claims by members in the same work unit, the Plan will be revoked.