

BACK TO WORK DURING COVID-19: WORKER SAFETY RIGHTS, SICK LEAVE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

As Rhode Island reopens for work you may be worried about your health and safety as an employee.

A SAFE WORKPLACE

All employees have the right to a safe workplace.

Emergency regulations of the Department of Health¹ require all re-opening businesses to follow safety guidelines to minimize the risks of COVID-19 contagion. These guidelines include:

- Free masks for employees.
- Screening for illness.
- Posters with health / safety rules.
- Additional room to allow for social distancing whenever possible.
- Water, soap and sanitizer and clear procedures for cleaning of premises consistent with CDC guidelines.
- A plan for how to accomplish worker and consumer safety, available at the request of the Department of Health.
- Cooperation with the Department of Health in investigations of flare ups of infection.
- A designated individual in charge of monitoring compliance.
- Employee training about health and safety requirements.

In addition, specific additional guidelines apply to different work sectors such as child care centers, offices and others. For details see www.reopeningri.com. You can also call the RI Department of Health COVID-19 Info Line 401-222-8022 for more information.

If you have a disability or health condition that puts you at risk you can also ask for other reasonable accommodations that would make your work safe for you, such as the right to work from home if possible or to transfer to an area of the workplace with limited exposure to other people.

If you see that the required safety measures are not in place you can call in your concerns to the Department of Business Administration at 401-889-5550. Leave your name and number and the nature of your complaint and someone will call you back. All calls are confidential.

IF YOU CAN'T GO BACK TO WORK: UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS, TDI/TCI, PAID SICK LEAVE

If you are:

- Sick
- Quarantined
- Have a health condition your doctor tells you puts you at risk even with workplace accommodations
- Taking care of a sick person or a child who is learning from home or whose child care is closed

You may be eligible for unemployment benefits, sick pay, or TDI/TCI instead of returning to work.

¹<https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/216-50-15-7>

For example, you are receiving **Unemployment Benefits**, your employer calls you back to work and reports your refusal to return to DLT. You may still be eligible for **benefits** if you have good cause to continue receiving them. Good cause includes: you have tested positive for COVID-19, OR your doctor recommends you stay home because you are high risk, OR you need to care for children due to school/daycare closures.

Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) is available if you can't work due to illness and **Temporary Caregiver Insurance (TCI)** provides benefits if you need to be home to care for a sick family member.

You may be eligible for **Paid Leave or Paid Sick Time** if you are unable to work due to illness or you need to care for a child or family member.

For help deciding which program to apply for: Each person's circumstance is unique. **RI Legal Services** can help you figure out which program is the right one to apply for and give you information about other benefits, including health insurance coverage and SNAP, that can help you meet basic needs.

For help with concerns about workplace safety: Contact **RI Legal Services** or the **R.I. Center for Justice**

Contact Information:

RI Legal Services: 401-274-2652 x164

R.I. Center for Justice: 401-491-1101

Department of Business Regulation (DBR) 401-889-5550 (for complaints that workplace safety requirements are not being met)

RI Department of Health (RIDOH) 401-222-8022 (COVID-19 Info Line)