

If you're 60 or over, call your local legal aid office:

Eastern CT	800-413-7796	Western CT	800-413-7797
Hartford Area	860-541-5000	Bridgeport Area	800-809-4434
Stamford Area	800-541-8909	New Haven Area	203-946-4811

If you're under 60, call SLS for help:



Statewide Legal Services
1-800-453-3320
860-344-0380

Search our website for help:



www.ctlawhelp.org

EMPLOYMENT

LEGAL SERVICES

SELF HELP SERIES

Out of Work? *Apply for Unemployment*

November 2016



We offer free legal help in many areas, including

- welfare,
- SNAP (food stamps),
- divorce,
- child support,
- domestic violence,
- bankruptcy,
- special education,
- nursing home care,
- health insurance,
- eviction,
- foreclosure,
- and more.

See the reverse side for more about legal services.

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Statewide Legal Services
1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380

Search our website for help:



www.ctlawhelp.org

If you're over 60, call your local legal aid office.

Connecticut Legal Services

www.ctlegal.org

Bridgeport

1000 Lafayette Blvd 203-336-3851
Suite 950

New Britain

16 Main Street 860-225-8678

New London

125 Eugene O'Neill Dr.
Suite 120 860-447-0323

Stamford

20 Summer Street 203-348-9216

Waterbury

85 Central Avenue 203-756-8074

Willimantic

1125 Main Street 860-456-1761

Greater Hartford Legal Aid

www.ghla.org

999 Asylum Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
860-541-5000

New Haven Legal Assistance Association

www.nhlegal.org

205 Orange Street
New Haven, CT 06510
203-946-4811

Consumer Law Project for Elders

Free legal assistance to people 60 and over throughout Connecticut who have money/debt problems.

1-800-296-1467

Out of work? Apply for Unemployment

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This booklet was produced by Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Statewide Legal Services.

The information in this booklet is based on laws in Connecticut as of 11/2016. We hope that the information is helpful. It is not intended as legal advice. For advice on your situation, call Statewide Legal Services or contact a lawyer.

Tips for your written statement:

- **Read** the referee's decision carefully.
- **Explain** any mistakes in the decision, the Findings of Fact, or anything else you disagree with.
- **Send in** any written information you couldn't get before the hearing, along with an explanation of why you didn't have it for the hearing. For example, a medical issue caused you to be fired but you couldn't get your doctor to write a note about your condition until after the hearing.

The Board will read your statement and the information from your hearings and make a decision. It could take up to six months for the Board to make a decision. You will probably not have another hearing.

Remember!

- You only have **21 days** from when the Referee decision was mailed to get your appeal to the Board!
- Keep filing your claim every week.

Applying for Unemployment

If you left a job or were fired, you should apply for unemployment as soon as possible. You should apply even if

- you quit or were fired,
- you worked as an independent contractor or were paid in cash,
- you do not have any papers to prove you were working, or
- your boss didn't give you a pink slip or said you won't be able to get unemployment benefits.

How do I apply?

You can apply

- online at www.ct.gov/dol, or
- by calling 860-263-6785 and asking for your local TeleBenefits number.

What will happen after I apply?

You will get a notice in the mail that tells you

- if you can get unemployment, or
 - if you have to give more information.
- ▶ **If you were laid off**, the notice will probably say you can get unemployment benefits.
- ▶ **If you quit or were fired**, the notice will ask you to give more information at a hearing.

Unemployment hearings

When is my hearing?

Your notice will tell you the date and time of your hearing. If you aren't available at that time, call the American Job Center right away.

Important: If you do not participate in the hearing, you will not get unemployment benefits.

Where is my hearing?

Most hearings are done over the phone. If you want an in-person hearing, call the American Job Center.

American Job Center	Phone and Fax
Hartford Area	Tel: 860-256-3800 Fax: 860-256-3820
Hamden Area	Tel: 203-859-3100 Fax: 860-859-3135
New London Area	Tel: 860-439-7500 Fax: 860-439-7510

What happens at the hearing?

A *fact finder* from the American Job Center will be in charge of the hearing. The fact finder will give you and your boss a chance to explain why you quit or were fired.

You and your boss can also

- have witnesses who know about your case, and
- show proof (such as timecards or a doctor's letter) to prove your case. If your hearing is done by phone, you can fax or mail your proof to your local American Job Center.

If you were fired, your boss must prove why you should not get unemployment benefits.

- Bring a pen and paper to the hearing in case you want to make notes.
- Arrive at least **15 minutes early** with your witnesses. Ask to see your file and look at all of the papers in it before your hearing. Call the phone number on your hearing notice if you are going to be late.

During the hearing:

- Stay calm, be polite, and do not interrupt.
- Do not speak until the referee says it is your turn.
- Tell the referee if you do not understand something.
- Be honest, but don't give information that you were not asked about.

After your hearing:

The referee will make a decision based on information from both hearings. The referee will mail you the decision in about two to four weeks.

If you lose, you will not be able to get unemployment until you get another job and earn enough money to be eligible. This normally takes about 5 weeks.

If you lose, you can appeal to the Board of Review. File your appeal in person, by mail, or by fax. The Board will ask you to send in a statement about why you think you should get unemployment benefits.

Contact the Appeals Division right away if you

- do not get a notice within 30 days,
- want to change the hearing date, or
- need an interpreter at your hearing.

Will the appeal hearing be like the first hearing?

No. The appeal hearing is more formal. It will be recorded. The referee will

- explain the appeal hearing process;
- review the documents from the first hearing;
- ask you, your boss, and any witnesses to swear to tell the truth before asking questions; and
- ask if you want to say anything else. You won't get another chance to add more information later.

Get ready for your appeal hearing

Things to do before your hearing:

- Watch this free video. It explains what will happen at your hearing. You can watch it at the American Job Center or online at <https://youtu.be/VDTSuktRnpM>. You can also ask for a copy that you can watch at home by following this link: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/appeals/video.htm>.
- Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320. We will explain your rights and tell you what to expect at your hearing.
- Organize the documents and other evidence that support your case. Make notes about
 - what you want to say to prove your case, and
 - the questions you want to ask the witnesses.

If you quit, you must prove that you had a good reason to quit and that

- you can work now and are actively applying for jobs (at least 3 each week);
- quitting was the only reasonable thing for you to do; and
- before you quit, you either
 - told (or tried to tell) your boss about the problem, or
 - did not say anything because it would not have helped.

What qualifies as a good reason to quit?

Here are some examples that might be considered good reasons to quit:

- ▶ You had work problems that were not your fault. For example:
 - The job was dangerous or made you sick.
 - The job changed to have longer hours, less pay, different job duties, or different working conditions.
 - Coworkers or supervisors treated you unfairly, discriminated against you, or harassed you.
- ▶ You had a problem at home. For example:
 - You had to care for a sick family member.
 - You had to keep yourself or a relative safe from domestic violence.
 - You lost your transportation to get to work (for example, your bus service was cancelled or a carpool ended). This does not mean problems with your own car.

► You have health problems. For example, you can no longer do your job because of a health problem, but you can do a different kind of job. **Important:** You must show proof, such as a doctor's letter. The letter should say

- what your health problem is and the kinds of activities you should not do at work,
- how your job affects your health and if you should continue in your current job or change to a new job, and
- what other kinds of work you could do despite your health problem.

What my reason for quitting is not considered good enough?

If you don't have one of these *good reasons* for quitting mentioned above, you will not get benefits. In addition, you could also lose your welfare and SNAP benefits.

What if I do not speak or read English well?

Call the American Job Center right away and ask them to provide an interpreter for your hearing.

What happens at the end of the hearing?

The fact finder will read the hearing report to you over the phone. If there are any mistakes, ask the fact finder to fix them.

How will I find out if I won my hearing?

The fact finder will mail you a written decision in about one week.

What if I don't agree with the hearing decision?

You can *appeal*. You will have a new hearing with a *referee*. A referee is an attorney who will listen to testimony and look at documents in your case. An appeal is your chance to give new information that you did not give at your first hearing.

How do I appeal?

You have **21 days** after the date of the fact finder's written decision to file your appeal.

- File by mail, fax, or online at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/appeals/apfrmnt.htm.
- Fill out an appeal form. You can get a blank form at an American Job Center or an Appeals Division office.
- Write a letter. Include your name, address, social security number, date of the fact finder's decision, and the reason you think the decision is wrong.

Important: Keep a copy of your appeal for your records, and continue filing your claims every week during your appeal process. If you win, you will only get money for the weeks you filed a claim.

What will happen after I file my appeal?

The Appeals Division will mail you a notice within 30 days with

- the date, time, and place of your next hearing; and
- the issue(s) the referee will ask about.