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.
### Out of work? Apply for Unemployment

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

**Search our website for help:**  
www.ctlawhelp.org

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**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

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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 2/2019. 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.*

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Applying for unemployment

If you quit a job or were fired, apply for unemployment right away. You should apply even if

- you don’t think you can get unemployment because you quit or were fired,
- you worked as an independent contractor or were paid in cash,
- you don’t have any papers to prove you were working, or
- your boss didn’t give you a pink slip or said you can’t get unemployment benefits.

You can apply online at www.ct.gov/dol. If you are disabled or you need help filing your claim, you can get help at an American Job Center office. More information about American Job Centers is available at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ajc/FactSheets.htm.

What will happen after I apply?

If you were laid off, you will probably get a notice in the mail that says you can get unemployment benefits.

If you quit or were fired, you will probably get a questionnaire in the mail that you must fill out and send back to the Department of Labor. This questionnaire is called a Claimant Separation Statement. You will have to answer questions about why you were fired or why you quit your job. You should also send any documents that support the reasons why you quit or why the employer should not have fired you (such as a doctor’s letter or phone records).

If you don’t understand the questions or you need help, contact an American Job Center:

► www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ajc/FactSheets.htm
Who decides if I can get unemployment benefits?

A person called a fact finder from the Department of Labor will decide if you are can get unemployment benefits based on the questionnaires and other documents that you and your employer send in.

If you were fired, your boss must prove why you should not get unemployment benefits. Your boss might say that you were late, absent, or you broke work rules.

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 speaking up would not have helped.

What qualifies as a good reason to quit my job?

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.

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.
**What will happen at the hearing?**
The hearing will be recorded. The referee will

- explain the appeal hearing process;
- look at the documents that were submitted to the fact finder;
- 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.)

**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 don’t 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 the file and the hearing. 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.

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 a list of the activities you should not do at work,
- how your job affects your health,
- if you should continue in your current job or change to a new job, and
- the 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. You could also lose your welfare and SNAP benefits.

**How will I find out if I can get benefits?**
The Department of Labor will mail you a written decision in about one week.
What if I don’t agree with the decision?

If you don’t agree with the decision, you can appeal. An appeal is your chance to give new information that you did not give at your first hearing. You will have a hearing with a referee. A referee is an attorney who will listen to testimony and look at documents in your case.

How do I appeal an unemployment decision?

You have 21 days after the date of the fact finder’s written decision to file your appeal. Here are the different ways you can 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 with

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

Contact the Appeals Division right away if

- you don’t get a notice within 30 days,
- you want to change the hearing date, or
- you need an interpreter at your hearing.

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. They can 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 employer’s witnesses and any witnesses you bring.
- Bring a pen and paper to the hearing in case you want to make notes.
- Plan to 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.