



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) State Employee WorkShare Program

Beginning Sunday, June 14, the Administration is making available a new State of Rhode Island Employee WorkShare Program, which will allow eligible state employees to claim federal WorkShare benefits while working 60% of their regular weekly hours. Below are some Frequently Asked Questions about the program.

*If I volunteer to participate in the program, does that mean that I am automatically enrolled?*

Departments need to consider the totality of program volunteers against the necessity to maintain adequate levels of needed and critical services to the citizens of Rhode Island. Following careful consideration, if an agency is unable to meet required service levels, they may determine that an employee or groups of employees in particular classifications are unable to participate in the program. Included in this consideration are employees who are health care providers and emergency responders.

*I am a temporary or seasonal worker. Am I eligible to participate in the State's WorkShare program?*

Under the Department of Labor and Training's WorkShare rules, seasonal or temporary workers are not eligible to participate in the program.

*I live in another state. Am I still able to participate in Rhode Island's Workshare program?*

Yes, nonresident employees are able to participate since their employer is in Rhode Island.

*How is the WorkShare benefit calculated?*

Since employees will be receiving WorkShare benefits for 40% of their weekly wages, the maximum weekly benefit under the WorkShare program will be \$234. As part of the federal CARES Act, individuals collecting WorkShare benefits are also eligible to receive the extra \$600 per week in full. It should be noted that this \$600 payment is set to end on July 25, 2020, and there is no guarantee that it will be renewed. Due to the extra \$600 per week, employees earning a taxable salary of \$69,500 or less will average the same salary or better (as if working full-time over the course of this period). Note: This is a rough estimate. The salary cited does not assume any tax or other payroll deductions and may vary depending on individual circumstances.

For example, an employee whose annual taxable salary is \$50,000 receives \$962 weekly from the State of Rhode Island. Working 60% of their work week will result in a payment of \$577 from the State and \$193 in a WorkShare payment. Adding the \$600 benefit from the CARES Act, the employee would receive a total of \$1,369 for the six weeks through the July 25, 2020, and then \$770 weekly for the remaining six weeks of the program.

*Will I receive any additional benefit for dependents?*

Yes, the full unemployment insurance benefit for dependent children (under the age of 18) is the greater of \$15 or 5% of the weekly benefit rate for each dependent up to a maximum of 5 dependents. This would be reduced under WorkShare by 60%.



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*With WorkShare, is there an income maximum where an employee would not qualify for the additional \$600 benefit?*

No.

*When will I receive my first WorkShare payment?*

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the standard mandatory waiting period of one week has been waived. However, employees should also be aware that due to the high volume that DLT is experiencing with unemployment claims, employees may experience a lag in receiving their first WorkShare benefit payment. Details about your benefit payment will be shared as they become available.

*Do the two WorkShare days need to be the same each week, or can I switch them each week based on either my personal needs or the needs of my agency?*

To ensure that agencies are able to properly manage their operations, the goal is to have employees consistently work the same three days and take the same two WorkShare days each week.

**UPDATE!** *What happens if one of my WorkShare days falls on a holiday?*

A participant cannot receive a WorkShare payment on a day for which they are also getting paid for the holiday. During those weeks where there is a Monday holiday, the holiday will be counted as one of the three non-WorkShare days (since the participant is getting a full day of pay for the holiday). As a result, a participant would move their WorkShare day from Monday to another day during the week and would only actually work two other days during that week.

**NEW!** *What happens if my regular schedule includes a Saturday, and Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> is one of my scheduled WorkShare days?*

If you are a participant who is covered by a bargaining unit contract, much like the Monday holiday question above, Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> will be counted as one of the three non-WorkShare days. As a result, you would move your WorkShare day from Saturday to a day earlier in the week and would only work two other days during in the week. If you are then scheduled to work on Monday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, you would report to work on that date. Note that WorkShare looks at each week individually, and you would not be able to move a WorkShare day from Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> into the week of July 5<sup>th</sup>.

If you are a participant who is not covered by a bargaining unit contract, then you would work on Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> as Monday, July 6<sup>th</sup> is your scheduled holiday and you should follow the Monday holiday scenario detailed above.

**NEW!** *During a week with a holiday, can I use accrued time on my two working days so I can be out for a full week and still receive my WorkShare benefit payment?*

The WorkShare program requires that a participant work at least a portion of their hours during any given week in order to qualify for the WorkShare benefit. So, in a week with a holiday, a participant would not receive their WorkShare benefit payment if they choose to use vacation or



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other accrued time for their two remaining working days. In this case, the participant would be required to use other accrued time for their two WorkShare days in order to be paid and out of work for the full week.

*How will I receive my WorkShare benefit payment?*

During the application process, employees will be asked to provide their routing and account numbers if they want direct deposit, or they can choose our Electronic Payment Card (EPC).

**UPDATE!** *What happens if I call out sick on one of my scheduled workdays?*

Under the Department of Labor and Training's (DLT) WorkShare regulations, if an employee calls out sick on any of their scheduled workdays, they will be disqualified from receiving the WorkShare benefit payment for that week. For the purposes of the SORI Employee WorkShare Program and to allow employees flexibility during this difficult time, if an employee has an unanticipated need to be off on a scheduled workday or days, the employee may choose to use approved time off from their accrued personal, vacation or comp time. If the employee has no accrued vacation, personal or comp time to discharge, the employee can choose to work another day (or days) that week. If an employee is sick and is unable to work a portion of the week, the employee must discharge sick, vacation, personal, comp time or RO/R1time for all 5 days that week and would not receive WorkShare benefits for that week.

*What happens if I have a vacation week planned for this summer? Can I use three days of vacation time and still receive my WorkShare benefit payment?*

If you have a vacation week planned, you will not be eligible to receive your WorkShare benefits payment for that week and you will need to discharge accrued time for the full week. The WorkShare program requires that employees work at least a portion of their hours during any given week in order to qualify for the WorkShare benefit. (Note: While participating in WorkShare, employees continue to accrue full credit of vacation, sick, personal and other accruals.)

*What happens if my circumstances change and I would like to drop out of the program before the program end date?*

It is the State's expectation that once committed to the WorkShare program, all employees will remain part of the program for the entire duration. This is for both the State to realize its payroll savings goal as well as for agencies to be able to properly manage its workforce needs through the end of the program. The more we maximize participation in this program, the fewer painful choices the State will have to make down the road.

*If I participate in WorkShare and there are layoffs and furloughs at a later date, will the WorkShare payments reduce my unemployment benefits in the future?*

Your unemployment benefit credit amount and claim year are established at the beginning of the claim. WorkShare payments would reduce your total unemployment benefit amount for the claim year.

*Will WorkShare impact when I get my scheduled step increase as a result of less days worked?*

WorkShare will not impact when an employee receives their scheduled step increase. The scheduled date of the step increase remains the same.



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*Will I still receive my full longevity and education credits?*

Yes.

*I am on a compressed work week now. Would I have to discontinue my compressed work week schedule in order to participate in the program?*

Employees who are presently in a compressed work week agreement will need to revert to a regular work schedule for the period of WorkShare.

*If I work extra hours on one or more of the days I am scheduled to work, will that reduce my WorkShare benefit?*

Employees will not be assigned or required to work extra hours during the weeks they are participating in the WorkShare program. In the event an employee participating in the WorkShare program works extra hours, those hours would be paid at straight time and the additional earnings and hours worked would be reported to DLT which would have an effect of reducing the unemployment benefits an employee would receive for that week. If an employee's total hours worked in a week exceed 90%, they are no longer eligible for a WorkShare payment. (Note: In order for the State to effectively manage the WorkShare Program in coordination with DLT, employees should adhere to their scheduled hours as much and as closely as possible.)

*I am currently teleworking either all or some of my work week. If I volunteer, will I be able to continue teleworking on my three working days?*

Yes, if you already working under an approved teleworking agreement, you can continue to telework while part of the WorkShare program with the understanding that as the State moves into each phase of reopening, we will be looking to bring more employees back into the workplace. This may cause your teleworking agreement to end or be modified in the future.

*If I am set to retire during the WorkShare program period, can I still participate until my retire date?*

No, the participants must be in the program for the full period from June 14 to September 5.

*Will participating in the WorkShare program impact my retirement eligibility date?*

No. For purposes of determining your retirement eligibility date, you will still receive full-service credit while on the WorkShare program.

*If at the end of the program period I would like to "buy back" my missed pension contributions, is it with or without interest?*

The interest is 7% compounded annually. Members may request such a purchase at any time, beginning at the conclusion of their participation in the WorkShare program. Therefore, the sooner they request to purchase, the less interest they will be required to pay. The missed contributions will matter to those who are in their 5 highest paid years (generally those closer to retirement, but not always).

*How do I make a buyback?*

To make a buyback, complete the WorkShare Verification form at [ERSRI.org](http://ERSRI.org) to contribute the "missing" employee contributions.



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You may elect to "purchase" this salary once the WorkShare program time period has ended in September. Members interested in purchasing the missing salary must submit the request to ERSRI prior to retirement or December 31, 2020 -whichever is sooner - to avoid also having to pay interest charges on the missing contributions.

*I am currently enrolled in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) program for the care of my child(ren) due to their school/day care closure. Can I participate in the WorkShare program and continue to receive the FFCRA benefit?*

No. You are unable to receive benefits from both programs. If you are accepted to participate in WorkShare, you will need to be removed from FFCRA. Please contact the Division of Human Resources Disability Management Unit (DMU) at 401-574-8401 to initiate this process.

*If I have another job with a 2<sup>nd</sup> employer, will this affect my participation with the State's WorkShare program?*

No. Employment with a second employer will not affect your participation in the State of Rhode Island Employee WorkShare Program.

*I am a part-time employee with the State. Can I participate in the WorkShare program?*

Yes. Part-time employees may be eligible to participate in the WorkShare program, and the same formula applies in that part-time employees will work 60% of their schedule each week and receive WorkShare benefits for the remaining 40%.

*I am interested in volunteering for the WorkShare Program. What do I do next?*

Employees who are interested in volunteering for the WorkShare program should fill out the State of Rhode Island Employee WorkShare Volunteer Form and submit it to your supervisor by Monday, June 8, 2020. Your supervisor or agency director will notify you if you have been accepted to participate. Should you be selected, you will be provided instructions on how to file an initial claim with DLT, as well as details regarding the timing of WorkShare payments and other pertinent program information as it becomes available. After the filing of the initial claim, the Department of Administration will continue to recertify you each week through the end of the program.

*Where can I go if I have more questions about DLT's WorkShare program?*

- WorkShare Program, Documents and FAQs: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/ws.htm#faqs>
- WorkShare Brochure: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/pdfs/Workshare0316.pdf>
- COVID-19 One Pager: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/ui/pdfs/WorkShare%20COVID19%20One-Pager.pdf>

*Questions about the State Employee WorkShare Program? You have a few different resources:*

- HR General Email: [doa.hrcontact@hr.ri.gov](mailto:doa.hrcontact@hr.ri.gov)
- HR General Hotline: 401-222-2160
- Assigned Agency HR Liaison:  
<http://www.hr.ri.gov/documents/Organizational%20Charts/General-March2020.pdf>