



Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid

EMERGENCY COVID-19 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANT REPRESENTATION PROGRAM

Nearly one million Washingtonians have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and mandatory social distancing orders. Hundreds of thousands have filed claims for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, the vast majority of whom have never sought assistance from government programs.

The Employment Security Department has been overwhelmed with demand, hired hundreds of new claims specialists, reengineered its telephone and on-line systems to meet both demand and implement changes resulting from federal stimulus programs and Governor Inslee's emergency orders. Thousands of UI claimants will have their claims lost, improperly or untimely processed, or wrongfully denied.

With emergency state funding, the Office of Civil Legal Aid has established an Emergency COVID-19 Unemployment Insurance Claimant Representation Program. A major part of this program involves contracting with properly trained private attorneys across the state to accept referrals of and represent UI claimants whose claims have not been properly handled or who have been denied UI benefits. Under this program, OCLA will:

- Recruit private attorneys willing to accept at least 20 referrals of UI claimants for legal representation between May 15, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
- Engage the Unemployment Law Project to provide training, technical assistance, and ongoing support for private attorneys contracted to represent UI claimants.
- Pay private attorneys \$100/hr. for representation of UI claimants between May 15, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

Because UI appeals are conducted telephonically, these cases offer excellent opportunities for remote lawyering. Cases will be screened prior to referral; the substantive law and legal processes are relatively uncomplicated; cases do not require extensive amounts of attorney time; and excellent training and support resources have been developed.

On our [website](#) you will find a copy of the private attorney [contract](#) and [reporting/invoice](#) templates.

Private attorneys interested and willing to handle UI cases should contact:

Unemployment Insurance Program Manager
Office of Civil Legal Aid
ocla@ocla.wa.gov