

IMPORTANT NOTICE

TO UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS RECIPIENTS

In May 2009, it was announced that individuals filing for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits may receive special consideration for Pell Grant financial aid to pay for job training or education. Some UI benefit recipients may also be able to continue receiving benefits while enrolled. Studies have shown that workers with more education and training have better job security and earn higher wages.

Federal Pell Grant scholarships covering up to \$5,350.00 in education and training expenses may be available for individuals meeting eligibility requirements. Pell Grants are accepted at nearly all universities and community colleges, and many trade and technical schools. Even if you don't qualify for a Pell Grant, you may be eligible for other aid.

PELL Grant Information

The Departments of Education and Labor have created a single web site, www.opportunity.gov, where you can find helpful information and apply for a Pell Grant. An application is also available at www.fafsa.gov, or by calling 1-800-4FEDAID. While you will need to report last year's income when applying, your school can adjust your eligibility to reflect your current circumstances. Colleges or One-Stop Career Centers can also help you apply for Pell Grant scholarships and other federal financial aid.

Where To Go For Information – One Stops, Community Colleges or VEC

Decide what type of training best meets your needs. You may want to visit www.careeronestop.org or visit your local community college at www.vccs.edu/ for help in identifying potential education and training opportunities. To locate the nearest One-Stop Career Center, you may call the toll free number: 1-877-US-2-JOBS (1-877-872-5627) for assistance or visit www.servicelocator.org.

Continued Unemployment Benefits Eligibility

Please contact the VEC Customer Contact Center at 1-866-832-2363 or VEC staff in a local Workforce Services Center in advance of enrolling, to ensure that you can continue to receive unemployment benefits while enrolled in the program you chose. Currently, it is not every training program that excuses you from the requirement that you must continue to seek employment and remain available for work in order to receive unemployment benefits. **We encourage individuals to participate in job training however you should know that only approved training programs waive the requirements as outlined below.**

In order for approval of training to be considered by the Commission, other than that under the Trade Act, Section 134 of the Workforce Investment Act or Section 2296, the following outlines current Virginia law:

A. Training shall be approved for an eligible claimant under the provisions of Section 60.2-613 of the Code of Virginia *only if* the Commission finds that:

- The prospect for continuing employment for which the claimant is qualified by training and experience are minimal and are not likely to improve in the foreseeable future in the locality in which he resides or is claiming benefits;
- The proposed training course is vocational or technical training or retraining in schools or classes that are conducted as programs designed to prepare an individual for gainful employment in the occupation for which the training is applicable. The training course shall require a minimum of 30 hours attendance each week;
- The proposed training has been approved by an appropriate accrediting agency or, if none exists in the state, the training complies with quality and supervision standards established the Commission, or is licensed by an agency of the state in which given;
- The claimant has the required qualifications and aptitude to complete the course successfully;
- The training does not include programs of instruction, which are primarily intended to lead toward a baccalaureate or higher degree from an institution of higher education.

B. Benefits may be paid to an otherwise eligible claimant while he is attending training only if the Commission finds that the claimant is enrolled in and regularly attending the course of instruction approved for him by the Commission.

C. Be sure to take this letter with you to the school you select. For the next 90 days, it confirms that you are an unemployment insurance beneficiary. While it does not guarantee you a Pell Grant, your school will use this letter to adjust your eligibility. After 90 days, or if you lose this letter you may provide alternative evidence that you are currently receiving unemployment insurance benefits to include your monetary determination letter sent to you from the Virginia Employment Commission.

In addition the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) has Workforce Services Offices and One Stop Career Centers located throughout the state that can assist you in finding training and employment opportunities. You may also visit www.vawc.virginia.gov for more information on services.

While our economy is struggling, we have an opportunity to improve workers' skills and lay the foundation for a stronger economic future. You are encouraged to seek training and job opportunities under the guidelines noted above.