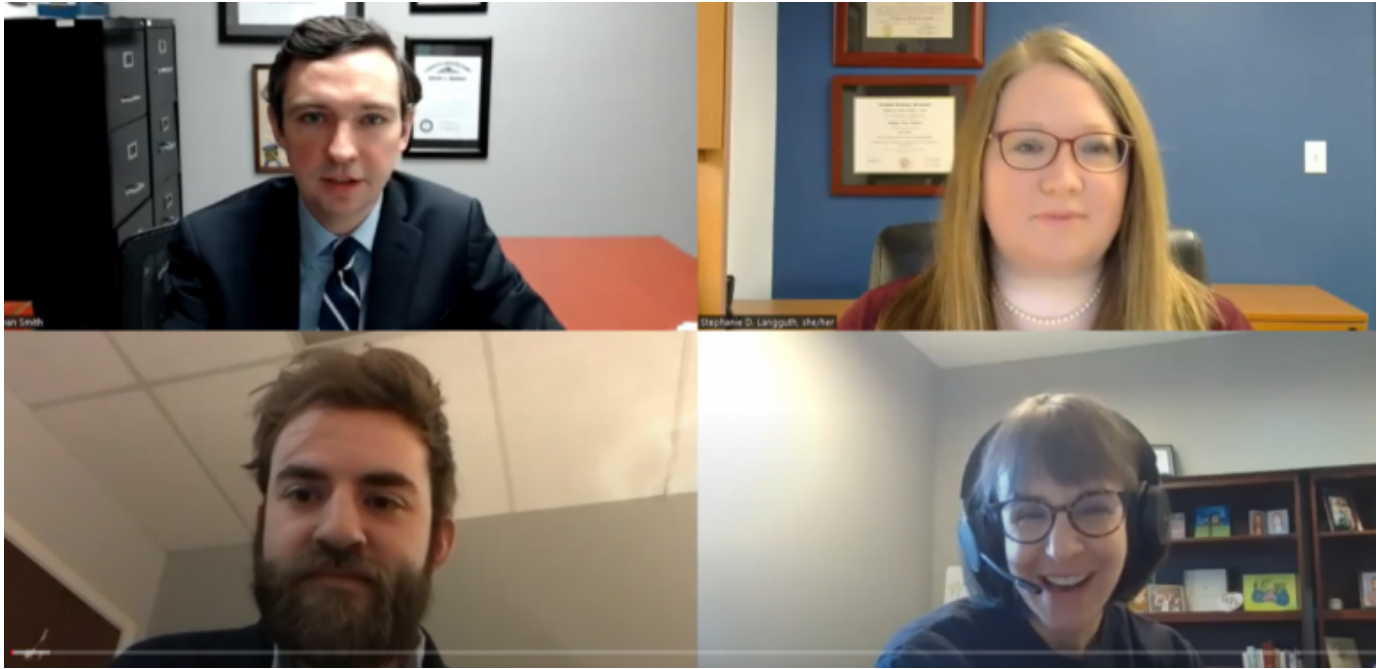


Legal Aid Explains: Changes to Kentucky's Unemployment System



Attorneys from Kentucky's four civil legal aids released a video today to help people who are out of work understand changes to the unemployment insurance system that went into effect January 1.

Katina Miner, Advocacy Director at Kentucky Legal Aid, started the discussion saying these changes are not good news for people out of work. "That's why we want to make sure people know how to get help."

Stephanie Langguth, who specializes in public benefits for Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, emphasized that it is important to contact legal aid right away if your claim is denied or you have other issues. There is a time limit on appeals.

Andrew Chandler, Legal Aid Society, summarized the changes, saying, "There are three major changes that went effect due to HB 4. The first is simply fewer benefits. Secondly, the state now considers suitable wages lower—so if you made

\$25/hr, the state now considers \$13.50 to be a suitable wage. Third, a claimant now must complete five unique job search tasks a week and respond to audits.”

Changes include:

- Claimants will now receive unemployment benefits for a maximum of 12 weeks. This is reduced from 26 weeks.
- All claimants must complete five unique and verifiable job search tasks a week, including three submitted applications. Previously, one activity was required.
- There have been changes to the definition of suitable work. After six weeks, a claimant must accept the first job offer that pays 120% of their unemployment benefits and is within 30 miles of their home (or remote).
- The unemployment office will conduct random audits. A claimant will receive an email about the audit. They will have ten days to respond. If the audit is unsuccessful, the claimant will receive a mailed “notice of redetermination.” There will be a limited amount of time to appeal.
- Claimants must keep records of all job search tasks to submit in case of audit. This might include documentation of a scheduled interview, email copy of application, business cards from a job fair, texts, and more.

“Navigating the unemployment system can be challenging, especially for those with limited access to internet,” says AppalReD Legal Aid Advocacy Director Evan Smith. “It is key that claimants have their email inboxes ready to receive communications from the state. Check spam and junk folders. And make sure you have room to receive messages. Secondly, keep records of all job search tasks. Paper files can get lost. Take pictures of everything and upload them to a Google Doc or cloud.”

Smith offered another tip for those with spotty internet and who have had challenges uploading state IDs needed for ID.ME, a federal digital identity verification system that went live during the pandemic, that became barrier for many. Smith recommends visiting an office where you can do a lot of activities, including use a kiosk. The KCC website lists available appointments at 13 Career Center hubs but there are nearly 60 local unemployment offices.

To find your closest legal aid office visit kyjustice.org.

You can watch the video [here](#).

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