



Connecticut's COVID-19 Essential Workers Programs

Essential Worker Programs

Over the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, the General Assembly established two programs to help certain workers who had to work in-person during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic: the Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program and the Connecticut Premium Pay Program. Created in [2021](#) and revised in [2022](#), the Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program is generally for workers who lost work due to having COVID-19. The program's benefits are similar to what might be provided as Workers' Compensation benefits (e.g., 75% of average net earnings). In contrast, the Premium Pay Program, created in [2022](#), provides a bonus payment of up to \$1,000 to essential workers who worked throughout the height of the pandemic. Both programs are administered by the Office of the State Comptroller. People may [apply](#) to the Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program until December 31, 2022. [Applications](#) for the Premium Pay Program closed on October 1, 2022.

Eligibility Criteria for the Two Programs

Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program

- Worked in a workforce category eligible for a vaccination in phase 1a, 1b, or 1c of the CDC's COVID-19 vaccination program
- Could not work due to having COVID-19 anytime between March 10, 2020, and July 20, 2021
- Had COVID-19 either confirmed by a positive lab test or, if one was not available, diagnosed and documented by certain medical providers based on the symptoms
- Did not work solely from home, with no physical interaction with other employees, during the 14 consecutive days immediately before they could not work due to having COVID-19

Premium Pay Program

- Private-sector employee
- Worked in a workforce category eligible for a vaccination in phase 1a or 1b of the CDC's COVID-19 vaccination program
- Worked from March 10, 2020, through May 7, 2022
- Was not employed in a capacity where he or she worked or could have worked from home
- Has an individual income less than \$150,000

Who's an Essential Worker?

Both programs limit eligibility to certain workers based on CDC recommendations for a COVID-19 vaccination as of February 20, 2021. Those who worked in a workforce category recommended for a vaccine in phase 1a, 1b, or 1c of the program may qualify for the Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program, but only those categories recommended for a vaccine in phase 1a or 1b may qualify for the Premium Pay Program. The table below shows examples of the workforce categories recommended for each phase. A complete list is available [here](#).

CDC Vaccination Phases & Eligible Workforce Categories

Vaccination Program Phase	1a	1b	1c
Eligible Workforce Categories	Health Care Personnel	First responders Corrections workers Food & agriculture Grocery stores Education U.S. Postal Service Public Transit Manufacturing	Transportation and logistics Food service Energy Water and wastewater Shelter and housing IT and Communication News Media Finance Legal

Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program Benefits

- Payments for wages lost due to having COVID-19 (generally, 75% of average net earnings, reduced by the amount of any other benefits received for the same lost work days)
- Out-of-pocket medical costs
- Burial expenses (\$3,000)

Funding

The Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program is supported by the Connecticut Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Fund, which was appropriated \$34 million in 2021. The Premium Pay Program is supported by the Connecticut premium pay account, which was originally appropriated \$30 million by PA 22-118.

According to [media reports](#), the Premium Pay Program received at least 248,000 applications, which could have led to a significant reduction in the benefits

provided to each eligible applicant. However, in November 2022, the legislature enacted [legislation](#) that, among other things, increased the program's funding and adjusted its benefit scale.

Premium Pay Program Benefits

Payment amount generally depends on the applicant's individual income. Payments for full-time applicants (those who worked at least 30 hours per week) are shown below. Part-time applicants receive a \$200 payment.

Individual Income Range	Premium Payment
Under \$50,000	\$1,000
\$50,000 - < \$60,000	800
\$60,000 - < \$70,000	750
\$70,000 - < \$80,000	500
\$80,000 - < \$90,000	250
\$90,000 - < \$100,000	200
\$100,000 - < \$150,000	100

PA 22-118 (§ 143), as amended by HB 6001 (§ 3),
November 2022 Special Session

Learn More

OLR's Summaries for PAs [21-2](#), JSS (see § 289), [22-118](#) (see §§ 205 & 143-144)

State Comptroller's information on the [Essential Workers Program](#) and [Premium Pay Program](#)

