

TRANSMITTAL SHEET FOR
NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION

Control No. _____ Department or Agency: Dept. of Labor
Rule No. 480-4-3-.15
Rule Title: Availability for Work

_____ New X Amend _____ Repeal _____ Adopt by Reference

Would the absence of the proposed rule significantly harm or endanger the public health, welfare, or safety? NO

Is there a reasonable relationship between the state's police power and the protection of the public health, safety, or welfare? NO

Is there another, less restrictive method of regulation available that could adequately protect the public? NO

Does the proposed rule have the effect of directly or indirectly increasing the costs of any goods or services involved and, if so, to what degree? NO

Is the increase in cost, if any, more harmful to the public than the harm that might result from the absence of the proposed rule? NO

Are all facets of the rulemaking process designed solely for the purpose of, and so they have, as their primary effect, the protection of the public? YES

Does the proposed rule have an economic impact? NO

If the proposed rule has an economic impact, the proposed rule is required to be accompanied by a fiscal note prepared in accordance with subsection (f) of Section 41-22-23, Code of Alabama 1975.

Certification of Authorized Official

I certify that the attached proposed rule has been proposed in full compliance with the requirements of Chapter 22, Title 41, Code of Alabama 1975, and that it conforms to all applicable filing requirements of the Administrative Procedure Division of the Legislative Reference Service.

Signature of certifying officer Stephen C. McCole

Date 7-22-13

(DATE FILED)
(STAMP)

Department of
Labor

NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION

AGENCY NAME: DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

RULE NO. & TITLE: 480-4-3-.15 Availability For Work

INTENDED ACTION: To amend certain criteria regarding a person's availability for work while claiming unemployment compensation benefits.

SUBSTANCE OF PROPOSED ACTION: The adoption is necessary to establish a policy for unemployment compensation reporting requirements that follows federal guidelines regarding benefit audit procedures.

TIME, PLACE, MANNER OF PRESENTING VIEWS: All interested persons may submit data, views, or arguments in writing to Stephen McCormick, Department of Labor, 649 Monroe Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36131 by mail or in person between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday until and including September 09, 2013. Persons wishing to submit data, views or arguments orally should contact Stephen McCormick by telephone at (334) 242-8274 during this period to arrange an appointment.

FINAL DATE FOR COMMENT AND COMPLETION OF NOTICE: September 09, 2013

CONTACT PERSON AT AGENCY:

Stephen McCormick
Department of Labor
649 Monroe Street
Montgomery, AL 36131
Telephone: (334) 242-8274



Stephen McCormick
Director, Governmental Affairs

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

CHAPTER 480-4-3

BENEFITS

480-4-3-.15 Availability For Work.

- (1) This rule does not attempt to set hard and fast specifics as to what constitutes availability that could apply to each conceivable circumstance that might arise, but rather, to provide a standard of interpretation in certain specific areas as set out below.

In all cases under this rule the individual circumstances must be carefully investigated and the judgment made on the basis of those circumstances. The relevant facts and the reason for any decision should be documented and placed in the claimant's file. The burden of proof of availability rests with the claimant.

- (2) Availability for work contemplates on the part of the claimant a voluntary, full and conscientious exposure to possible job opportunities either at a locality where wages on which a claim is based were earned or at a locality where it may reasonably be expected that work for which the claimant is qualified by previous training or experience may be available. The claimant must show a good faith effort to find such work as could reasonably be expected of an individual who desires work. Registration at an employment office alone does not establish that a claimant is available for suitable work. The adequacy of such efforts cannot be defined in terms of a specified number of contacts with employers during a specified period of time. A thorough coverage of suitable employment possibilities is contemplated. This will vary widely among groups of claimants, being influenced by such factors as local hiring practices, labor market conditions (commute distance and cost, wage rates, prospects of employment in the local labor market, etc.) and types of work for which claimants are qualified.

(a) If a claimant is on a temporary layoff, the duration of which is not expected to exceed ~~thirteen (13)~~ eight (8) weeks, or a customary or seasonal layoff from his regular employer, such layoff not expected to exceed ~~(13) thirteen~~ eight (8) weeks, no work search is required during such temporary, customary or seasonal layoff as a condition of eligibility. This work search exemption shall not apply unless such layoff is from an employer who normally provides work of a permanent and continuing nature to the claimant. ~~Registration with the Employment Service will not be a requirement.~~

(b) When a claimant willfully follows a course of action designed to discourage prospective employers from hiring such claimant, the

claimant shall be determined unavailable for work and ineligible for benefits.

- (3) The claimant must be actively seeking, available for and willing to accept work during the full-time hours and full work week and for the shifts normally worked in the trade or industry for which qualified by experience or training. The requirements cannot be met by being available for part-time work only.

(a) Actively seeking work generally means a good faith and reasonable search as would be expected of an individual who desires work.

(b) Available for work generally means that the claimant is in the vicinity, physically able and free to accept work as described above. Vicinity does not necessarily require a physical presence, it only requires that a person be available for contact by telephone or other electronic means.

(c) Disqualification should not normally be assessed if the claimant is available during the majority of the normal and customary work week for his occupation provided that no work was available during the portion of the week that the claimant was not available and that the claimant made a reasonable work search. Majority of the work week is defined as equal to or greater than fifty percent (50%). In determining what constitutes a "normal customary work week", one must take into consideration the hours and days that the occupation requires rather than what the claimant worked on their last job. Provided, however, a determination of ineligibility for a week of unemployment shall not result simply and solely because the worker had to be absent from work for not more than four hours due to illness or compelling personal circumstances.

(d) Willing to accept work generally means that the claimant demonstrates a willingness to accept any work for which he/she is qualified by previous training or experience and that is suitable in accordance with Code of Ala. 1975, 25-4-78(5).

(e) In some cases individuals become unemployed where other suitable work opportunities in the locality are either non-existent or so limited that the existing possibilities became exhausted within a very short time. The law requires a search for work that is active and reasonable. It would be unreasonable to require an individual to conduct a futile search for suitable work, which does not exist. Therefore, if suitable work opportunities in the locality do not exist or if suitable work possibilities in the locality have been exhausted it will be deemed that the work search requirement is satisfied.

As the period of unemployment lengthens work may become suitable which was not suitable earlier in the claim series. Therefore, the issue of suitability ~~will~~ may be examined periodically, ~~usually at 8 week intervals, utilizing the eligibility review process.~~ If the examination reveals that other work in the locality exists that has become suitable according to the criteria set forth in the appropriate section of the law, the claimant must actively seek such work. If the lack of suitable work possibilities in the locality continues, the work search requirement will continue to be deemed satisfied.

- (4) An active search for work is evidence of availability for work, ~~and, case law has dictated that the claimant must supply the department with proof of his availability.~~ Registration with the Employment Service is required as a further condition of eligibility, unless otherwise exempted.

(a) Various methods of work search may be employed by claimants in their efforts to find work. While any means of seeking work may result in a job, some methods may not be acceptable to remain eligible for benefits. The following are examples of suitable methods which may be used. This list is not intended to be limiting or prohibitive, but is to offer guidance.

1. In-Person Contacts. Almost always the most appropriate method whether or not combined with other means. (The contact should be with the hiring authority where possible.)
2. Telephone Contacts. An acceptable method when combined with in-person contacts. (Telephone contacts should be made with the hiring authority where possible.)
3. Employment Agency. An acceptable method, but registration with the agency does not relieve the claimant of other types of contacts which may be deemed appropriate.
4. The Resume'. An acceptable method for individuals in certain skills or professions where this is the standard job-seeking practice.
5. Claimants who identify themselves as a member of a union where work is secured exclusively through a union hiring hall will not be required to register with the employment service and may limit their work search to registration with their hiring hall. Such claimants must be able to show that they are a member in good standing of their union and that they are currently registered with their hiring hall. The law makes no distinction between those who are and those who are not members of a labor union, but requires of both that they demonstrate a constant availability for work.

6. Electronic methods including E-mail, and the Internet, ~~as well as others (kiosks, ALEX, etc.)~~ are acceptable methods of work search where this method of seeking employment is usual and customary.
7. An Employment Service exclusive hiring agreement with an employer is a recognized job search with that employer. In an area where job opportunities in that occupation are only available through this method, the claimant would be required to follow the instructions from the Employment Service on keeping these applications active.

(b) All claimants must use reasonable and realistic job-seeking methods to establish availability and remain eligible for U. C. benefits. In addition, claimants using any of the methods except (5) above must also register for work with the State Employment Service.

(c) While in-person contacts are not required for each week, in order that claimants meet minimal availability requirements, they must make some in-person contacts where work is usually obtained in this manner in order to demonstrate a willingness to work during a claim series.

(d) Code of Ala. 1975, 25-4-78(5) requires that certain factors be considered in determining the suitability of work for which the individual must be available. Pertinent among these are (1) experience and prior earnings and (2) the length of unemployment and prospects for securing work in his/her customary occupation. Unless it is obvious that an individual, other than a member of a labor union in good standing and registered at his union hiring hall, cannot reasonably expect to find work in the locality in line with prior earnings, a reasonable period shall be allowed in which to seek work somewhat comparable. As the period of unemployment lengthens and prospects for locating such work diminish, the individual must be willing to accept work which would have been deemed unsuitable earlier in the period of unemployment. (See State of Alabama Department of Industrial Relations vs. James M. Harbin 365 So.2d 313 (Ala. Civ. App. 1978). The totality of work search must be considered, not just isolated weeks. He must be able, available and seeking work for each week claimed.

- (5) A claimant incarcerated or legally detained (to include work release) is considered unavailable for work. If incarcerated or detained for only a short time, not affecting his availability for the week equal to or greater than 50% of the normal and customary work week, he would not be considered unavailable because of such incarceration.
- (6) Generally, students attending school will not be considered available for work unless it can be shown that they are available during the normal hours for work for which qualified by experience and training. If a student is attending school outside of normal customary work hours for his occupation, no issue exists. If school hours overlap normal work hours,

such claimants must show, not only that they are prepared to quit school if work is found but also that school will not interfere with a diligent ~~search for work~~ reasonable and active effort to secure work. Generally, availability for students must include consideration of the amount of money invested in schooling, what type of work they are seeking (are they seeking work commensurate with their current skill level?), whether school hours allow time for an adequate work search, time remaining until studies are completed, wage demand, and, if willing to change hours of classes, would the school allow this change anytime during the term. These factors are critical to the determination of the claimant's attachment to the labor market. Students not available during school terms are not considered in the labor market between school terms, or during summer recess, and will be presumed not available for work for these periods.

Only students attending high school on a regular, full time basis are considered unavailable (not in the labor market), either during or between terms or academic years. Such students are not questioned regarding their willingness to quit school to obtain employment; their attendance demonstrates that education is their primary pursuit.

- (7) Jury Duty. The claimant is considered available for work while serving on jury duty since time spent in jury service is not a personal service performed under a contract of hire in an employment situation but is a public duty required by law. Jury duty does not render the individual as employed and ineligible for benefits even though it may involve the individual's full-time. Witness and jury fees will be considered as reimbursement for expenses and not as wages.
- (8) Notwithstanding any other provision of this rule, all availability for work requirements, including search for work requirements, are waived for any individual who is enrolled in a course of training with approval of the director as, provided in \pm 25-4-77(a)(3). Approved training is not limited to, but includes:
- (a) Dislocated workers and other government sponsored training programs for unemployed workers.
 - (b) Training to which the individual is referred by the Alabama State Employment Service in conjunction with an employment development plan or to guidelines established by Section 4 of Public Law 103-152, or as amended or by its successor.
- (9) Disabled Accessibility to Job. A job offer shall not be suitable for an individual with a disability if he cannot gain access to a building or its facility.

Author: John B. Benton, Assistant UC Administrator-Benefits **Statutory**

Authority: Code of Ala. 1975, §§25-2-7, 25-2-8,
25-4-111.

History: Amended: Effective September 30, 1992, effective

Labor

Chapter 480-4-3

March 17, 1993. **Amended:** Filed November 17, 1994; effective
December 22, 1994. **Amended:** Filed August 9, 1995; effective September 13,
1995. **Repealed and New Rule:** Filed
January 12, 2001; effective February 16, 2001.