

New law addresses eligibility for SEBB benefits related to COVID-19

As Washington State schools closed in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, a new law helps public school employees keep their eligibility for health benefits.

The Legislature approved [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill \(ESSB\) 6189](#), which addresses how school employees can maintain eligibility for their health benefits under the School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) Program during the Governor's state of emergency. The bill was signed into law March 17, taking effect immediately.

The new law states that school employees eligible for the employer contribution toward SEBB benefits as of February 29, 2020 will maintain their eligibility:

- During any school closures or changes in school operations for the school employee.
- While the school employee is quarantined, or required to care for a family member who is quarantined ("quarantine" is defined in the bill).
- To take care of a child when the child's school or day care facility is closed, or when their regular child care provider is unable to provide services.

These exceptions are in effect only during the Governor's state of emergency related to the COVID-19, which started February 29, 2020. The conclusion of the Governor's emergency is not yet defined.

When regular school operations resume, school employees maintain their eligibility for SEBB benefits for the remainder of the school year:

- If they return to what their regular work schedule was in place before February 29, 2020; or
- If there is a change in their work schedule, had it been in effect at the start of the school year, would have resulted in the school employee meeting the minimum hours for SEBB benefits.

School employees who already have met eligibility for SEBB benefits for this school year (that is, already worked 630 hours) will continue their SEBB coverage through Aug. 31, 2020, unless employment is terminated or the individual resigns.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

I am a school employee who has been placed in “standby status.” If I receive unemployment benefits, will I automatically lose my eligibility for the employer contribution for benefits under the School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) Program?

Under the Employment Security Division’s rules and policies in certain described emergency situations, an employee can receive unemployment benefits when placed in “standby status” even though their employment has not been terminated by their employer. Therefore, receiving unemployment benefits alone, without any additional proof the employment status has changed, does not constitute a termination of employment (nor loss of eligibility for the employer contribution) as described in [WAC 182-31-050\(1\)\(a\)](#).