

# Ask HR: Can I Collect Unemployment If I Can't Return to Work Due to Lack of Child Care?

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*SHRM President and CEO Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP, is answering HR questions as part of a series for USA Today. The questions are submitted by readers.*

*Do you have an HR or work-related question you'd like him to answer? [Submit it here.](#)*

**Question: I've tried all my resources to see how I can go back to work but am unable due to lack of child care. I am unable to start work until this is resolved. Can I be let go? Or still collect unemployment because I was furloughed since the start? —Anonymous**

*Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.:* I'm sorry to hear about your furlough. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended millions of Americans, and I truly understand your struggle—I'm a single dad. In fact, only 7 percent of employers are considering adding [onsite child care services](#) upon returning to work.

You don't mention why you were furloughed. But you could be in luck: Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, employees are able to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave if they lack child care due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, if you were furloughed due to a lack of work caused by an economic downturn, there are no job protections nor paid leave. However, you could still be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

Additionally, many states have enacted temporary eligibility rules for unemployment, allowing residents to receive benefits due to both furlough and inability to work due to lack of child care for COVID-19-related reasons. To learn more, check the website of your state's unemployment office.

You might also consider discussing your options with HR. These are difficult times, and your employer may have resources and tools to help you navigate them. And, keep in mind, no employer wants to lose a strong employee. Help yo