

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FAQ

Q: Which HC&S workers are eligible for TAA benefits?

A: Once a petition has been filed on behalf of HC&S workers and the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has verified the petition, all HC&S workers who are laid off between November 16, 2014 and November 16, 2016 will be eligible for TAA benefits. Workers who were laid off before November 16, 2014 or after November 16, 2016 may still petition for TAA benefits, but their petition will be subject to a new USDOL investigation. USDOL strives to complete new investigations within 40 days.

Q: When are the benefits available?

A: As soon as USDOL has verified the petition for HC&S workers and issued a determination, HC&S workers will have access to TAA benefits. Some retraining benefits are available to workers who have not yet been laid off.

Q: Where do workers go to access their TAA benefits?

A: To begin accessing TAA benefits, HC&S workers should contact their local Workforce Development Division One-Stop Office, located at:

2064 Wells Street, Suite 108
Wailuku, HI 96793
Ph: 808-984-2091
Fax: 808-984-2090
Email: dliir.wdd.maui@hawaii.gov

Hours: 7:45am – 4:30pm Monday-Friday

Q: What kinds of benefits are available to workers who are eligible for TAA?

A: There are a number of TAA benefits available to eligible workers, including:

- **Training:** Funding is provided for classroom training, on-the-job training, and customized training designed to meet the needs of a

specific employer, groups of employees, apprenticeship programs, etc. Funding covers training expenses, including tuition, fees, books, and certain travel expenses.

- ***Income Support (Trade Readjustment Allowances):*** Weekly cash payments are available to workers who are enrolled in full-time training (or have a training waiver) and have exhausted their unemployment insurance.
- ***Job Search and Relocation Allowances:*** Reimbursements for relocation costs for employment outside of the worker's commuting area (up to \$1,250 each for job search and relocation expenses if the state elects to provide the benefit).
- ***Wage Subsidy:*** For workers over 50 years old and earning less than \$50,000 a year, a wage subsidy is available for up to two years to cover a portion of the difference between a worker's new wage and their old wage. The maximum total income support benefit is \$10,000.
- ***Employment and Case Management Services:*** Employees can receive skills assessments, individual employment plans, career counseling, supportive services, and information on training, labor market and more through TAA or other American Job Center programs.
- ***Health Coverage Tax Credit:*** Eligible workers may receive a refundable tax credit that pays 72.5% of qualified health insurance premiums for eligible individuals and their families. This is provided via the worker's filings with the IRS.

Q: How long do benefits last?

A: The length of time that a worker can receive TAA benefits depends on a few factors. Those factors include the type of training in which the worker enrolls (or whether the worker receives a training waiver), the length of time the worker is eligible to receive state unemployment benefits, whether the worker finds a job, and if the worker is over 50 years old and therefore eligible for wage supplements. As a general guideline:

- A worker must enroll in a training program (or receive a training waiver) within 26 weeks of either certification or lay-off;

- A worker may receive up to **130 weeks** of income support (Trade Readjustment Allowance) after the worker exhausts state unemployment benefits, if the worker is enrolled in full-time training. The last 13 weeks of which are available only if needed for the completion of a training program.
- There is no deadline for applying to receive a wage subsidy (Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance) if you are over 50 years old and your new salary is less than \$50,000. Your wage subsidy ends **after 2 years** or when you receive \$10,000 in total.

Q: On average, what can workers expect to receive in TAA benefits?

A: The amount a worker is eligible to receive depends on how much the worker is eligible to receive from the state in unemployment benefits. In general, income support is equivalent to the worker's final unemployment benefit. In Hawaii, the maximum weekly benefit in 2015 was \$551. Nationwide, the average weekly benefit in 2015 was \$326.

For workers eligible for the wage subsidy, the maximum amount the worker may receive is \$10,000 over the course of two years.

The value of the training benefit depends on the type and length of program in which the worker enrolls, as well as the types of training-related expenses that the state is able to cover for the worker (such as books and transportation costs).

Q: Under what circumstances can a worker receive TAA without being enrolled in training?

A: A worker may still receive income support through TAA without being enrolled in training under certain circumstances:

- The worker is unable to participate in or complete training due to a health condition;
- No training program is available; or
- An enrollment date is not immediately available.

Q: Can workers of companies that provided services to HC&S apply for TAA if they lose their job as a result of HC&S closing?

A: Yes, workers of up- and down-stream firms may be eligible for TAA if they lose their jobs as a result or if their hours are reduced. Workers must work for a firm that was a supplier or a downstream producer to a TAA-certified firm and either (1) the sales or production for the TAA-certified firm accounted for at least 20% of the sales or production of the petitioning firm or (2) a loss of business with a TAA-certified firm contributed importantly to the workers' job losses. The following groups can apply for TAA for workers of up- or down-stream firms:

- A group of three or more workers from such a firm;
- A union; or
- A state government workforce official or other authorized representative.

Once a petition is filed, USDOL will conduct an investigation and issue a determination within 40 days.

Q: Are there any TAA benefits for firms that are impacted by HC&S's closure?

A: Yes. The Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration provides assistance for firms through Trade Adjustment Assistance Centers (TAACs). Companies affected by trade can go to the TAACs and seek advice and consultations on how to adjust their business to better compete. No cash benefits are available.

- In order to qualify for assistance, the company must be certified by EDA's headquarters.
- The TAAC covering Hawaii is the Western TAAC, which is operated out of the University of Southern California (<http://wesrac.usc.edu/wtaac/>).
- Companies are adversely affected by the HC&S closure should first contact the TAAC for a free consultation on petitioning for certification. If the TAAC thinks there is something that can be done, they will recommend the company seek certification with EDA's headquarters. Once that process is completed, the company may then seek assistance from the TAAC.
- The company is required to cover some of the cost of the services provided by the TAAC: usually 25% of the cost of the adjustment plan and 50% of the cost of implementation. EDA covers the remainder.