

## Covid-19 Ters applications re-open

Workers affected by the Covid-19 lockdown regulations since March 2021 will once again be able to claim from the Covid-19 Temporary Employee/Employer Relief Scheme (Ters).



Source: © Vitaliy Vodolazskyy – [123RF.com](https://123RF.com)

This comes after Employment and Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi on Friday signed the direction which makes it possible for the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) to implement the third extension of the Ters benefit.

“This means that the UIF will open the system for applications from 19 July 2021 and commence payments from 26 July 2021.

“However, there is one major condition that payments will in the main be made directly to the bank accounts of workers and not, as has happened before, through their employers but employers would still be expected to claim on their behalf,” the Employment and Labour Ministry said in a statement.

This third phase will bring relief for the following categories of workers:

- Workers who have not been able to work from 16 March 2021, due to Level 1, 2 and 3 restrictions preventing gatherings of a certain number of people – such as in the entertainment industry;
- Workers who were and or are still impacted upon by the Level 4 restrictions which commenced on 28 June 2021; and
- Workers who have not been able to work due to the fact that they are over 60 or have co-morbidities and have not been able to work in the period as well as those who have had to isolate or go into quarantine.

The period the direction covers ends on 25 July 2021.

The direction follows the announcement by Minister Nxesi three weeks ago that the department intended on extending benefits to sectors affected by Adjusted Alert Level 4 restrictions.

President Cyril Ramaphosa had also announced on 11 July 2021 that the UIF had embarked on negotiations with Nedlac social partners to address the difficulties faced by employees who lost income under level 4 restrictions.

The Ministry said after intense deliberations with social partners at Nedlac, the UIF had agreed to open the window for phase 3 of Covid-19 TERS to cover the period between 16 March 2021 and 25 July 2021.

The application process and the information or documents required are the same as with the previous extensions, except in respect of the processing of payments directly into the employees' accounts.

"It is therefore crucial for employers to provide valid and accurate details of their employees including identity document numbers and valid bank accounts," said Advocate Mzie Yawa, acting UIF Commissioner.

While paying directly into employees bank account remains the most preferred payment mode, the UIF said it was mindful of instances where this may be difficult.

"In such instances and upon provision of sufficient proof by the employer, funds may be paid into the employer's account at the UIF's discretion.

"We have learnt the lesson from the previous phases that some unscrupulous employers did not advance the funds to their employees and it is for that reason that we have opted for this mode of payment.

"As a result of the non-payment of workers, the UIF and the entire department were inundated with a lot of complaints as workers could see in the system that funds had been released but had not been paid by their employers who kept the Covid TERS funds for themselves," said Yawa.

Qualifying sectors for Phase 3 of the Covid TERS are identified in Annexure A of the direction which includes venues hosting auctions, professional sports, where social events are held and venues hosting concerts and live performance.

Annexure B contains all sectors affected by Level 4 lockdown restrictions including restaurants, the liquor industry, hospitality and tourism as well as any industries and business establishments that form part of these value chains.

Other operational details will be contained in a letter to be sent directly to employers and the letter together with directives will be available on both the TERS portal ([www.uifecclabour.gov.za](http://www.uifecclabour.gov.za)) and the Employment and Labour website ([www.labour.gov.za](http://www.labour.gov.za)).