

## **Michigan Unemployment and Paraprofessionals & School-Related Personnel**

1. We believe that Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) have earned the right to access unemployment benefits when they are laid off.
2. Michigan's unemployment insurance system is confusing in many ways, particularly involving education employees; however, we believe that PSRPs should generally be considered eligible for unemployment during those times when the institution is operating (including traditional breaks), they are available to work, but are not employed.
3. In particular, the "school denial period" is a provision in Michigan's unemployment insurance law that renders school employees ineligible for unemployment benefits when they are not working during a typical break period between academic terms. This provision was originally intended to prevent K-12 teachers and administrators from claiming unemployment over the summer between school years; however, it has been stretched to exclude other educational employees as well.
4. Setting aside the merits of excluding teachers and administrators from unemployment, it is clearly immoral to argue that PSRPs -- who generally earn low wages, receive few, if any benefits, and are hourly employees who often do not get paid on snow days or other school closures -- should be excluded from this basic social safety net simply because they work for a school district rather than McDonald's or Meijer.
5. Therefore, we believe that **Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel should be eligible for unemployment over typical break periods if:**
  - a. **there is work available for members of their classification/bargaining unit during the break period; but,**
  - b. **the available work is less than normal so that it effectively results in a layoff or reduction in hours for some members.**
6. School districts who wish to be ethical employers should choose one of two options. Either make PSRPs year-round salaried employees with real job security and equitable wages and benefits, or accept that part of the cost of relying on a largely low-wage part-time workforce is acknowledging their right to access unemployment benefits during periods in which there is no work available for them.
7. If the district wishes to maintain their status quo system of employment, they should be willing to pay their fair share to support our social safety net rather than asking individual PSRPs to figure out how to support their families over breaks themselves.