OESC Announces State Extended Benefits Program

OESC — Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) is announcing the State Extended Benefits (SEB) program, which provides up to 13 weeks of unemployment benefits to regular Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants.

“This extraordinary time has triggered this benefit for the first time in almost 40 years,” said OESC Interim Executive Director Shelley Zumwalt. “The pandemic has caused continued unemployment for many Oklahomans above and beyond what is traditionally outlined by the Oklahoma Employment Security Act. We will continue to work with claimants to ensure they’re able to access benefits and answer any questions.”

In order for Oklahomans to receive these benefits, individuals must exhaust regular UI and the CARES Act extension PEUC benefits. In addition, SEB is only available for individuals who were eligible for regular UI claims. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claimants are not eligible for SEB.

“The State’s Unemployment Trust Fund, paid into by Oklahoma employers, pays benefits to individuals receiving regular UI benefits,” Zumwalt said. “Because of this, SEB will not be available for self-employed, contract, and gig workers utilizing the federally-funded PUA program.”

In most cases, unemployment claims will automatically change from PEUC to SEB. If a claim’s benefit year ends while receiving PEUC or SEB, a new regular UI claim must be established.

It should also be noted that SEB maximum entitlement is based on the lesser of three calculations so some individuals may not receive 13 weeks of benefits.

Assistance can be found at OESC’s 27 regional offices, which are continuing to see claimants in person — with masks required and social distancing in effect. Regional office staff also can assist claimants over the phone via their local office number. Please visit
https://oesc.ok.gov/oesc-office-location-finder for all American Job Center locations in Oklahoma.

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