OESC Reports Ninth Week of Decline for Initial and Continued Claims’ Four-Week Average

More than $1 billion in UI claims paid and nearly $2.9 billion paid out since March 1

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) is reporting continuing decreases in the state’s unemployment claims, including nine straight weeks of decline for initial and continued claims four-week moving averages. Additionally, since March 1, OESC has paid more than $1 billion in unemployment insurance claims and nearly $2.9 billion overall.

“We’re continuing to push forward with improvements and changes at the agency,” said OESC Interim Executive Director Shelley Zumwalt. “We’re not letting our foot off the gas even as some of the pressure is lifted regarding decreasing unemployment claims. From employee training and increased fraud protections to implementing the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) program and technology updates, we have our sight set on helping Oklahomans get unemployment assistance as efficiently and quickly as possible.”

Work is ongoing to set up the LWA program within OESC’s systems since FEMA recently approved the state’s application for the unemployment benefit. Through this program, the state would receive a minimum of three weeks of benefits for Oklahomans receiving $100 or more in unemployment benefits. The state would continue to apply for additional weeks as funds remain within the LWA program for possible distribution up to Dec. 27, 2020. The LWA program is anticipated to begin distribution to Oklahomans in late September.

Weekly Unemployment Numbers for Week Ending Aug. 22

- For the week ending Aug. 22, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 5,130, a decrease of 1,431 from the previous week’s revised level of 6,561.
- Initial claims’ four-week moving average was 5,997, a decrease of 949 from the previous week’s revised average of 6,946.
- The advance unadjusted number of continued claims totaled 112,140, a decrease of 11,165 from the previous week’s revised level of 123,305.
- Continued claims’ four-week moving average was 122,134, a decrease of 3,869 from the previous week’s revised average of 126,004.
Nationally, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims during the same period was 1,006,000, a decrease of 98,000 from the previous week's revised level, the U.S. Department of Labor reports. The four-week moving average was 1,068,000, a decrease of 107,250 from the previous week. For the week ending Aug. 15, DOL reports the advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 9.9%, a decrease of 0.2 percentage point from the previous week’s revised rate.

The national weekly seasonally adjusted initial claims report is one of 10 components in the Composite Index of Leading Economic Indicators. To smooth out the volatility in the weekly initial claims data, a four-week moving average is used to assess trends.

**Claimant Resources**

Individuals seeking unemployment benefits under the CARES Act should go to [https://ui.ok.gov](https://ui.ok.gov) and create an account with the Get Started button to connect their social security number and pull all unemployment information into one location.

Unemployment claimants should be aware that not returning to work when recalled or when work is available could potentially lead to disqualification from receiving unemployment benefits.

Employers may report this activity by emailing returntowork@oesc.state.ok.us, calling 405-962-7524, or mailing OESC at P.O. Box 52006, Oklahoma City, OK, 73152-2006.

If a claimant returns to work full time, they should keep their unemployment claim open with OESC and not certify a weekly claim. If they return part time, a claimant may continue to certify their weekly claim and must report all gross earnings for the week to potentially receive a partial benefit. Eligibility for continued benefits is determined on the circumstances of each individual claimant.

OESC is an excellent resource for people looking to re-enter the job market by connecting Oklahomans with available employment through [https://okjobmatch.com/](https://okjobmatch.com/).

If a PUA-eligible claimant reopens their business, they will still receive backdated unemployment benefits to when their COVID-19-related job loss or business closure occurred.

**Updated Graphs for Week Ending Aug. 22**