OESC processes more than 500,000 payments in Lost Wages Assistance Benefits

Four-week average for continued claims decreased for 13th consecutive week

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) has paid out more than 500,000 payments to Oklahomans seeking Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) benefits as of this week. Additionally, OESC continues to report the four-week moving average for continued claims has declined for the 13th consecutive week.

“I am pleased with the continued decline in unemployment claims this week,” said Shelley Zumwalt, OESC Executive Director. “We will continue to work hard to help those receive their unemployment benefits, including in the LWA program. We have moved very quickly to get Oklahomans their LWA benefits since the program was announced late last month. There have been questions of eligibility due to COVID-19, so we have updated our website to include a form to assist those in verifying their eligibility. Payments started processing Monday night and will continue to go out today and into next week. We want to ensure that every Oklahoman who is eligible for LWA benefits receives their payments.”

Lost Wages Assistance

After receiving federal approval, OESC started to pay out the LWA benefits to eligible claimants on Sept. 21. For Oklahomans that believe they are eligible for the benefits, but have not yet received them, OESC created a form for claimants to fill out to request the benefits, which can be found at https://oesc.ok.gov/.

To be eligible for the benefits, claimants must receive at least $100 in weekly unemployment benefits and they must select that they are unemployed due to COVID-19. Claimants must also be receiving benefits during the six-week program, Aug. 1 through Sept. 5.

“Our team has worked day and night to ensure that Oklahomans get the benefits they are entitled to through the LWA program,” Zumwalt said. “We know there may be confusion as to what constitutes unemployment due to the COVID pandemic. If a claimant made a selection in error or confusion, I encourage you to review the eligibility and fill out the questionnaire online. We know how important these funds are to families and individuals in Oklahoma, and we will continue to work to get Oklahomans their benefits.”

Weekly Unemployment Numbers for Week Ending Sept. 19

- For the week ending Sept. 19, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 5,455, a decrease of 141 from the previous week's revised level of 5,596.
• Initial claims’ four-week moving average was 5,918, a decrease of 152 from the previous week’s revised average of 6,070.
• The advance unadjusted number of continued claims totaled 94,574, a decrease of 16,333 from the previous week’s revised level of 110,907.
• Continued claims’ four-week moving average was 110,943, a decrease of 6,985 from the previous week’s revised average of 117,928.

Nationally, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims during the same period was 870,000, an increase of 4,000 from the previous week’s revised level, the U.S. Department of Labor reports. The four-week moving average was 878,250, a decrease of 35,250 from the previous week. For the week ending Sept. 12, DOL reports the advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 8.6%, a decrease of 0.1 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 Sept. 19

Initial Claims

Continued Claims

###