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OESC continues LWA payouts, moves forward with digital transformation project

Four-week average for continued claims decreased for 14th consecutive week

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) continues to process payments for Oklahomans seeking Lost Wages Assistance (LWA), which further pushed the agency to revise their digital systems. OESC also continues to record the four-week moving average declining for the 14th consecutive week.

“Our team is working extremely hard to get the LWA payments out the door and into the hands of Oklahomans,” said OESC Executive Director, Shelley Zumwalt. “Processing LWA claims has made it abundantly clear just how desperately we need to update our digital infrastructure. We’re taking an aggressive approach to updating our digital systems. We’ve already begun working towards updating our digital infrastructure already and we’re looking to complete the project in the beginning of 2022.”

Many of the issues OESC experienced with processing LWA claims were a result of the agency’s outdated technology systems. OESC’s digital transformation undertaking will speed up the processes, making it more user-friendly and easier to use for citizens, employers and the state. Despite the technical issues, OESC created a form for claimants to fill out to request any LWA benefits they believe are missing at https://oesc.ok.gov/.

“Seeing the claims numbers continue to drop for over three months now is a good indicator that we are on a solid path toward recovery in our state,” said Zumwalt. "While the agency is still processing a record number of unemployment claims, we are also thinking toward re-employment services and training for our claimants and how we can bring them these opportunities so they can take the next steps toward finding a new position or career.”

Weekly Unemployment Numbers for Week Ending Sept. 26

- For the week ending Sept. 26, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 4,512, a decrease of 922 from the previous week's revised level of 5,434.
- Initial claims’ four-week moving average was 5,536, a decrease of 377 from the previous week's revised average of 5,913.
- The advance unadjusted number of continued claims totaled 87,556, a decrease of 17,352 from the previous week’s revised level of 104,908.
- Continued claims’ four-week moving average was 105,523, a decrease of 8,003 from the previous week's revised average of 113,526.
Nationally, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims during the same period was 837,000, an increase of 36,000 from the previous week's revised level, the U.S. Department of Labor reports. The four-week moving average was 867,250, a decrease of 11,750 from the previous week. For the week ending Sept. 19, DOL reports the advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 8.1%, a decrease of 0.6 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. 26

Initial Claims

Continued Claims

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