OESC reports continued unemployment decline
The agency has paid out nearly $3.4 billion, looks to the future

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) continues to report a decline in unemployment claim numbers with the four-week moving average for continued claims declining for the 15th straight week.

“While it’s encouraging to see claims continue to fall, I think it’s important to look at what the agency has paid out since the beginning of the pandemic to understand the scale of what the pandemic has asked of the agency,” said Shelley Zumwalt, Executive Director of OESC. “We have paid out more in benefits from March 1, 2020 through today than was paid out in the entire decade preceding the pandemic.”

From 2010 to 2019, OESC paid out just under $3 billion in unemployment benefits, compared to the agency paying out nearly $3.4 billion since the pandemic started in March through today. It has been an extraordinary effort for the agency to ensure Oklahomans get the money they need. The extremely high amount of claims paid out has also shown the gaps in the existing technology, much of which was not made to keep up with this level of demand. OESC remains focused on improving their systems and looking toward the future for claimants.

“We are striving to give claimants, employees, and the state a secure and seamless experience with our process updates,” Zumwalt said. “Right now, that’s extremely difficult with our decades-old systems. Although we’ve made a lot of progress and have been able to help hundreds of thousands in need, we are continuing to adjust and improve our technology through our 18-month digital transformation project.”

Last week, OESC rolled out a digital transformation project that aims to completely update the agency’s systems. The project will streamline their processes, and the organization plans to have it in place by the end of the first quarter in 2022.

Weekly Unemployment Numbers for Week Ending Oct. 3
- For the week ending Oct. 3, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 5,001, a decrease of 257 from the previous week's revised level of 5,258.
- Initial claims’ four-week moving average was 5,322, a decrease of 401 from the previous week’s revised average of 5,723.
- The advance unadjusted number of continued claims totaled 78,430, a decrease of 19,482 from the previous week’s revised level of 97,912.
Continued claims’ four-week moving average was 98,039, a decrease of 10,072 from the previous week's revised average of 108,112.

Nationally, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims during the same period was 840,000, a decrease of 9,000 from the previous week's revised level, the U.S. Department of Labor reports. The four-week moving average was 857,000, a decrease of 13,250 from the previous week. For the week ending Sept. 26, DOL reports the advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 7.5%, a decrease of 0.7 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 Oct. 3

Initial Claims

Continued Claims

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