FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OESC reports continued decline in claims
as state’s unemployment drops
Agency reinstates DOL work search, registration and waiting period requirements

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) reports that for the 17th week straight, continued claims four-week moving average continues to decline. Additionally, OESC and the U.S. Department of Labor reported that Oklahoma’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped to 5.3% in September, the ninth lowest in the country.

“The continued decline of unemployment claims is very promising for Oklahoma,” said Shelley Zumwalt, OESC Executive Director. “The numbers show that Oklahoma is recovering well and we’re making progress as a state. The drop in claims is reflected in Oklahoma’s unemployment rate declining to 5.3% in September. We are doing much better than the majority of other states in recovering from the devastating economic impacts of the pandemic. However, our agency remains focused on working to help Oklahomans who need it most.”

Work Search, Work Registration and Waiting Period Reinstated
Beginning Sunday, Oct 25, 2020, work registration and work search requirements will be reinstated for claimants filing for unemployment benefits. This is a requirement from the U.S. Department of Labor, which establishes that Oklahomans filing for unemployment must register to work and actively search for work every week that they are unemployed. All claimants filing new unemployment claims will also be required to serve the one-week waiting-period per Oklahoma law.

“The state waiver for these eligibility requirements expires on Oct. 24,” Zumwalt said. “This requirement had been in place prior to the pandemic and the timing to reinstate this requirement is right. Many companies are looking for seasonal and full-time employees right now. Still, we want people to be comfortable with rejoining the workforce and are making accommodations to the requirement for those who have medical concerns or issues that prevent them from returning to the workforce at this time.”

This reinstatement does not require claimants to leave their home to complete the work search requirement. OESC will put forth additional information on the requirements for those claimants who are part of a population that is deemed vulnerable or have medical conditions that restrict them from returning to the workforce before the end of the week.

Weekly Unemployment Numbers for Week Ending Oct. 17
For the week ending Oct. 17, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 45,405, a decrease of 126 from the previous week's revised level of 5,501.

Initial claims' four-week moving average was 5,494, a decrease of 7 from the previous week’s revised average of 5,501.

The advance unadjusted number of continued claims totaled 63,701, a decrease of 18,681 from the previous week’s revised level of 93,332.

Continued claims’ four-week moving average was 83,301, a decrease of 10,301 from the previous week's revised average of 93,332.

Nationally, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims during the same period was 787,000, a decrease of 55,000 from the previous week's revised level, the U.S. Department of Labor reports. The four-week moving average was 811,250, a decrease of 21,500 from the previous week. For the week ending Oct. 10, DOL reports the advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 5.7%, 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](mailto: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. 17