FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 29, 2020
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Continued unemployment claims decline for 18th consecutive week
OESC works with Conduent to eliminate customer service fee

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) reports a decline in the initial and continued unemployment insurance benefit claims, and the four-week moving average for continued claims declines for the 18th consecutive week.

“It’s encouraging to see Oklahoma unemployment claims continue to decline,” said OESC Executive Director Shelley Zumwalt. “We’re continuing to make changes and work to eliminate barriers to Oklahomans seeking unemployment benefits. In fact, just last week, we worked with our debit card partner, Conduent, to help eliminate fees associated with the unemployment debit card.”

Conduent Eliminates Customer Service Fee

OESC has collaborated with Conduent to eliminate fees associated with the debit card program that claimants use to access their benefits. Effective today, Oct. 29, Conduent will remove the automated customer service balance inquiry fee for OESC debit card recipients.

“I am pleased to see this change from Conduent, which will help our claimants who continue to need help accessing their unemployment benefits,” Zumwalt said. “I’m grateful for the leadership from Senators Leewright, Hall and Boren during the senate interim study where they asked the right questions of Conduent’s representatives. Their goal, like mine, is to protect Oklahomans and get them the help they need in these difficult times.”

Cardholders are currently offered five free calls to automated customer service each month to check their balance with a fee of $0.25 applied per inquiry after the five free calls. Moving forward, this fee will be waived for all OESC claimants and no fee will be applied for customer service, live or automated, through the duration of Conduent’s service agreement with OESC.

“We have a unique partnership with OESC to deliver unemployment insurance disbursements through a prepaid payment card or Direct Deposit to Oklahoma Unemployment Insurance recipients,” said Paul Gates, general manager at Conduent. “In consideration of these unprecedented times, coupled with the historic rise in unemployment, the waiving of this fee allows Conduent to represent not only our commitment to our OESC partner but to the many Oklahomans who depend on the program.”

Weekly Unemployment Numbers for Week Ending Oct. 24
For the week ending Oct. 24, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 4,591, a decrease of 686 from the previous week's revised level of 5,277.

Initial claims' four-week moving average was 5,295, a decrease of 167 from the previous week's revised average of 5,462.

The advance unadjusted number of continued claims totaled 59,007, a decrease of 14,314 from the previous week's revised level of 73,321.

Continued claims' four-week moving average was 75,709, a decrease of 9,727 from the previous week's revised average of 85,436.

Nationally, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims during the same period was 751,000, a decrease of 40,000 from the previous week’s revised level, the U.S. Department of Labor reports. The four-week moving average was 787,750, a decrease of 24,500 from the previous week. For the week ending Oct. 17, DOL reports the advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 5.3%, a decrease of 0.5 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 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/.

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. 24