



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Sept. 22, 2021

Media Contact:

[OED\\_Communications@oregon.gov](mailto:OED_Communications@oregon.gov)

## **Sept. 22 Oregon Employment Department Media Statement**

Our next media briefing is scheduled for 1 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 29.

### **Employment**

Yesterday, the Employment Department released the [jobs numbers](#) and [unemployment rates](#) for Oregon's counties and metropolitan areas in August.

Oregon's eight metropolitan areas have collectively regained three out of five (or 62%) of the jobs lost during the pandemic recession. Salem and Albany rank the highest among metropolitan areas. They've each regained nine out of 10 jobs lost in spring 2020.

Portland, Eugene and Corvallis are further from a full jobs recovery. Each of these metropolitan areas have regained about two-thirds of the jobs lost during the recession.

Within the Portland metro area, Multnomah County in particular has struggled to recover jobs. Less than half the jobs lost during the recession were regained by August. This is meaningful for Oregon's overall recovery, as Multnomah has the most jobs of any county in Oregon and also the largest deficit to get back to its February 2020 employment level.

Oregon's rural areas continue to outpace metro areas in this recovery. Taken together, Oregon's 23 rural counties have regained three out of four jobs (75%) lost in the COVID recession. Wallowa, Crook, and Harney counties each had more total nonfarm jobs in August than they did before the pandemic recession.

### **Back to Work Update**

The Employment Department continues to focus on helping people find jobs or new careers and employers find talented workers with our Back To Work Campaign in partnership with WorkSource Oregon.

There is an ongoing and urgent statewide need to fill health care and other positions that support the health care industry, like food service, facilities and business administration.

The Employment Department is reaching out to claimants with health care experience to let them know about job openings in their field. Our first health care hiring event is at the Clackamas Town Center today, Wed., Sept. 22.

As part of the Governor's health care initiative, the Employment Department has also scheduled a statewide virtual Hiring Heroes for Health care event from 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Wed., Oct. 6, so job seekers can explore career opportunities and meet employers hiring across Oregon. People can [register](#) for the virtual event online and visit our [LinkedIn](#) page for details.

All WorkSource Oregon events will follow the state and CDC guidance to make sure everyone is safe during these events. To ensure the safety of our visitors and employees and prevent further spread of COVID-19, all customers and employees must wear masks.

### **Online Scheduling through WorkSourceOregon.org**

The new online scheduling tool is live in Spanish and English! People can go to [WorkSource.org](#) and click on the Contact button for either language page. The tool has options to schedule virtual and in-person appointments with an employment specialist at one of the WorkSource Oregon (WSO) centers throughout the state. Job seekers can also schedule time to use a WorkSource Oregon computer for job search activities. Translation work is in progress to make the new scheduling tool available in all 12 languages that we are making available on the WorkSource site.

People filing new claims must complete a one-on-one orientation to receive their benefits, and they can use this tool to schedule this required orientation.

### **Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance (PFMLI)**

PFMLI will conduct a Rules Advisory Committee (RAC) meeting from 9 a.m. – noon on Wed., Sept. 29, to review the first batch of PFMLI's administrative rules. This meeting is open to the public and gives people an opportunity to provide input and offer suggestions on the proposed rules. These "[batch one rules](#)" are available for review on our website.

The first batch of PFMLI rules relate specifically to wages, contributions, employer size, assistance grants, equivalent plans, self-employed and the agency's outreach plan. The RAC meeting is one of many opportunities the public will have to provide comments on these proposed rules throughout the rulemaking process.

### **Unemployment Insurance Benefits**

#### **Resuming Able and Available for Work Requirements, new temporary rule**

Starting this Sunday, Sept. 26, OED is resuming able and available to work requirements for people claiming unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. This means people filing for initial and weekly claims for benefits must be able to work and available for suitable work for at least 40 hours per week OR one shift, if their work is shift based.

Being able to work and available for work were both requirements for receiving UI benefits before the pandemic; however, there is a new temporary rule in place that applies to the available to work requirement. Under the new rule, if someone has barriers preventing them from returning to their work, they may still be eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits if they are willing to seek an alternate type of work for which they are available at least one shift per day and 40 hours per week.

With this change to availability requirements, the rule will better reflect the current workforce and economy. Some people who would have otherwise been denied benefits as a result of a limited availability would be able to receive them under the temporary rule changes. This change also may help provide economic stability to local communities where there are a large number of people whose work schedules have been restricted, including individuals with underlying conditions who may need to limit their exposure to COVID-19.

OED is notifying claimants to make sure people know about this rule change. They also may visit our online Temporary Eligibility Rule FAQs for more information. The department is scheduling six listening sessions for business, labor, community organizations and others to give us feedback on these new temporary rules before we work on permanent availability rule changes. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian and Cantonese. Listening session dates and times will be posted on our [webinar page](#).

## **Benefit Numbers**

The Employment Department previously reported that, when the federal pandemic-related unemployment benefits expired over Labor Day weekend, as many as 81,000 people could see their Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) benefits end in Oregon. Here is some more information about how this is impacting the people of Oregon.

OED has identified geographic information for nearly 78,000 of the 81,000 people – 46,500 who were receiving Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits in Oregon and 31,500 who were receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits.

Statewide, those with Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits ending made up about 2% of the labor force. By county, the highest share of the labor force losing PEUC benefits (3% in each) occurred in Curry, Josephine, Lincoln, and Multnomah counties.

Those with Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits ending also made up another 2% of the state's labor force. By county, the highest share of the labor force with PUA benefits ending (3% in each) occurred in Coos, Curry, and Josephine counties.

In addition to geographic impact, OED found that the end of the federal pandemic unemployment programs also had slightly more impact on women than on men. Prior to the pandemic, women made up 47% of the state's labor force. As the PEUC benefits expired, women comprised 52% of those claims. Women also had a slight majority (51%) of PUA claims as the program drew to a close.

## **Backdating Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Claims**

The PUA program expired September 4, 2021; however, people have until Oct. 6 to file their initial claim for benefits and to file for retroactive weeks. This only applies to people who have a COVID-19 impact [reason](#) for being unemployed prior to Sep. 4, 2021. We encourage people to file using the [Online Claim System](#). After Oct. 6, no one can make any changes or backdate weeks of a PUA claim.

## Updated Dashboard

At next week's media briefing, OED will present the new dashboard tool that will reflect that pandemic-related benefit programs have expired and highlight other Employment Department activities.

## Customer Service

OED has promised throughout the pandemic to be transparent. Current data show that more than 94 percent of Contact Us inquiries are now resolved within seven days. The department is experiencing a delay with its call data information reporting and hopes to provide an update on call wait times during our next media briefing.

## Benefits Paid

OED paid **\$10.9 billion in benefits** to more than **617,000** people from **March 15, 2020 – Sept. 21, 2021**. This is the last week OED will report on this data in the media briefing; however, this information will still be available upon request.

**Last week, we paid approximately \$29 million to more than 32,000 people.** Detailed information is on the [media dashboard](#).

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Equal Opportunity program — auxiliary aids and services available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Contact: 971-673-6400. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, call 711 Telecommunications Relay Services.