



MEMORANDUM

Prepared for: Senator Kathleen Taylor
 Date: August 29, 2020
 By: Tyler Larson, Analyst
 Re: Timeline of COVID-19 events and UI administration

LPRO: LEGISLATIVE POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICE

This memorandum is in response to your request for a timeline of events related to the Oregon Employment Department’s (OED’s) administration of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information on OED’s technology modernization, please see Legislative Fiscal Office’s [Budget Information Report](#) which provides an overview of the history, issues, and decisions surrounding OED’s efforts to modernize UI information technology infrastructure.

TIMELINE OF COVID-19 EVENTS AND UI ADMINISTRATION

Date	Event
March 7, 2020	OED reports 4,154 new jobless claims for the week ending March 7. ¹
March 8, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-03 declares an emergency due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Oregon.
March 12, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-05 prohibits gatherings of 250 people or more, with an exemption for school attendance, places of employment, grocery stores, and retail stores. Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 10-20 provides guidance to states regarding UI eligibility for individuals affected by COVID-19.
March 14, 2020	OED Reports 4,269 new jobless claims for the week ending March 14.
March 17, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-07 prohibits on-premises consumption of food and drink and gatherings of 25 people or more, with an exemption for essential business and services. Executive Order No. 20-08 orders public schools to close. OED files temporary rules pursuant to Executive Order No. 20-03 which clarify access to UI benefits for COVID-19 related situations.
March 18, 2020	The Families First Coronavirus Response Act is signed into law. The measure provides federal UI funding and emergency UI stabilization grants to states.
March 19, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-09 prohibits public and private colleges and universities from conducting in-person classes.
March 21, 2020	OED reports 30,054 new jobless claims for the week ending March 21, a seven-fold increase from both the prior week and the same week in 2019.
March 22, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 13-20 provides states with instructions for implementing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

¹ New jobless claims are filed by an unemployed individual after separation from an employer and reflect only applications for regular UI benefits.

March 23, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-12 orders Oregonians to stay at home, closes specified retail businesses, requires social distancing measures for other public and private facilities, and imposes requirements for outdoor areas and licensed childcare facilities.
March 22, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter 13-20 provides guidance on the implementation of work search requirement flexibility adopted in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.
March 26, 2020	OED files temporary rules to implement DOL guidance regarding work search requirement flexibility. OED files temporary rules pursuant to Executive Order No. 20-03 which expand coverage options for employing units who are not required to be subject to UI coverage and potentially enable business owners and their workers to qualify for benefits.
March 27, 2020	The CARES Act is signed into law. The measure provides federal UI funding for states and additional UI benefits which must be implemented at the state level, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), which are UI benefits for those who would not otherwise be eligible, including independent contractors. PUA benefits are calculated at the same rate as UI benefits and are available for up to 39 weeks beginning January 27, 2020, and ending December 31, 2020. Benefits for independent contractors are calculated using net income from all self-employment in the most recent tax year filed. • Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), which are an additional 13 weeks of benefits for those who exhaust their regular UI benefits. PEUC benefits are available from the active date of the measure through December 31, 2020. • Extended Benefits (EB), which provide 13 and up to 20 additional weeks of benefits for those who exhaust regular benefits and PEUC. EB are triggered by formula based on an increase in the state's unemployment rate. Oregon met the unemployment rate threshold on May 10, 2020. • Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), which are benefits of \$600 paid in addition to weekly UI or PUA benefits. FPUC benefits are available for all weeks of unemployment from the enacted date of the measure through July 31, 2020. • Full federal funding for the first week of benefits for states that waive the waiting-week requirement. Federal funding includes the first week of benefits and state administrative expenses.
March 28, 2020	OED reports 47,498 new jobless claims for the week ending March 28.
April 2, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 14-20 provides states with a summary of the UI provisions in the CARES Act and guidance regarding emergency state staffing flexibility.
April 4, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 15-20 provides states with operating, financial, and reporting instructions for the FPUC program authorized by the CARES Act. OED reports 62,788 new jobless claims for the week ending April 4.
April 5, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 16-20 provides states with operating, financial, and reporting instructions for the PUA program authorized by the CARES Act.

April 10, 2020	<p>OED announces it has started issuing FPUC benefits.</p> <p>Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 17-20 provides states with operating, financial, and reporting instructions for the PEUC program authorized by the CARES Act.</p>
April 11, 2020	OED reports 54,581 new jobless claims for the week ending April 11.
April 18, 2020	OED reports 37,209 new jobless claims for the week ending April 18.
April 25, 2020	OED reports 49,300 new jobless claims for the week ending April 25.
April 27, 2020	<p>Executive Order No. 20-22 allows for the measured resumption of non-urgent health care procedures.</p> <p>Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 18-20 provides states with instructions for implementing the emergency unemployment relief for state and local government entities, certain nonprofit organizations, and Federally-recognized Indian Tribes authorized in the CARES Act.</p> <p>Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 16-20, Change 1 addresses questions from states regarding administration of the PUA program and provides further guidance about the PUA program authorized in the CARES Act.</p>
April 28, 2020	OED announces PUA benefits are available in Oregon.
April 30, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 20-20 provides states with operating, financial, and reporting instructions for the full federal funding of the first week of UI benefits authorized in the CARES Act.
May 2, 2020	OED reports 48,120 new jobless claims for the week ending May 2.
May 3, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 21-20 provides states with an overview of Short-Time Compensation Program Provisions authorized in the CARES Act. In Oregon, this program is referred to as Work Share.
May 4, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 13-20, Change 1 provides states with reporting instructions for provisions contained in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and informs states of an amendment in the CARES Act.
May 9, 2020	<p>Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 15-20, Change 1 addresses questions from states regarding administration of the FPUC program and provides further guidance about the FPUC program authorized in the CARES Act.</p> <p>OED reports 33,936 new jobless claims for the week ending May 9.</p>
May 10, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 22-20 encourages and assists states in applying for grant funds for Short-Time Compensation (i.e., Work Share) programs and issue guidance on the process to apply for the grants authorized in the CARES Act.
May 11, 2020	<p>OED opens new Contact Center.</p> <p>Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 23-20 reminds states of program integrity functions required for the regular UI program and provides states with guidance regarding required program integrity functions for the UI programs authorized in the CARES Act.</p>
May 13, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 17-20, Change 1 addresses questions from states regarding administration of the PEUC program and provides further guidance about the PEUC program authorized in the CARES Act.

May 14, 2020	<p>Executive Order No. 20-25 implements a phased approach for reopening Oregon's economy including directives for Phase I.</p> <p>Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 24-20 provides guidance and response to state inquiries related to the Federal-State Extended Benefits Program and temporary changes to the program in accordance with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and the CARES Act.</p>
May 15, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 10-20, Change 1 provides guidance to states regarding UI benefit flexibilities related to COVID-19.
May 16, 2020	OED reports 23,539 new jobless claims for the week ending May 16.
May 21, 2020	OED announces PEUC benefits are available in Oregon.
May 23, 2020	OED reports 28,452 new jobless claims for the week ending May 23.
May 29, 2020	OED begins Project Focus 100 to process a backlog of 38,000 claims as quickly as possible by focusing experienced employees on oldest and most complex claims; hiring, training, and deploying new staff; and using technology to close communication gaps and improve service.
May 30, 2020	OED reports 20,565 new jobless claims for the week ending May 30.
June 5, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-27 implements prerequisites and directives for Phase II of reopening Oregon's economy, which allows qualifying counties to reopen certain sectors of the economy.
June 6, 2020	OED reports 24,508 new jobless claims for the week ending June 6.
June 12, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-28 establishes criteria for public and private colleges and universities to conduct in-person instruction.
June 13, 2020	OED reports 24,645 new jobless claims for the week ending June 13.
June 15, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 15-20, Change 2 provides states with a new overpayment report and revised reporting instructions for the FPUC program authorized in the CARES Act.
June 20, 2020	OED reports 16,274 new jobless claims for the week ending June 20.
June 24, 2020	Executive Order No. 20-29 restricts the conduct of in-person instruction in public and private K-12 schools and school-based services for the 2020-2021 academic year.
June 27, 2020	OED reports 11,195 new jobless claims for the week ending June 27.
July 4, 2020	OED reports 10,343 new jobless claims for the week ending July 4.
July 11, 2020	OED reports 11,713 new jobless claims for the week ending July 11.
July 18, 2020	OED reports 10,152 new jobless claims for the week ending July 18.
July 21, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 16-20, Change 2 addresses questions from states regarding administration of the PUA program authorized in the CARES Act.
July 25, 2020	OED reports 9,417 new jobless claims for the week ending July 25.
July 30, 2020	OED files temporary rules to allow employers participating in Work Share to approve the use of accrued leave as requested by employees when they are sick or taking care of someone who is sick without compromising their eligibility for UI benefits under the Work Share program.
August 1, 2020	OED reports 7,275 new jobless claims for the week ending August 1.
August 8, 2020	Presidential Memorandum on Authorizing the Other Needs Assistance Program for Major Disaster Declarations Related to Coronavirus Disease directs federal disaster relief funds be made available for a Lost Wage Assistance (LWA) grant program which authorizes the governor of a participating state to provide a \$400 weekly payment, \$300 of which is federal funds, for eligible claimants receiving UI benefits.

	OED reports 6,505 new jobless claims for the week ending August 8.
August 15, 2020	OED reports 5,233 new jobless claims for the week ending August 15.
August 17, 2020	Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 27-20, Change 1 addresses questions raised by states and provides further guidance about the Lost Wage Assistance program authorized by the August 8 Presidential Memorandum.

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office