



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## More Changes Coming for the Extended Unemployment Benefits Program

**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK** (May 25, 2012) – On June 2, 2012, changes will be implemented to the federally funded Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program. These changes are part of the EUC reauthorization legislation passed by Congress and signed by President Obama last December. EUC was first established in July 2008 to help the long-term unemployed as they continued to look for work. Unemployment claimants are first eligible for up to 26 weeks of regular state unemployment benefits from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC). When these regular benefits are exhausted, claimants can receive a first round of EUC benefits (EUC Tier 1) for up to 20 weeks and a second round (EUC Tier 2) for a maximum of 14 weeks. A third EUC tier, the availability of which was tied to the state's unemployment rate, provided up to 13 additional weeks of benefits, but is no longer available to Oklahomans after recently triggering off due to the state's improving economic conditions.

The major change that will go into effect involves EUC Tier 2 benefits. Beginning on June 2, to continue offering EUC Tier 2 to unemployment claimants, a state must have a three-month average seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 6.0 percent or higher. When this change is implemented, Oklahoma's three-month average seasonally adjusted unemployment rate will be below 6.0 percent, triggering the suspension of any new EUC Tier 2 claims after June 23, 2012. Only new EUC Tier 2 claims will be affected. Oklahomans who exhaust their EUC Tier 1 claims the week ending June 23, 2012, or earlier will still be able to apply for and receive any EUC Tier 2 benefits for which they're eligible. If a claimant exhausts an EUC Tier 1 claim after this date, that claimant will not be able to apply for EUC Tier 2 benefits. All EUC benefits will expire on January 2, 2013, when the EUC program is scheduled to end.

In addition to affecting EUC Tier 2, the legislation will also change the trigger rate for EUC Tier 3 benefits from 6.0 percent to 7.0 percent, raising the bar for states to qualify. Another provision that was enacted in March requires those receiving EUC to register for employment services, actively search for work (a requirement for regular state benefits that was expanded to include EUC), and attend re-employment and eligibility assessment activities at their local Workforce Oklahoma center.

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## OKLAHOMA EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

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Because these changes are based on the week ending dates of claims, federal law will supersede state law in implementation of these provisions.

For further information about changes to the EUC program, you are encouraged to visit the frequently asked questions (FAQ) page on the OESC website. Simply go to <http://oesc.ok.gov>, follow the "Unemployment Benefits" link, and click on the "EUC Deadline and Eligibility Changes FAQs" link at the top of the page. If additional assistance is required, claimants can contact the UI Service Center at (405) 525-1500 in the Oklahoma City metro area or (800) 555-1554 in other parts of the state.

**About OESC** – The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission is Oklahoma's state workforce agency. OESC provides unemployment compensation to support unemployed workers and their communities; matches jobs and workers to benefit local labor markets; prepares a skilled workforce to meet employers' needs; and gathers, analyzes and disseminates information about the labor force to improve local economic decisions.

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