



SC Department of Employment and Workforce

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:
Heather Bianca

Immediate Release

April 17, 2020

Employment and Workforce Executive Director Dan Ellzey's Statement March 2020 Employment Situation

We understand that the numbers presented today are not a true depiction of the economic impact and unemployment in the month of March. So we wanted to offer some explanation as to how this process is completed and what we anticipate as we release April's data on May 22, 2020. Our release of data is a strict schedule set by the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics that all states are ordered to adhere to, so please understand the data always has and will continue to reflect the month in arrears.

BACKGROUND: (Provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics explanation of how the government measures unemployment. Excerpts are below. Read full PDF and explanation here: https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.pdf)

The government conducts a monthly survey called the Current Population Survey (CPS) to measure the extent of unemployment in the country. Each month, highly trained and experienced Census Bureau employees contact 60,000 eligible sample households and ask about the labor force activities (jobholding and job seeking) or non-labor force status of the members of these households during the survey week – which is the week of the 12th of each month.

RESPONSE:

“This survey was completed during the week of March 12. That was prior to the closings of many businesses and prior to our state truly experiencing the affects as we took shelter to combat COVID 19. We expect the release on May 22, 2020 to be a more accurate depiction of the current unemployment situation in our state,” says Department of Employment and Workforce executive director, Dan Ellzey. “We know there is a continued uncertainty and many people are having problems filing claims. It is our goal to work with every one of these individuals to ensure their claim is filed and that they get a proper adjudication of it. While we are working with these individuals, we have been processing more than a quarter of a million claims within the last month. Prior to that, we processed approximately 7,000 claims per month. We have also been configuring our system to implement the five new federal programs.”



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Here's a breakdown of some continued good news:

- We are happy to report that South Carolina was one of the first states to not only implement, but pay out money for the weekly \$600 CARES Act program.
- We've paid out a total of \$67.5 million in regular UI benefits since claim week ending March 21, 2020.
- We've paid out a total of \$105.1 million in \$600 CARES Act benefits so far.
- We anticipate being able to accept applications for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) by the claim week ending April 25. To date, no other state has implemented or paid out PUA funding for self-employed, 1099, gig workers and those who don't qualify for regular UI.
- PEUC program (13 week extension of UI benefits) will be the last program to be rolled out in the coming weeks and will extend UI benefits to those who have already exhausted their 20 weeks.
- ChatBot: We have launched a new feature on our website to help folks find information with ease. Just go to dew.sc.gov and click the chat icon towards the top right of the homepage, if you're on a computer. If on a mobile device, click the menu in the top left corner and select the ChatBot option.
- Week over week, we've added additional staff members to assist claimants on the phones. We expect our total Customer Service Representatives to reach 500, by next week. We are ramping up as fast as possible, while providing a safe environment and proper training to ensure claimants receive meaningful assistance when they get through.

"We are all in this together and I assure you the Department of Employment and Workforce will continue to serve the good people of this state for the duration of this pandemic event."

Dan Ellzey

Executive Director of the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce.

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About the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce is putting South Carolinians to work. The agency has four missions: (1) workforce development; (2) free job match employment services; (3) unemployment insurance; and (4) labor market information. All four missions contribute to workforce development. The agency is dedicated to advancing South Carolina through services and programs that meet the needs of our businesses, jobseekers and those looking to advance their careers.