

Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board: How COVID-19 has impacted unemployment claims

Posted on Thursday, Apr 16, 2020

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The numbers do not lie, and a quick scan of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims for the six-county southwest region of Wisconsin reveals the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on individuals and the economy both locally and throughout the state and nation.

A quick scan of weeks 12-15 (March 15-April 12) from 2019 compared to 2020 shows the drastic jump in UI numbers. Grant County totaled 1,802 UI claims for that four-week period in 2019, but in 2020 it ballooned to 3,625, more than double. In Green County, it also more than doubled, increasing from 1,401 in 2019 to 2,943 in 2020.

Iowa County went from 1,597 last year to 2,806 this year, not quite doubling, while Lafayette County rose from 555 in 2019 to 1,088 in 2020. Richland County nearly doubled from 754 in 2019 to 1,498 in 2020, while in Rock County, it was similar, going from 8,677 in 2019 to 16,252 in 2020.

In comparison, in weeks 11 and 12 (pre-COVID-19) of 2020 (March 1-14), all 2020 daily UI claim totals were less than the 2019 totals for that same time period, except for the last two days, which were almost equal.

In total, for the six counties, UI claims in 2019 for those four weeks were 14,786, while in 2020 it leaped to 28,212.

Statewide, the total UI claims for weeks 12-15, 2019 were 336,504, while in 2020 it totaled 618,082.

Furthermore, in the first four days of week 16 (Sunday through Wednesday, April 12-15), in 2019 there were 3,245 UI claims filed (daily totals of 764, 1,130, 705, and 646), while in 2020 for that same four day period a whopping 37,659 claims (6,198, 14,053, 9,069, and 8,339) were filed.

SWWDB CEO, Rhonda Suda, cautions that these are preliminary numbers provided by

Wisconsin's Division of Unemployment and change slightly. "This crisis is placing huge burdens on families, businesses and our state and local resources. The unemployment numbers reflect this. Keep yourself and families safe. Stay home. When applying for unemployment, be patient yet persistent."