

## BUSINESS

# Orange County's tight jobs market continues to grow, up 2.5 percent in a year



Health care jobs are among the fastest growing in Orange County. Janet Rodriguez, right, a retail saleswoman, practiced taking vitals, from fellow classmate, Mayra Linares, left, at Hope Builders in Anaheim where the two are studying to be medical assistants. (Photo by Michael Kitada, Contributing Photographer)

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By [MARGOT ROOSEVELT](mailto:mroosevelt@scng.com) | [mroosevelt@scng.com](mailto:mroosevelt@scng.com) | Orange County Register

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Orange County, with Southern California's tightest job market, managed to add 39,100 positions from January 2017 to January 2018, a growth rate of 2.5 percent, the state reported Wednesday, March 7.

The county's jobless rate in January was 3.1 percent, up from a revised 2.9 percent in December. A year earlier, the county's unemployment rate stood at 4 percent.

California also added jobs at a healthy clip of 2.4 percent over the year. The state's January unemployment rate fell to 4.4 percent — a record low in data dating back to 1976.

The U.S. unemployment rate was 4.1 percent and total non-farm employment grew by 1.5 percent.

California officials' January jobs report was delayed until Wednesday, due to an annual recalculation of the year's data based on new information.

Significant year-over-year changes in Orange County's job mix included:

— Professional and business services reported the largest payroll growth: 12,200 jobs. But most of it occurred in the lower-paid administrative and support roles, and waste services, which together added 13,000 positions. Better-paid professional, scientific and technical services suffered job losses of 600, while management positions dipped by 200.

— Educational and health services added 10,700 jobs, with 90 percent of the gain in health care and social assistance.

— Two other sectors reported declines: manufacturing was down 1,300 jobs; trade, transportation and utility positions dropped by 500 positions.

Orange County reported 50,700 unemployed people in January, down from 64,600 a year earlier.

The annual data revisions for Orange County showed 27,700 more jobs by the end of 2017 than originally reported — a 1.7 percent increase — for a total of 1,651,700 positions.

Several sectors showed significant jumps: Manufacturing employment was revised up by 6,600 positions or 4.4 percent. Information, which includes non-Internet publishing and telecommunications, added 1,100 more jobs than originally reported, a 4.2 percent rise. And educational and health services jobs were revised upward by 12,700 jobs or 6.1 percent.

Among other Southern California counties, January jobless rates stood at 4.7 percent for Los Angeles; 4.7 percent for Riverside, 4.3 percent for San Bernardino and 3.6 percent for San Diego.

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Staff writer Jonathan Lansner contributed to this report.

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