

PAY ADMINISTRATION

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures related to payment of higher rates of pay for assignment as a head nurse (also known as a nurse manager).
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory VA procedures on pay administration. The pages in this issuance replace the corresponding page numbers in VA Handbook 5007. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5007 that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management Website](#). Significant changes include:
 - a. Eliminates the term “nursing unit or ward” and replaces it with “patient care team” for the purpose of authorizing two additional steps for serving as a head nurse/nurse manager.
 - b. Entitles head nurses/nurse managers who supervise at least the equivalent of three full-time subordinate patient care team members, of which two must be in a nursing position, to receive the additional two-step head nurse pay.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Compensation and Classification Service (055), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5007, Pay Administration.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
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**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

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CHAPTER 8. HIGHER RATES OF PAY FOR ASSIGNMENT AS HEAD NURSE [(NURSE MANAGER)] OR POSSESSION OF SPECIALIZED SKILLS

1. ASSIGNMENT AS A HEAD NURSE[/NURSE MANAGER]. An RN serving in a head nurse[/nurse manager] assignment shall, while so serving, receive basic pay at a rate two steps above the rate that would otherwise be applicable. The adjustment is made even if it causes the RN to exceed the maximum authorized step of the grade, even when the rate range is 175 percent. For example, a head nurse[/nurse manager] may receive a constructed step 13 or 14 if step 12 is the maximum authorized step of the grade or step 27 or 28 if step 26 is the maximum authorized step of the grade. Head nurses[/nurse managers] are eligible for PSIs until they reach two steps above the maximum authorized step of the grade; e.g., a head nurse[/nurse manager] at a constructed step 13 who meets the requirements of part III, chapter 5, is eligible for a PSI to step 14. The differential is also in addition to any pay retention under paragraph 6 of chapter 6, this part.

a. **Restrictions.** Individuals in head nurse[/nurse manager] assignments must exercise first line supervisory responsibility over a [patient care team] which contains at least the equivalent of three full-time subordinate [patient care team members] (registered nurses, licensed practical nurses[,], nursing assistants[,], technicians, clerks or other licensed/certified clinicians). At least two of the patient care team members must be in a nursing position (i.e. registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, nursing assistant).] A [patient care area] is defined as a geographic location or program with patient care delivery of responsibilities across the continuum of care.

b. **Head Nurse[/Nurse Manager] Supervisory Responsibilities.** The head nurse[/nurse manager] is responsible for ensuring that subordinate [patient care team] personnel provide timely nursing care which complies with generally accepted standards of clinical practice. This includes the authority to accept, amend or reject the work of subordinates. In addition, to be eligible for head nurse[/nurse manager] pay, individuals in the assignment must have continuing responsibility for all of the following functions:

- (1) Planning work to be accomplished by subordinates, setting priorities and preparing schedules for completion of work;
- (2) Assigning work to subordinates based on priorities, selective consideration of the difficulty and the requirements of the assignments, and the capabilities of subordinates;
- (3) Evaluating the performance of subordinates;
- (4) Making recommendations for appointments, advancements or reassignments of subordinates;
- (5) Giving advice, counsel, or instruction to subordinate personnel on work and administrative matters;
- (6) Hearing and resolving complaints of subordinates and referring more serious complaints not resolved to higher level supervisors;
- (7) Recommending and/or taking disciplinary action where appropriate; and
- (8) Identifying developmental and training needs of subordinates and providing or making provision for such development and training.

**PART III
CHAPTER 8**

c. **Exclusions.** Head nurse[/nurse manager] pay does not apply to the following:

(1) Second or higher level supervisors and upper level managers; e.g., [] Associate or Assistant Chiefs, or Chief of the Nursing Home Care Unit;

(2) Assignments that do not involve the provision of direct [patient] care (e.g., assignments in quality assurance or regional medical education centers); and

(3) Evening supervisors, night supervisors, or other supervisory assignments that do not possess the full range of supervisory responsibilities described in the preceding.

(4) Employees detailed to head nurse[/nurse manager] assignments except as provided in paragraph 6a(2).

(5) Employees at Nurse IV or Nurse V since assignment to these grades is based on a scope of duties and responsibilities beyond those associated with a head nurse[/nurse manager] position.

d. **Other Supervisory Assignments.** Facility directors, or their designees, may establish supervisory assignments that do not meet the preceding criteria; however, individuals in those assignments are not eligible for head nurse[/nurse manager] pay. For example, a nurse may be given [] an assignment [that] may meet the definition of a first-line supervisor for labor relations purposes under 5 U.S.C. 7103(a)(10), but not meet the eligibility requirements for head nurse[/nurse manager] pay.

2. HIGHER RATES OF PAY BASED ON SPECIALIZED SKILLS

a. **Appointments and Reappointments.** Facility directors may, after considering the recommendation of the Professional Standards Board, appoint or reappoint individuals to covered positions at any step of the grade for which they qualify if vacancies for such employees exist and such action is necessary to obtain their services. This action may only be taken to recruit employees with specialized skills, particularly specialized skills that are difficult or demanding. The step rate may exceed the maximum authorized step of the grade only when the individual is appointed to a head nurse[/nurse manager] position (see par. 1 above), or if pay retention is authorized under chapter 4, paragraph 1c(2)(b) or (c).

b. **Employees Currently Employed at the Facility.** When an adjustment is made under subparagraph 2a, salary rates of onboard employees in assignments requiring the same specialized skills may be adjusted up to the same number of steps. The step may exceed the maximum authorized step of the grade only if the individual is in a head nurse[/nurse manager] assignment.

NOTE: *The purpose of this adjustment is to ensure that current employees are receiving rates of pay that are comparable to corresponding positions in the LLMA. An adjustment would not be appropriate if the employee's skills have already been recognized under superior qualification appointment, special advancement, or other means.*

c. **Coordination.** Higher rates for specialized skills will be coordinated with other affected VA health care facilities in the LLMA.

PART X

APPENDIX A

- b. Special advancements for achievement or performance;
- c. Increases resulting from adjusting employees to the new minimum step for a higher level in Nurse I;
- d. Increases resulting from the approval of special salary rates;
- e. Higher rates of pay received by head nurses[/nurse managers] or employees with specialized skills; and
- f. Cash awards.

11. Establishment

- a. Except as noted in the following, an establishment is a non-VA medical center, independent outpatient clinic or an independent domiciliary facility, either in the private or public sector, with 50 or more employees, whose primary function is to provide diagnostic and therapeutic medical, psychiatric, surgical, or specialty services for particular medical conditions.
- b. For the purposes of surveys for nurse anesthetists conducted under paragraph 8 of chapter 2, Surveying Nurse Anesthetist Contractors, an establishment would also include organizations that provide anesthesia services on a contract basis through registered nurse anesthetists.

12. Federal Wage System (FWS) Survey Area. FWS survey areas are geographic areas (a group of counties, townships, and/or independent cities) in which FWS surveys are conducted. FWS survey areas are established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and published in the OPM Operating Manual, Federal Wage System.

13. FTE. FTE is full-time equivalent employees.

14. Gains. For an occupation or specialty, gains is the total FTE of placements in the occupation or specialty, either from internal or external sources, during the reporting period.

15. General Schedule (GS) Adjustment. A GS adjustment is an adjustment to the national schedule of rates of basic pay exclusive of any locality-based pay adjustments.

16. Grade. Unless otherwise specified, an LPS grade, Nurse I, Nurse II, Nurse III, Nurse IV, and Nurse V.

17. Head Nurse[/Nurse Manager]. A head nurse[/nurse manager] is a registered nurse who is the first line supervisor for a designated [patient care team] and who is responsible for the management of [direct patient] care and [subordinate patient care team members].

18. Highest Previous Step. For former employees who have served under LPS, the highest previous step is the current equivalent of the highest step formerly earned. The highest step for former employees who have not served under the LPS is determined under part II, chapter 2, paragraph 1a(9)(c). Also see part II, chapter 2, paragraph 1a(9)(d) for restrictions on making highest previous step determinations.