

MS 623 Physician Comparability Allowance

Effective Date: September 20, 2019

Responsible Office: Office of Human Resources, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and Office of Health Services

New Manual Section

Issuance Memo (09/20/2019)

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Manual Section is to authorize payment of a Physician Comparability Allowance (PCA) to certain eligible physicians in order to recruit and retain highly-qualified licensed medical professionals in the Federal workforce. This policy is in accordance with regulations, criteria, and conditions as set forth in MS 623 Attachment A – Peace Corps Physician Comparability Allowance Plan (Plan) as approved by the Office of Management and Budget.

2.0 Authorities

- (a) 5 U.S. Code § 5948. Physicians comparability allowances
- (b) 22 U.S. Code § 3962. Salaries of Senior Foreign Service members
- (c) 22 U.S. Code § 3963. Foreign Service Schedule
- (d) 5 CFR Part 595 – Physicians’ Comparability Allowances
- (e) Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Fact Sheet: Physicians’ Comparability Allowances

- (f) Office of Personnel Management. Memorandum: Changes in Annual Physicians' Comparability Allowance Reporting and Authorization Processes

3.0 Scope

This Manual Section applies to Peace Corps Physicians employed in the 0602 occupational series as (i) U.S. Direct Hires under the Foreign Service (FP) or Senior Foreign Service (FE) pay schedule and (ii) serving in a position as a licensed medical professional where there is a significant recruitment and retention challenge as outlined in the Plan.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Peace Corps Director

The Peace Corps Director is responsible for approving and making final determinations on the use of established physician position categories and subcategories upon a recommendation by the Office of Human Resources (HR), in consultation with Office of Health Services, that recruitment and retention problems are significantly hindering the Peace Corps' mission and objectives.

4.2 Office of Human Resources

4.2.1 The **Chief Human Capital Officer** is responsible for the following:

- (a) Certifying that a position requires a licensed medical professional, in consultation with the Office of Health Services (OHS);
- (b) Certifying that the PCA is necessary for the purpose of recruiting and retaining a high-qualified physician;
- (c) Recommending each Physician position's category and subcategory, in consultation with OHS, to the Director for approval;
- (d) Approving any MS 623 Attachment B – Physician Comparability Allowance Service Agreement (Service Agreement), in accordance with the Plan, for approved categories and subcategories;
- (e) Approving and issuing an individual payment authorization for a PCA; and
- (f) Determining conditions under which repayment of any PCA may be waived while approving or rejecting requests for such a waiver, in consultation for Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO).

4.2.2 The **Office of Human Resources** is responsible for the following:

- (a) Determining, in consultation with OHS, the allowable PCA amount in accordance with the Plan;

- (b) Determining a physician position's eligibility for a PCA based upon employment data certified by HR;
- (c) Ensuring, before issuance of an SF-50 – Notification of Personnel Action, that the Service Agreement is signed by the physician, an approved PCA request is signed by the Chief Human Capital Officer; and a payment authorization is signed by the Chief Human Capital Officer.
- (d) Directing the initiation of an SF-52 – Request for Personnel Action to terminate a PCA due to the failure of the physician to fulfill their Service Agreement. If it is determined that the physician must refund any amount to the Peace Corps, the SF-52 will include the following statement, "The employee is obligated to repay the U.S. government for a debt incurred by non-completion of a PCA agreement."

4.3 Office of the Chief Financial Officer

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the following:

- (a) Complying with and collecting of PCA reporting requirements, as outlined in 5 USC 5948 (j), and annually submitting that required information to the Officer of Personnel Management utilizing the template provided in MS 623 Attachment C – Documentation of Recruitment and Retention Problems;
- (b) Consulting with HR on determining the conditions under which repayment of any PCA may be waived
- (c) Including the cost of PCAs in agency budget justifications.

4.4 Office of Health Services

The Office of Health Services is responsible for consulting with HR on the following:

- (a) the certifying of positions requiring licensed medical professionals;
- (b) the recommending of each physician position's category and subcategory to the Director for approval; and
- (c) the determining of the allowable PCA amount in accordance with the Plan.

5.0 Policy

The Peace Corps may authorize the payment of a PCA to eligible Federal physicians in accordance with the terms and conditions agreed upon in MS 623 Attachment B – Physician Comparability Allowance Service Agreement (Service Agreement).

5.1 Categories

The Director has determined that the following categories of physician positions present the agency with a demonstrated and significant recruitment and retention challenge and are therefore eligible to receive PCAs, as set forth in the Plan: (i) Category I. Clinical Positions, (ii) Category II. Research Positions, (iii) Category III. Occupational Health, and (iv) Category IV. Disability Evaluation and Administration of Health and Medical Programs.

5.2 Subcategories

In addition, subcategories within the four categories of positions referred to in 5.1 above may be established by the Director upon a determination by HR, in consultation with OHS, that certain factors including, but not limited to, location, class, medical specialization, and level of medical qualification warrant the creation of a subcategory.

5.3 Allowance Eligibility

- (a) No physician may receive a PCA unless the physician occupies a position in a category or subcategory as set forth in sections 5.1 and 5.2 above with respect to which there are documented recruitment and retention challenges and which has been designated by the responsible agency official as requiring a PCA.
- (b) A physician occupying a position which is certified to require a physician and authorized by the appropriate agency official for receipt of a PCA shall enter into a Service Agreement for at least 12 months.
- (c) PCA amounts based on creditable Federal service are set forth in the Plan.
- (d) PCAs are subject to the aggregate limitation on pay under 5 U.S.C. 5307 and 5 CFR part 530, subpart B.
- (e) A physician employed part-time with a scheduled tour of duty of 40 hours or more per pay period is eligible to receive a prorated portion of the PCA paid to those with full-time positions in the same category or subcategory. A physician employed less than 40 hours per pay period or on an intermittent basis is not eligible to receive a PCA.
- (f) A physician granted Leave Without Pay (LWOP) while under a Service Agreement is not eligible to receive a PCA payment during the LWOP period. A physician may not be granted LWOP during the final 60 days of any Service Agreement, except in cases (i) when it is determined to be in the interest of the U.S. government, (ii) of medical emergency, (iii) of pregnancy, and (iv) when the physician is anticipated to return to the position. LWOP shall not be counted toward meeting creditable Federal service requirements for a PCA.

6.0 Effective Date

The effective date of this Manual Section is the date of issuance.