

Arkansas Department of Human Services
Special Compensation Award Program (Award Program)

Authority: Arkansas Code § 21-5-227 and § 21-5-228

Effective Date: November 1, 2024

PURPOSE

This policy establishes the Department of Human Services (DHS) Special Compensation Award Program (Award Program). The Award Program is designed to:

- (i) alleviate the extensive use of expensive contract nursing staff to deliver direct care to clients at DHS facilities through improved staff retention and attracting new nursing staff into direct care roles; and
- (ii) increase the continuity of nursing direct care for clients. The Award Program consists of a one-time, lump sum special compensation award to qualifying employees.

SCOPE

This policy applies to current employees and new hires in full-time nursing positions that provide direct care to clients at DHS facilities, which include the five Human Development Centers, the Arkansas State Hospital, and the Arkansas Health Center.

AWARD PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Award Program will be administered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information.

Eligibility:

Current employees in full-time nursing positions that provide direct care to clients at DHS facilities, which include the five Human Development Centers (HDC), the Arkansas State Hospital (ASH), and the Arkansas Health Center (AHC). New hires into full-time nursing positions that provide direct care to clients at DHS facilities will also be eligible so that the Award Program can serve as a recruitment tool to incentivize new recruits to join state government in these direct care roles. The classifications eligible to receive a lump-sum special compensation award are listed in Appendix 1.

Criteria:

All full-time employees meeting the above eligibility requirement will automatically meet the criteria for the five-thousand-dollar (\$5,000) lump-sum special compensation award. This will result in following one-time costs of approximately the following amounts for each of the facilities: HDCs: \$510,000 (72% federal and 28% state), ASH: \$467,000 (8% other and 92% state), AHC: \$283,000 (72% federal and 28% state).

New hires in full-time nursing positions that provide direct care to clients at DHS facilities will receive their five-thousand-dollar (\$5,000) lump-sum special compensation award over time as set out below.

Special Compensation Award:

A one-time, lump-sum special compensation award of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per qualifying current employee and new hire. An individual can only receive one lump-sum special award (i.e. a qualifying current employee who later leaves and returns or promotes as a new hire into another qualifying nursing position could not receive a second lump-sum special award).

Procedures:

Each qualifying current employee's one-time lump sum special compensation award will be processed following final legislative approval.

Each new hire into a qualifying position will receive one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of their lump-sum special compensation award on their first paycheck if employed for the entirety of the initial pay period. A new hire will then receive an additional one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of their lump-sum special compensation award as part of their last paycheck in each of the following four calendar months if employed for the entirety of the covered pay period. A new hire receiving a recruitment incentive shall commit to 6 months of employment. If the employee voluntarily resigns or is terminated before completing the required period of employment the following shall apply:

- Repay DHS any installment payments received before the date that the employee resigns or is terminated from employment; and
- Not receive the value of any installment payments scheduled on or after the date the employee resigns or is terminated from employment.

If the employee does not repay within one hundred eighty (180) days from the date the employee resigns or is terminated from employment, the Revenue Division of the Department of Finance and Administration may set off any refunds due the employee from the division by the sum certified by the Office of Personnel Management as due and owing under § 26-36-301 et seq.

Miscellaneous:

The following terms apply to the Award Program:

1. An employee shall not receive more than one (1) lump-sum special compensation award payment.
2. The lump-sum special compensation award payment is subject to withholding of all state and federal taxes.
3. A lump-sum special compensation award payment is included by retirement systems in determining retirement benefits.
4. A lump-sum special compensation award may allow an employee's salary to exceed the maximum pay level.
5. An employee may receive a lump-sum special compensation award, and a merit increase in the same fiscal year, if the employee is otherwise eligible for a merit increase.
6. Existing department funding will be used to cover the costs associated with any lump-sum special compensation award.

Appendix 1 – Positions Eligible for Special Compensation Awards

GRADE	TITLE	CLASS CODE
MP04	Nurse Practitioner	L018N
MP04	AHC Nursing Director	L105N
MP03	Nurse Manager	L009C
MP03	Associate Director of Nursing	L006C
MP02	Nurse Instructor	L036C
MP02	Nursing Clinical Coordinator	L022C
MP02	Registered Nurse Supervisor	L027C
MP02	Registered Nurse Coordinator	L019C
MP01	Registered Nurse	L038C
MP01	Registered Nurse - Hospital	L032C
GS06	LPN	L069C
GS07	LPN Supervisor	L062C