

Basic Pay Change for IHS Registered Nurses Assigned to Positions in the 0610 Nurse Occupational Series

The Indian Health Service (IHS) Acting Director has approved a basic pay increase for IHS registered nurses who are paid from one of the three IHS 0610 Nurse occupational series Title 38 special salary rate tables. Basic information about this change and how it affects nurses' compensation is provided in the below Frequently Asked Questions.

1. Which nurses are affected by this change?

Registered nurses who are paid under the following three IHS Title 38 special salary rate tables for the 0610 Nurse occupational series are affected by this change. The current pay tables that will soon be replaced are:

- [Nationwide nurse pay table \(pay table I-04\)](#),
- [Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area nurse pay table \(pay table I-11\)](#), and
- [Alaska nurse pay table \(pay table I-04A\)](#) (pay changes only at the General Schedule (GS)-9 and GS-10 levels)

Most IHS nurses in positions within the 0610 Nurse occupational series are covered by one of these three salary tables, although Advanced Practice Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses (occupational series 0620) and Commissioned Officers are covered by separate pay tables or a separate salary system. Additionally, some IHS nurses at the GS-13 and GS-14 level, other than nurses in Alaska, are paid their respective GS locality pay as administered by the United States (U.S.) Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Dependent on the GS locality area, some GS-13 and GS-14 level nurses will be covered by an IHS Title 38 special salary rate table following the pay change.

2. Where can I find the revised pay tables?

The revised pay tables that reflect the pay increases will be posted on the Office of Human Resources (OHR) website by close of business on Friday, October 8, 2021, on the [OHR Compensation Pay Tables](#) webpage under the "Registered Nurse 11-07-2021 Pay Increase" section.

3. When will this basic pay increase take effect?

The new basic pay rates are scheduled to go into effect for pay period 24, which begins on Sunday, November 7, 2021. The pay increase should be reflected in nurses' paychecks received on November 26, 2021.

4. What happens to the biweekly retention incentive payments currently being received by some nurses?

Nurses who are receiving retention incentive payments at the time of the basic pay increase will continue to receive the retention incentive payment at the same percentage of the basic rate of pay for pay period 24 which begins on Sunday, November 7, 2021. This is the same pay period when the new basic pay rates are scheduled to go into effect. All retention incentives for nurses affected by this basic pay change will stop on the last day of that pay period, Saturday, November 20th. In the vast majority of cases, IHS Areas will not re-establish a retention incentive since the basic pay increase will bring nurses' compensation to a competitive level. In isolated cases, the Areas may elect to re-establish a retention incentive. It is anticipated that there will be a greatly reduced need to provide nurses with retention incentives once the new basic pay rates take effect. Retention incentives are not entitlements, but can be used with discretion in unique situations when additional compensation is necessary to retain highly-qualified staff.

5. What should nurses anticipate seeing in their leave and earnings statements?

In pay period 24, which begins on Sunday, November 7th, nurses should receive:

- an increased rate of basic pay,
- increased premium pay if earned, and/or
- increased biweekly retention incentive payments

Both premium pay and retention incentive payments are based on the rate of basic pay.

In pay period 25, which begins Sunday, November 21st, nurses should receive:

- an increased rate of basic pay, and
- increased premium pay if earned

Since all retention incentives will stop at the end of pay period 24, most nurses will not receive a retention incentive payment for pay period 25 even if they received a retention incentive previously. Nurses should review their leave and earnings statements in the [myPay system](#).

6. What are the advantages of nurses receiving a basic pay increase versus receiving a retention incentive?

A basic pay increase is an ongoing change that not only increases a nurse's biweekly take-home pay, it also increases the government's contributions towards other important benefits such as retirement, life insurance, premium pay, severance pay, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), performance-based cash awards computed as a percentage of basic pay, and lump sum payments for annual leave. The payout of these benefits is

based on a higher rate than they would be with a lower pay rate plus a retention incentive. A retention incentive is not a permanent, ongoing change and is not part of a nurse's rate of basic pay for any purpose. Retention incentives must be justified and approved on an annual basis creating an administrative burden on staff and possible disruption of the incentive.

7. Why is IHS nurse pay changing?

The OHR conducted a review of IHS nurse pay in 2021. It was a collaborative effort between the OHR at Headquarters, nurse leadership with the IHS Division of Nursing Services and the National Nurse Leadership Council, and Area HR leadership. This review included a comparison of IHS nurse pay rates against Federal and non-Federal employers and other factors. As a result, it was determined that an increase in nurses' basic pay was warranted. The IHS greatly values its nurse workforce and nurses' many contributions to the IHS mission. The change was made to ensure that the IHS remains a competitive employer of high-performing nurses and that the IHS is able to recruit and retain highly-skilled nurses.

8. Why does IHS pay nurses under Title 38 special salary rate pay tables as opposed to the regular GS locality pay tables managed by the OPM?

The IHS elects to use the pay authorities granted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from the OPM as a way to recruit and retain staff. These pay authorities, which allow Federal agencies to pay higher salaries than allowed by the General Schedule, may be used by HHS agencies to create competitive pay tables for certain clinical-care occupations. The IHS has used the Title 38 special salary rate pay authorities for many years to pay competitive salaries to nurses, physical therapists, dental hygienists, and many other health-care occupations. On rare occasion, a GS locality pay rate may be higher than the IHS Title 38 special salary rate, and in those cases, the employee is paid off of the GS locality pay table. The highest pay rate available is always applied.

9. Do nurses need to do anything in order to receive the pay increase?

No. The HR systems will handle changing all affected nurses' pay to the new pay tables. However, it is strongly recommended that nurses closely monitor their leave and earnings statements in the [myPay system](#) during the pay transition period and report any questions or concerns to their local human resources office.

10. Who should nurses contact if they have a question about this change?

Nurses' supervisors may be able to answer some questions pertaining to this change. If additional information is needed, nurses should contact their local human resources staff.