



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

One East Main, Suite 301 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 266-3847 • Fax: (608) 267-6873  
Email: [fiscal.bureau@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:fiscal.bureau@legis.wisconsin.gov) • Website: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb>

---

June, 2021

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #232

### **Nursing Assistant and Resident Care Technician Pay Progression (Compensation Reserves)**

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 116, #1]

---

#### **CURRENT LAW**

Funding is allocated to compensation reserves for cost increases related to state and University of Wisconsin (UW) System employee salaries and fringe benefits, including targeted pay increases for classifications with particular recruitment or retention needs.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. Under Assembly Bill 68/Senate Bill 111, \$52,700 GPR in 2021-22 and \$68,000 GPR in 2022-23 is provided to compensation reserves to implement a pay progression system for nursing assistants and resident care technicians to address recruitment and retention issues. A pay progression system provides pay increases to employees in specific classifications or pay ranges based on longevity through a grid that lists hourly pay rates for different lengths of service, such as some number of months or years. Pay progressions included in the compensation plan generally require that employees meet performance standards to be eligible for pay increases.

2. Positions in the nursing assistant and resident care technician classification series are employed by Corrections (28.35 GPR positions), Health Services (597.35 PR positions), and Veterans Affairs (410.5 PR positions). Nursing assistants and resident care technicians perform similar duties and have similar qualifications. Therefore, the proposed pay progression structure for the two classification series would be identical, based on the pay grade to which each respective position is assigned. Funding provided to compensation reserves represents the estimated cost of the pay progression proposal for nursing assistants at Corrections. The program revenue cost of the proposal for nursing assistants and resident care technicians at Health Services and Veterans Affairs is estimated at \$2.3 million PR in 2021-22 and \$2.6 million PR in 2022-23.

3. Corrections employs nursing assistants stationed at Dodge, Taycheedah, and Oshkosh Correctional Institutions. Nursing assistants at correctional institutions assist in the provision of health care and services for inmates in a correctional infirmary or health services unit. Duties include: assisting licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and physicians with direct patient care; clerical functions and upkeep of the infirmary or unit; and other assigned duties associated with maintaining the 24-hour operations of the institution.

4. Health Services resident care technician and nursing assistant positions serve at the agency's three intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities known as "state centers": Central Wisconsin Center in Madison, Northern Wisconsin Center in Chippewa Falls, and Southern Wisconsin Center in Union Grove. The state centers provide health, assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation services. Duties of employees in these positions may include providing personal hygiene care; assisting new residents in adjusting to their living area; observing and reporting behavior, mental, and physical changes in residents; recording and summarizing information in daily logs and clinical records; and assisting seated or lying residents to a standing position by pulling and lifting. Applicants may be required to pass a physical evaluation to assess physical requirements of the position, including the ability to lift up to 55 pounds. For some positions, applicants must be willing and available to work up to 15.5 hours in one shift.

5. Veterans Affairs employs nursing assistants at two of its veterans nursing homes, King and Union Grove. Nursing assistants provide direct care to elderly or disabled veterans and their spouses. Duties include assisting in patient mobility efforts; making visual observations; maintaining patient hygiene; using special safety equipment; and kneeling, stooping, lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, and reaching in the course of performing tasks. Employees stand or walk up to six hours of each eight-hour work period as they provide assessments and carry out other functions.

6. Nursing assistants and resident care technicians perform physically demanding duties in challenging work environments providing direct care to intellectually disabled residents, veterans, and inmates. Employees work nights, weekends, and holidays, and are often required to work overtime shifts due to vacancy rates ranging between 28% (resident care technician-objective) and 47.7% (nursing assistant 2). High turnover rates (separations from state employment) also contribute to difficulties in the residential institution setting, as institutions are perpetually training new employees. In 2019-20, the turnover rate for resident care technician-objective was 64.1%, for nursing assistant 2 was 34.9%, and for nursing assistant 3 was 33.3%. In other words, for every 100 employees who were employed in these positions at the start of the year, between 33 and 64 had terminated employment by the end of the year.

7. In an August, 2019, audit report relating to investigations of incident reports and complaints at the Veterans Home at King, the Legislative Audit Bureau noted that 32.2% of incident reports and complaints were attributable to quality of resident care for reasons including high turnover among nursing assistants. Specifically, the report noted that "Allegations about the quality of care were diverse and included concerns such as a failure to use proper procedures when transferring a resident from a bed to a wheelchair, inconsistency of resident care because of high turnover among certified nursing assistants, and delayed follow-up on a doctor's written orders."

8. Positions in the nursing assistant and resident care technician classification series are

assigned to pay ranges 06-10, 06-11, and 06-12. To encourage retention and advancement, the pay progression would only apply to positions above the entry level (positions in ranges 06-11 and 06-12). Currently, pay for positions in these pay ranges is mostly flat for employees with 20 years of service or less. That is, most employees in these classifications with 20 years of service earn the same hourly pay rate as an employee with six months of experience (\$18.43 for positions in grade 11, and \$19.69 for positions in grade 12).

9. The proposed pay progression would provide pay increases based on years of service, as employees reach work anniversaries of one, two, three, five, 10, or 15 years. On the effective date of the progression (which would be determined in the compensation plan), employees would initially be placed on the progression schedule according to their current years of service. For example, an employee with four years of service would be paid at the three-year rate, and would progress to the next pay rate when the employee reached five years of service. Employees with more than 15 years of service would receive the greater of the rate for 15 years or their current pay rate. Therefore, the progression would also provide pay increases for many employees with between 15 and 20 years of service. The greatest impact of the pay progression would be for employees with between two and 20 years of service. The details of the progression, including specific pay rates, would be finalized in the 2021-23 state employee compensation plan, which will be submitted to the Joint Committee on Employment Relations for approval.

10. For the affected appropriations under Health Services, funding for state centers is primarily from medical assistance payments. Funding for the veterans nursing homes is a combination of medical assistance payments, other third-party payments, out-of-pocket payments from veterans nursing home residents, and federal payments that support the care of veterans nursing home residents. While the respective PR appropriations may have sufficient revenue available to support the pay progression system, what the agencies may lack is sufficient expenditure authority. If GPR funding is provided to compensation reserves for pay progression costs associated with Corrections nursing assistants, and the proposal is included in the compensation plan, Health Services and Veterans Affairs could request necessary expenditure authority for the relevant PR appropriations through the pay plan supplementation process, which is subject to passive review by the Committee.

11. The majority of positions in the nursing assistant and resident care technician classification series provide direct care for intellectually disabled residents and veterans nursing home residents (1,007.85 of 1,036.2 positions, or 97%). To improve quality of care and reduce reliance on overtime associated with vacancy rates ranging between 28% and 48% and turnover as high as 33% to 64%, the Committee could provide \$52,700 GPR in 2021-22 and \$68,000 GPR in 2022-23 to compensation reserves for pay progression costs associated with nursing assistants at Dodge, Taycheedah, and Oshkosh Correctional Institutions, with estimated costs for positions at state centers (Health Services) totaling \$1,434,500 PR in 2021-22 and \$1,663,500 PR in 2022-23, and costs for positions at veterans nursing homes (Veterans Affairs) totaling \$842,700 PR in 2021-22 and \$904,900 PR in 2022-23. [Alternative 1]

12. If the Committee takes no action, the Division of Personnel Management would need to determine whether the impact of the proposal could be absorbed in the existing budgets of Corrections, Health Services, and Veterans Affairs. If it were determined that the costs for all three

agencies could be absorbed, DPM could include the proposal in its recommendations for the compensation plan submitted to the Joint Committee on Employment Relations. If the pay progression were not included in the compensation plan, it is likely that these classifications would continue to experience high rates of turnover, vacancies, and resulting overtime hours, with adverse effects on the quality of resident and patient care. [Alternative 2]

## ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$52,700 GPR in 2021-22 and \$68,000 GPR in 2022-23 to compensation reserves to implement a pay progression system for nursing assistants and resident care technicians to address recruitment and retention issues. (Program revenue costs are estimated at \$2,277,200 in 2021-22 and \$2,568,400 in 2022-23.)

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$120,700

2. Take no action.

Prepared by: Rachel Janke