

# OMB BULLETIN NO. 98-05 - Physicians Comparability Allowance Data Reporting Requirements



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20503

May 4, 1998

**BULLETIN NO. 98-05**

**TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS**

**SUBJECT: Physicians Comparability Allowance Data Reporting Requirements**

1. **Purpose.** This Bulletin, which includes Attachments A through C, provides detailed instructions on agency data reporting requirements regarding operation of the Physicians Comparability Allowance (PCA) program. The Bulletin is issued pursuant to the 1997 edition of OMB Circular A-11, section 13.2(b)(12).

Collection of the data by OMB is required to monitor government-wide PCA usage, physician employment, and physician compensation. The data will be used to evaluate the effect of the PCA on Federal physician recruitment and retention and to issue the 1998 Presidential Report on the Physicians' Comparability Allowance in accordance with the Federal Physicians Comparability Allowance Act of 1978 Extension (P.L. 105-61).

2. **Background.** On October 10, 1997, the President signed P.L. 105-61, reauthorizing the Federal Physicians Comparability Allowance until September 30, 2000. This Act extends authority to pay annual bonuses for Federal physicians serving in areas or specialties with documented recruitment and retention problems.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations implementing PCA require OMB approval of agency plans to pay bonuses. OPM regulations implementing the PCA are published in 5 C.F.R. 595. OMB is collecting data on PCA program operation and Federal physician recruitment and retention to ensure consistent government-wide implementation and to evaluate the effectiveness of the PCA program.

3. **Due Date.** Agencies must submit the requested data by May 29, 1998. FY 1999 PCA Plans must be submitted by September 15, 1998.

4. **Termination Date.** This Bulletin will terminate as soon as the requested data have been submitted.

**Franklin D. Raines**

*Director*

Attachments

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ATTACHMENT A

**Agencies with currently approved PCA Plans**

Department of Defense  
Department of Energy  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Department of Labor  
Department of State  
Department of Transportation  
Social Security Administration  
Department of Veterans Affairs

**Agencies that have employed or now employ physicians eligible for PCA**

Agency for International Development  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Department of Agriculture  
Department of Justice  
Department of Treasury  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Library of Congress  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Tennessee Valley Authority  
United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home

**NOTE:** Agencies not listed that employ physicians eligible for PCA are also covered by this Bulletin.

Physicians Comparability Allowance (PCA) Report and Worksheets

**Authority.**

5 U.S.C. 5948 authorizes payment of physicians comparability allowance to eligible individuals paid as physicians under the following pay systems: General Schedule; administratively determined pay for certain specially qualified scientific or professional personnel; Tennessee Valley Authority Act; Foreign Service Act; CIA Act; section 121 of title 2 of the Canal Zone Code; or section 2 of the Act of May 29, 1959, relating to the National Security Agency. P.L. 100-140, the Federal Physicians Comparability Allowance Amendments of 1987, amended 5 U.S.C. 5948 to provide a maximum PCA of \$14,000 per year for physicians with less than 24 months' Federal service, and \$20,000 per year for physicians with 24 or more months' Federal service. P.L. 100-140 also allows physician service in the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to be creditable towards 24 months Federal civilian service when calculating maximum PCA allowance eligibility. P.L. 105-61 reauthorized PCA until September 30, 2000. Executive Order No. 12109 delegates authority granted the President under 5 U.S.C. 5948 to the Directors of the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget. 5 C.F.R. 595 sets additional requirements for agency implementation of 5 U.S.C. 5948, including agency reporting requirements. OMB Circular A-11, 13.2(b)(12), requires agencies to reflect approved plans to pay bonuses in annual budget estimates in accordance with P.L. 100-140 and P.L. 105-61.

**Coverage.** This Bulletin covers all agencies that employ physicians eligible for PCA. This includes both agencies with currently approved PCA plans that are eligible to pay PCA bonuses, whether or not they actually do pay the bonuses, and agencies without approved plans that employ physicians eligible for PCA. Attachment A lists those agencies that currently have an approved PCA plan, as well as agencies that do not currently have an approved plan but are known to have employed physicians eligible for PCA. Agencies not listed that employ physicians eligible for PCA are still covered by this Bulletin.

**Submission Requirement.** (1) Each agency should review and update the 1997 PCA reporting worksheet submitted by that agency. (Copies of the 1997 data have been given to the appropriate OMB staff. Agencies should contact their OMB examiners if they need a copy of the 1997 data.) Please verify that all FY 1994 - FY 1997 figures in the worksheet are correct and add a new column providing FY 1998 estimates. See below for instructions on how to calculate figures.

(2) Review the attached copies of the 1997 Presidential Report on the PCA (Attachment C). Verify and update the text for your agency that appears in the section entitled "Summary of Agency PCA Reports," pp. 6 to 11. Submit the revisions to the PCA Report and PCA worksheet to the OMB examiner responsible for that agency.

**Information Contact:** Inquiries should be addressed to Melany Nakagiri, telephone (202) 3954926.

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## Instructions for Preparing Worksheets

### General guidance

The data requested should be supplied for all Federal physicians *eligible* for PCA, and as a subset, all Federal physicians actually *receiving* PCA. Eligibility for PCA is defined in 5 U.S.C. 5948 and 5 C.F.R. 595. Data for the budget year should be the estimates included in budget formulation where applicable (e.g., average PCA per physician, average compensation, etc.) or the agency's best estimate (e.g., number of accessions anticipated). Agency estimates may simply be the average of the previous fiscal years. All dollars should be on an obligational basis, and all employment numbers should be on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis unless otherwise noted. Several sections of the worksheet request data by physician category. Some agencies may not employ physicians in all categories, but complete data should be provided for those physician categories applicable to the agency.

### Definitions-General

**Government Physician.** 5 U.S.C. 5948(g)(1) defines Government physician as any individual paid as a physician under the following pay systems: General Schedule; administratively determined pay for certain specially qualified scientific or professional personnel; Tennessee Valley Authority Act; Foreign Service Act; CIA Act; section 121 of title 2 of the Canal Zone Code; or section 2 of the Act of May 29, 1959, relating to the National Security Agency.

**Creditable Federal Service.** For purposes of PCA bonus calculations under 5 U.S.C. 5948, as amended by P.L. 100-140, creditable federal service includes service as a Government physician in any of the personnel systems established under authorities listed immediately above, as well as service as a physician in the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

### Definitions-Physician Categories

**Category I-Clinical Positions:** Positions primarily involving the practice of medicine as a direct service to patients, including the performance of diagnostic, preventive, or therapeutic services to patients in hospitals, clinics, public health programs, diagnostic centers, and similar settings.

**Category II-Research Positions:** Physician positions primarily involving research and investigative assignments.

**Category III-Occupational Health:** Physician positions primarily involving the evaluation of physical fitness, the provision of initial treatment of on-the-job illness or injury, or the performance of pre-employment examinations, preventive health screening, or fitness-for-duty examinations.

**Category IV-Disability Evaluation and Administration of Health and Medical Programs:**

Subcategory IV A: Physician positions primarily involving disability evaluation.

Subcategory IV B: Physician positions primarily involving the administration of health and medical programs, including but not limited to a chief of professional services, senior medical officer, or physician program director position.

**Description Worksheets to Be Submitted to OMB**

(1) **Total Number Employed:** The total number of agency physicians *eligible* for PCA (includes all eligible physicians, whether or not they actually received PCA bonuses) should be supplied for the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 in Part 1. The total number of agency physicians actually receiving or expected to receive PCA should be supplied for the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 in Part II. The same data should be provided by category for each of the fiscal years.

(2) **Number of Physicians Signing One-Year and Two-Year PCA:** Under the PCA program, physicians may elect to sign a one-year or two-year PCA service agreement. For those physicians actually *receiving* or expected to receive PCA (Part II), the number of physicians signing one-year and two-year agreements should be supplied for each fiscal year.

(3) **Average Compensation per Physician:** Average annual compensation per physician should *exclude* the PCA bonus, but include base pay and all other bonuses and awards. The average compensation for agency physicians *eligible* for PCA should be supplied for the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 in Part I. The average compensation for agency physicians actually *receiving* or expected to receive PCA should be supplied for the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 in Part II. The same data should also be provided *by category* for each fiscal year.

(4) **Average PCA Amount per Physician, by Category:** The average annual PCA bonus paid per physician for all categories, as well as for each individual category of physician, should be supplied for each fiscal year in Part II.

(5) **Average PCA Amount per Physician, by Length of Service Agreement:** The average annual PCA bonus paid per physician should be supplied for physicians with a one-year service agreement and two-year service agreement and for each fiscal year in Part II.

(6) **Average PCA Amount per Physician, by Length of Federal Service:** The average annual PCA bonus paid per physician with (a) less than two years creditable Federal service, and (b) two or more years creditable Federal service, should be supplied for each fiscal year in Part II.

(7) **Average Number Years Continuous Service:** The average number of years of continuous creditable Federal service as a physician for those eligible (Part I) and actually receiving or expected to receive PCA (Part II) should be supplied for each fiscal year. The average should be calculated as of the end of the fiscal year in question (e.g. for an agency with one eligible physician who began Federal service as a physician under the General Schedule on October 1, 1996, would have one-year creditable Federal service for purposes of PCA for fiscal year 1998).

(8) **Number of Accessions:** The total number of accessions for all physicians (Part I) and for those *receiving* PCA (Part II) should be supplied for each fiscal year. The number of accessions by category for each fiscal year should also be supplied.

(9) **Number of Separations:** The total number of separations for all physicians (Part I) and for those *receiving* PCA (Part II) should be supplied for each fiscal year. The number of separations by category for each fiscal year should also be supplied.

(10) **Number of Unfilled Full-Time Equivalent Physician Positions:** The number should be equivalent to the total number of physician positions for which the agency has budgeted for the fiscal year in question less the number of physicians on-board during the fiscal year. For example, the agency may have budgeted for 12 full-time equivalent physician positions for the prior fiscal year, but had only 9.5 physicians on-board for the entire year (9 physicians on-board the entire year, and one on-board for six-months of the year). The number of unfilled full-time equivalent physician positions in this case is equal to 2.5.

The total number for all physicians (Part I) and for those *receiving* PCA (Part II) should be supplied for each fiscal year. The number by category for each fiscal year should also be supplied.

(11) **Average Length of Time Physician Positions Remained Unfilled:** The time should be reported in *months* as of the end of the fiscal year (e.g., as of the end of the prior fiscal year the average length of time vacant physician positions remained unfilled might be 13 months, and for the current fiscal year

it may have declined to an average of 8 months). Only the time during which the agency was actively searching for candidates should be counted. The total number for all physicians (Part I) and for those *receiving* PCA (Part II) should be supplied for each fiscal year. The number by category for each fiscal year should also be supplied.

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UNITED STATES  
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT'  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20415

JULY 18, 1997

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Honorable Newt Gingrich  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

The purpose of this letter is to transmit a report on Physicians Comparability Allowances (PCA's), as required by section 5948(j) of title 5, United States Code. The report was prepared by the Office of Management and Budget using data gathered from those agencies with approved plans.

The enclosed report describes which agencies have entered into PCA agreements, the recruiting and retention problems justifying their use, the number of physicians entering into PCA agreements and the duration of the agreements, the size of the allowances provided, and the degree to which recruitment and retention problems are alleviated by the allowance.

The report also recommends a simple 3-year reauthorization of the PCA authority to September 30, 2000. Under the current PCA authority (5 U.S.C. 5948), no PCA service agreement may be entered into later than September 30, 1997.

Sincerely,

/S/

James B. King  
Director

Enclosure

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## Presidential Report on the Physicians Comparability Allowance

### Introduction

Public Law 103-114 requires the President to report to Congress on the operation of the Physicians Comparability Allowance (PCA), including information on:

- which agencies use the allowance;
- the nature and extent of recruiting and retention problems justifying the use of the allowance by each agency;
- number of physicians with whom agreements were entered into by each agency;
- size of the allowances and duration of the agreements;
- and the degree to which the allowance alleviates recruiting and retention problems.

To prepare this report, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) asked all agencies with PCA eligible physicians to provide data on:

- number of physicians they employ, type of work they do (clinical research, occupational health or disability evaluation), how many are eligible for the allowance and how many actually receive it;
- average compensation (excluding PCA) of physicians receiving and not receiving the allowance, size of the average PCA, and size of allowances provided to eligible physicians by category of work and length of PCA agreement;
- average number of years of continuous service per physician, number of accessions and separations the agency experienced, number of unfilled physician positions and average length of time positions were vacant;
- descriptions of the physicians' work, and recruiting and retention problems justifying payment of PCA.

Using these data, the report describes the use of PCA by Federal agencies. It also addresses the Federal physician recruiting and retention situation, and the effectiveness of PCA in improving the situation.

### Reauthorization of PCA

Under 5 U.S.C. 5948, the current PCA authority extends to September 30, 1997. Based on information presented in this and previous reports to Congress, PCA has been effective in assisting Federal agencies to address recruitment and retention problems for physicians. Consistent with these findings, the Administration supports a simple, 3-year reauthorization of PCA to September 30, 2000. The simple



reauthorization will allow OMB and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to continue to monitor the impact of PCA on the recruitment and retention of Federal physicians.

## Background

The Physicians Comparability Allowance authorizes agencies documenting severe recruitment and retention problems to pay annual bonuses to physicians, up to \$14,000 per year for physicians with less than two years Federal service and up to \$20,000 for physicians with more than two years Federal service. PCA was originally authorized by P.L. 95-603 in 1978 (5 U. S. C. 5 94 8) and has been reauthorized a number of times, including 1979, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1990 and 1993. Most of the reauthorizations were simple extensions of the PCA authority. The 1987 reauthorization doubled the maximum allowable bonuses to the current 1 levels.

PCA is authorized only to solve severe, documented physician recruitment and retention problems. For the purpose of this allowance, severe recruitment and retention problems are considered to exist if *all* of the following conditions exist: long-lasting position vacancies; high turnover rates in positions requiring well-qualified physicians; applicants do not have the superior qualifications necessary for the position; and existing vacancies cannot be filled with well-qualified candidates without PCA. Some agencies use alternative programs to improve recruitment and retention of physicians such as the physician special pay authority under title 38, United States Code, that are not covered by this report.

## Summary of PCA Usage Throughout the Federal Government

Table 1. Number and Compensation of Federal Physicians Receiving PCA

<b>Federal Physicians Receiving the Physicians Comparability Allowance Fiscal Years 1993 to 1997</b>					
	FY 1993 (Actual)	FY 1994 (Actual)	FY 1995 (Actual)	FY 1996 (Actual)	FY 1997 (Est)
Physicians Eligible	2,952	2,975	2,916	2,402	2,580
Physicians Receiving	1,896	1,890	2,014	1,841	1,793
% of Eligible Receiving	64%	64%	69%	77%	69%
Average Compensation (PCA excluded)	\$77,777	\$83,283	\$86,188	\$88,761	\$90,141
Average PCA	\$14,698	\$14,124	\$14,541	\$15,765	\$15,373

Source: OMB data collection from Federal agencies using PCA. Data for FY 1997 are estimated. Some agencies did not provide all of the requested data.

As of FY 1996, the last year for which we have complete data, 1,841 physicians in Federal employment received PCA, out of 2,402 who were eligible. The average allowance paid was \$15,765. The largest

users of PCA were the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which gave bonuses to 1,019 physicians and the Department of Defense, which gave bonuses to 487 physicians.

The recruiting and retention problems that justify the allowance vary greatly. Some agencies require physicians with special expertise such as aeronautics or agriculture. Other agencies require physicians to live and work in remote areas. Still other agencies suffer difficulties because local non-Federal competition for physicians has driven salaries past the standard government pay scale.

The percentage of physicians receiving PCA has risen from FY 1994 to FY 1996, but estimates for FY 1997 indicate a decline from FY 1996. The average compensation (excluding PCA) for physicians has risen consistently over the years, and estimates for FY 1997 indicate this trend will continue. From FY 1994 to FY 1997, PCA has constituted roughly 17% of the income of the physicians who receive the allowance.

Table 2. Data on Number and Compensation of Federal Physicians by Length of Agreement

<b>Physicians Signing One-Year and Two-Year PCA Agreements Fiscal Years 1993 to 1997</b>						
		FY 1993 (Actual)	FY 1994 (Actual)	FY 1995 (Actual)	FY 1996 (Actual)	FY 1997 (Est.)
Signing One-Year Agreements	Physicians	187	175	275	221	243

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