

Gov. Tony Evers: Announces additional security pay program for state employees

Posted on Friday, Mar 11, 2022

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced additional pay for correctional officers and sergeants, psychiatric care technicians, youth counselors, and related supervisors to address ongoing effects of the coronavirus pandemic, high vacancy rates, and security staffing needs at the Wisconsin Department of Corrections' and Wisconsin Department of Health Services' 24/7 institutions.

The \$3 per hour add-on will go into effect March 13, 2022, for all eligible employees in pay status, impacting more than 5,000 personnel across both agencies. Historically high vacancy rates at several state institutions have affected day to day operations and have resulted in the need for extra incentives to retain and attract additional staff to work at those facilities.

“Our security personnel have faced higher workloads, pressures, and hazards throughout the pandemic, and deserve to be fairly compensated,” said Gov. Evers. “My initial proposal called for an ongoing \$5 per hour increase for security pay, which the Legislature refused to fund. This increase will provide a much-needed boost not only for recruitment and retention but also to recognize the critical role these workers have across our state.”

Under the 2021-23 compensation plan originally proposed by Gov. Evers, all security employees within these classifications would have received a permanent \$5 per hour add-on. This pay increase would have been funded through a companion bill with general purpose revenue from the state, tapping into the largest general fund ending balance in state history to address this critical need with sustainable, ongoing state funding. Unfortunately, Legislative Republicans on

the Joint Committee on Employment Relations rejected this permanent pay increase for security employees. Responsibly compensating our correctional officers, youth counselors, and psychiatric technicians is an important and ongoing state cost, and the administration will continue to advocate for a permanent solution to this workforce crisis.

“This is a major step towards making compensation more competitive for a sizeable portion of our agency’s workforce that provides direct care,” said DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. “When this administration took office, starting pay for a correctional officer was \$16.65 per hour. After previous pay increases, that increased to \$19.89 per hour. Now, with this add-on, the starting rate for all correctional officers will go to \$22.89 per hour, which is a 37 percent increase in just three years. We will continue to advocate for better compensation for our staff, focusing on the areas of greatest need.”

“We need to do all that we can to retain the staff who are protecting the health and safety of some of our most vulnerable people—those needing care and treatment in our 24/7 facilities,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “These positions provide critical support to Wisconsinites and being able to provide well-deserved pay increases will help ensure we can continue to provide high-quality care.”

The [2021-2023 State of Wisconsin Compensation Plan](#) was approved on Dec. 21, 2021, and went into effect on Jan. 2, 2022. The security pay add-on is being implemented under the pilot add-on provisions of Section A, 4.39 of the 2021-2023 Compensation Plan, and will be paid in addition to any other add-ons identified in the plan. The pay increase is expected to continue through June 17, 2023, unless an extension is approved. The pay increase will be agency-funded to the extent possible, with the added use of American Rescue Plan Act funds.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).