

# County of Santa Clara

Employee Services Agency

Human Resources

County Government Center, East Wing

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San Jose, California 95110



## CLASSIFICATION REPORT

DATE: June 28, 2023

TO: Riko Mendez, Chief Elected Officer  
Debbie Narvaez Cole, Chief of Staff  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 521

FROM: Joel Tovar, Senior Human Resources Analyst

REVIEWED BY: Anita Asher, Human Resources Director

SUBJECT: Classification Study – Public Health Nurse Classification Series

### **BACKGROUND**

As a result of the last contract negotiations between the County of Santa Clara and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 521, an agreement was made to review and update the Public Health Nurse I/II/III/Specialist classifications and to conduct salary surveys to ensure that the classifications are compensated competitively in comparison to other large Northern California entities.

### **FINDINGS/ANALYSIS**

According to the American Public Health Association, public health nursing is defined as "...the practice of promoting and protecting the health of populations using knowledge from nursing, social, and public health sciences." Instead of being stationed in a hospital or clinic setting, public health nurses reach out to patients in the community. This allows public health nurses to assess the patient's environment, available resources, and potential healthcare needs.

Clinical nurses are registered nurses (RNs) who provide patient care in clinical settings. A clinical nurse's duties include assessing a patient's condition, administering medication, setting IVs, updating patient records, providing emotional support, and/or educating patients on how to manage their illness or injury.

The services provided by the County of Santa Clara necessitate the employment of both Public Health Nurses (PHNs) and Clinical Nurses (CNs), and there is a classification series for each in the County's Classification Plan.

Both the PHN and CN classification series have three (3) working levels and one (1) specialist level, and both require the possession of an RN license. An individual can qualify for an RN license after completion of a two (2) year college nursing program. All classifications in the

PHN classification series require the possession of a bachelor's degree in Nursing in compliance with the California Code of Regulations regarding the required qualifications to practice as a public health nurse.

The County of Santa Clara currently has over 2,000 alternately staffed CN III/II/I positions, four (4) CN Specialist positions, 80 alternately staffed PHN II/I positions, 10 PHN III positions, and three (3) PHN Specialist position. CN positions are represented by the Registered Nurses Professional Association (RNPA), and PHN positions are represented by SEIU Local 521, Public Health Nursing Unit.

As stated above, there are four (4) levels in the PHN classification series, PHN I, II, III, and Specialist. The PHN I and PHN II job specifications have not been revised since March 1972. The PHN III job specification has not been revised since October 1984. The PHN Specialist classification was established in October 1984, and the job specification has not been revised since. The definitions of each level are as follows:

#### Public Health Nurse I

“Under supervision, to apply systems-level thinking from knowledge of nursing, social, and public health sciences to provide public health nursing services in diverse settings, including homes, clinics, hospitals, schools, agencies, and community settings as required by the assigned program area.”

#### Public Health Nurse II

“Under general supervision, to apply systems-level thinking from knowledge of nursing, social, and public health sciences to provide professional public health nursing services in diverse settings, including homes, clinics, hospitals, schools, and community settings as required by the assigned program area.”

#### Public Health Nurse III

“Under general supervision and within established program areas, to apply systems-level thinking from knowledge of nursing, social, and public health sciences to provide specialized public health nursing services in diverse settings and liaison within or between the Public Health Department, other county departments and government agencies, and community partners.”

#### Public Health Nurse Specialist

Under direction, to apply systems-level thinking from knowledge of nursing, social, and public health sciences to provide advanced public health nursing services and act as a subject matter expert, consultant, and educator in a specialized area of public health nursing; to plan, implement, and evaluate nursing standards, programs, and outcomes in collaboration with a wide variety of public and private agencies.

The job specifications for all PHN levels have been revised to ensure consistency with current formatting. These revisions include adding current job specification template language, such as the statement under the Typical Tasks section, “The following are the duties performed by employees in this classification. However, employees may perform other related duties at an

equivalent level. Each individual in the classification does not necessarily perform all duties listed,” and the addition of the following Typical Task, “May be assigned as a Disaster Service Worker, as required.” Outdated or obsolete terminology, specification wording, and job duties have been replaced with current terminology, specification wording, and job duties. The language in each job specification relating to the oversight of lower-level employees has been clarified.

The experience requirement in the PHN II, PHN III, and PHN Specialist specifications has been expanded to include other acceptable nursing experience, such as school or community nursing. The current PHN Specialist educational requirement is possession of a master’s degree; however, a recent incumbent did not possess this degree and had been successfully performing in the position for 15 years. Therefore, the Training and Experience Note has been revised to require a bachelor’s degree in Nursing and four (4) years of experience as a Public Health Nurse, one (1) year of which must have been in the specialty nursing area. Possession of a master’s degree has been revised to be a “preferred” qualification.

In addition, because incumbents in the PHN classification series must travel within the county to perform job duties, the requirement to possess a California Driver’s License has been updated with the current specification wording: “Ability to travel to alternate locations in the course of work. If driving, possession of a valid California driver’s license prior to appointment and the ability to qualify for and maintain a County driver authorization.”

The required Knowledge and Abilities sections have been reviewed to ensure that they contain the necessary qualifications to perform the Typical Tasks. Where necessary, this language has been revised, updated, and expanded as appropriate. A Physical Requirement section has been added that includes:

- Ability to lift objects weighing up to 15 pounds, squat, bend, and climb stairs;
- Ability to work alternate shifts and/or weekends.

The revised PHN job specifications are attached to this report.

### Salary

As a result of the contract negotiations with SEIU Local 521, all levels of the PHN classification series received a five percent (5%) realignment, in addition to the general wage increase received by all SEIU - represented employees, which was implemented on April 6, 2020. There was a one percent (1%) realignment implemented in 2021. All the PHN classifications are paid on a five (5) step salary range.

A salary survey was conducted using the following large Bay Area counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Cruz. Public health nursing is almost always a unique function of county government; however, the City of Berkeley within Alameda County also has a public health nursing function and has been included in the salary survey in order to review as many local comparable entities as possible. Alameda County does not have a specific public health nurse classification; a generic Registered Nurse classification series is utilized for public health nursing, as well as the Health Care Services Agency, Social Services Agency, and

Community Development Agency. For purposes of the salary survey, the Registered Nurse classification series from Alameda County has been included, even though it is utilized in other County of Alameda agencies.

In compliance with the Memorandum of Agreement between the County and SEIU Local 521, an Employer Paid Member Contribution (EPMC) of two and 95 hundredths percent (2.95%) has been added to the County's PHN base compensation for purposes of comparison with the salaries of the other entities surveyed.

#### PHN I

Two (2) entities within the survey have classifications comparable to the County's entry-level PHN I classification, the Counties of Alameda and Santa Cruz. The County of Santa Cruz has two (2) additional salary steps in its salary range. The average step five (5) effective hourly salary for these two (2) counties is \$52.40. The step five (5) effective hourly salary for the County of Santa Clara's PHN I classification is \$68.749, which is approximately thirty five percent (35%) above the average of the Counties of Alameda and Santa Cruz. The average highest effective hourly salary [which includes the County of Santa Cruz's additional two (2) steps] for these two (2) counties is \$54.58. In this comparison, the County of Santa Clara's PHN I classification is paid approximately thirty percent (30%) above the average of Alameda and Santa Cruz counties. The salary for the County of Santa Clara's PHN I classification is the highest of the three (3) entities with PHN I – comparable classifications and clearly exceeds the average of the Bay Area counties. However, for recruitment and retention purposes it is recommended to increase the salary of the Public Health Nurse I classification by approximately five percent (5%).

#### PHN II

There is no consistency among the entities surveyed regarding the number of levels of PHN classifications. Since the PHN II is the journey-level in the County's PHN classification series, the journey-level public health nurse classifications located in each entity have been compared to the PHN II. All six (6) entities within the survey have journey-level classifications comparable to the County's PHN II. The City and County of San Francisco and the County of Contra Costa both have a ten (10) step salary range for their PHN classifications; the County of Alameda has an eight (8) step salary range for its Registered Nurse II classification; and the County of Santa Cruz has a seven (7) step salary range for its PHN II classification. These additional salary steps are considered longevity pay.

The step five (5) average effective hourly salary for these six (6) entities is \$70.78. The step five (5) effective hourly salary for the County's PHN II classification is \$70.75, which is approximately twelve percent (12%) above the step five (5) average of the Bay Area counties and the City of Berkeley. The average of the highest effective hourly salaries of these six (6) entities is \$76.24. In this comparison, the County of Santa Clara's PHN II classification is paid approximately five percent (4%) above the average of the six (6) entities surveyed. The salary for the County of Santa Clara's PHN II classification is the fourth highest of the six (6) entities with PHN II comparable classifications in the five (5) step comparison and the fourth highest in the highest step comparison. However, for recruitment and retention purposes, it is

recommended to increase the salary of the Public Health Nurse II classification by approximately five percent (5%).

### PHN III

Four (4) entities have advanced-level public health nurse classifications comparable to the County of Santa Clara's PHN III classification. Again, the Counties of Alameda and Santa Cruz have expanded salary ranges as noted above. The step five (5) average effective hourly salary for the four (4) entities with comparable classifications is \$64.24. The step five (5) effective hourly salary for the County's PHN III is \$83.02, which is approximately thirty-three percent (33%) above the average of the entities with comparable classifications. The average highest effective hourly salary of these four (4) entities is \$69.23. In this comparison, the County of Santa Clara's PHN III classification is paid approximately twenty-eight percent (28%) above the average of the four (4) entities with comparable classifications. The salary for the County of Santa Clara's PHN III classification is the second highest of the four (4) entities with PHN III comparable classifications and exceeds the average of the Bay Area entities. However, for recruitment and retention purposes, it is recommended to increase the salary of the Public Health Nurse III classification by approximately five percent (5%).

### PHN Specialist

Only one (1) entity, the County of Alameda, has a classification comparable to the County of Santa Clara's PHN Specialist classification, the Registered Nurse IV, which is paid on a five (5) step salary range. The highest hourly salary for the Registered Nurse IV classification in Alameda County is \$74.81. The highest effective hourly salary for the County of Santa Clara's PHN Specialist is \$85.89, which is approximately fourteen percent (14%) above the County of Alameda.

An internal comparison was made between the PHN Specialist and the CN Specialist classifications. The classifications are similar in that incumbents are experienced nurses who provide guidance and expertise in a specialty area. At a minimum, the PHN Specialist classification requires possession of a bachelor's degree, while the CN Specialist requires a two (2) year nursing degree; however, the CN Specialist requires one (1) more year of experience than does the PHN Specialist. In a comparison of step five (5) of the PHN Specialist classification to step five (5) of the CN Specialist classification, the CN Specialist is paid approximately nineteen percent (19%) above the PHN Specialist. The CN Specialist is also eligible for nine (9) longevity steps, making the difference between the PHN Specialist at Step five (5) and the CN Specialist at the highest longevity step, seven (7) C, approximately thirty-one percent (31%).

The PHN Specialist classification is paid three and four tenths' percent (3.4%) more than the PHN III classification, but has a higher level of responsibility, requires an additional year of experience in a specialty area, and the preferred possession of a master's degree. This salary difference between classifications is not adequate in recognition of the higher level of qualifications required and responsibility assigned to the PHN Specialist classification. The salary difference between the PHN I and II classifications is twelve and two tenths' percent (12.2%), and the salary difference between the PHN II and III classifications is seven and six tenths' percent (7.6%). To provide an appropriate distance from the lower-level PHN III, it is

recommended to increase the compensation for the PHN Specialist classification by approximately six and five tenths' percent (6.5%) which will create a salary difference between the PHN III and PHN Specialist classification of nine and nine tenths' percent (9.9%), the average of the distances between the PHN I and II, and PHN II and III classifications. This recommendation does not cause salary compaction with the Public Health Nurse Manager I classification.

This report was originally posted to SEIU on December 31, 2020. SEIU responded and engaged with the County on a meet and confer, which occurred for several months until the classification report was reposted to SEIU on January 20, 2023. SEIU responded and the meet and confer was scheduled for April 28, 2023. SEIU presented their counter proposal on the job specifications and asked questions regarding the salary comparison of the five (5) surrounding counties. Based on the information provided, and for recruitment and retention purposes, the salary recommendations have been updated.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Revise the Public Health Nurse I specification and increase the salary by approximately five percent (5%) to \$59.59 - \$72.19 hourly.
- Revise the Public Health Nurse II specification and increase the salary by approximately five percent (5%) to \$66.82 - \$81.00 hourly.
- Revise the Public Health Nurse III specification and increase the salary by approximately five percent (5%) to \$71.92 - \$87.17 hourly.
- Revise the Public Health Nurse Specialist job specification and increase the salary by approximately six and a half percent (6.5%) to \$75.47- \$91.48 hourly.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The annual fiscal impact will be approximately \$641,805 for PHN I/II's, \$86,341 for PHN III, and \$34,841 for PHN Specialists. The approximate fiscal impact for the remainder of the fiscal year is \$293,456.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Classification specifications
- Salary survey information