

County of Santa Clara

Employee Services Agency

Human Resources

County Government Center, East Wing

70 West Hedding Street, 8th Floor

San Jose, California 95110



DATE: January 24, 2023

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: John P. Mills, Director, Employee Services Agency

DocuSigned by:
John P. Mills
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SUBJECT: Off-Agenda Report RE: Psychiatric Nurse Series Classification Study

During the January 10, 2023, Board of Supervisors meeting, Supervisor Ellenberg requested an off-agenda report regarding the classification study for the Psychiatric Nurse series. This memorandum provides the requested information.

The Psychiatric Nurse classification series consisted of the Psychiatric Nurse II and Psychiatric Nurse I classifications. The Psychiatric Nurse II job specification was established in 1963 and revised in 1985. The Psychiatric Nurse I job specification was established in 1985, and no revisions have been made since that time.

In the intervening time since the establishment of the Psychiatric Nurse series classifications, the skills and knowledge needed to provide care in the various nursing specialty areas, including psychiatry/behavioral health, have evolved. The Psychiatric Nurse classifications were outdated and limited the psychiatric nurse's professional advancement opportunities relative to those available in other nursing specialty areas. Additionally, having only two levels in the Psychiatric Nurse classification series constrained the professional growth of psychiatric nurses. The Clinical Nurse classification series includes knowledge and abilities at each of three levels encompassing the progression from novice to expert nurse. With the recent creation of the Professional Nurse Development Program differential, the County can monetarily reward exceptional Clinical Nurses for their advanced professional accomplishments, resulting in higher nursing retention, increased patient satisfaction, and a positive patient experience.

The Clinical Nurse series classifications are inclusive of the typical tasks and employment standards required of a psychiatric nurse. In addition, the industry standard recognizes psychiatry/behavioral health as a nursing specialty area and not as a separate classification with a different scope of responsibilities and compensation. Therefore, to conform with the industry standard, reduce overlapping classifications, and allow for robust professional development, the Psychiatric Nurse incumbents will be reclassified to the corresponding level in the Clinical Nurse classification series, and the Psychiatric Nurse classification series will be abolished. All County agencies/departments impacted by this change, as well as the Registered Nurses Professional Association (RNPA), which represents the Psychiatric Nurse incumbents, concurred with these actions.

Board of Supervisors: Sylvia Arenas, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian

County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

All nurse recruitments are conducted by specialty area, so candidates will be able to distinguish that the applicable recruitment is for the psychiatric/behavioral health specialty area, and the County will be able to conduct outreach to candidates who may be interested in employment as a nurse dedicated to behavioral health services.

- c: Chief Board Aides
 - Greta S. Hansen, Chief Operating Officer
 - James R. Williams, County Counsel
 - Tiffany Lennear, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
 - Thuy Pham, Office of Budget & Analysis
 - Anita Asher, Human Resources Director
 - Michelle Quon, Assistant Human Resources Director
 - Laura Salas, Human Resources Manager