

Office of Nursing Services – Travel Corps Program

Pay & Benefits Overview

Salary Details

- ONS-TC Field Staff are compensated according to a **National Pay Table** and do **not receive locality pay**. Deployment location does not affect salary.
- The **ONS-TC National Pay Tables** are considered highly competitive with those in the private sector.
- **Intermittent employees** are paid **only for hours worked**.
- For more information on pay and leave, visit the U.S. Office of Personnel Management website. Be sure to reference benefits specific to **Intermittent Employees**.

Grade/Level/Step Details

- Employees transferring into ONS-TC from other parts of the enterprise retain their **current grade, level, and step**, but their salary is based on the **ONS-TC National Pay Table**.
- Salaries displayed are based on **full-time hours**. To calculate your annual salary, use your **hourly rate** and the **number of hours** you plan to work.
- Federal employees on **special pay tables** or **Nurse Managers with two-step increases** should note that these conditions **do not apply** upon transfer to ONS-TC.

Holiday Pay, Shift Differential, and Overtime

- Federal intermittent employees are **not entitled to paid holidays**, but ONS-TC Field Staff receive **holiday pay differential** when working on holidays, per VA pay regulations.
- Field Staff receive:
 - **10% shift differential** for hours worked between **6 PM and 6 AM**
 - **25% weekend differential** for hours worked on weekends
- Overtime pay is provided for **hours worked beyond eight consecutive hours**.

Within-Grade Increase (WIGI)

- For intermittent employees, **waiting periods for step increases** are based on **creditable service days**, not weeks.
- Employees earn **1 creditable day** for each day in **pay status**.
- For a detailed breakdown, refer to **“Step Increases for Intermittent Nurses.”**
- Waiting periods are **established by law**, not by the program.

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Proficiencies

- All Field Staff are encouraged to submit a **self-evaluation** to each deployment site supervisor for consideration in the site's **special summary rating**.
- **Proficiency ratings** and their review processes are used to determine **promotion eligibility**.
- **Annual proficiencies** are calculated each fiscal year by averaging ratings from all deployment sites and compliance with program requirements.

Promotions

- To qualify for promotion, employees must meet the criteria for the next grade level as outlined in **VA qualification standards**.
- A thorough review of the employee's record must demonstrate **valuable contributions** and **potential for continued impact**.
- Promotions are based on **merit**, supported by **supervisory reviews** and **documentary evidence**.

Retirement

- Federal employees transferring internally to ONS-TC without a break in service retain **retirement benefits**, prorated based on **paid status**.
- **External/private sector hires** are **not eligible** for retirement benefits.
- For those eligible for the **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)**, contributions are made via **payroll deduction** during paid status only.
- For more information, visit Retirement Services - OPM.gov, and reference benefits for **Intermittent Employees**.

Medical Benefits

- **Internal Transfers:** Federal employees transferring without a break in service retain **medical and dental benefit eligibility**.
- Employees who accumulate **365 days of non-pay status** will **lose health benefits**.
- **External/Private Sector Hires:** Eligible for **Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)**.
- For more information, visit Guide Me - OPM.gov.

Sick and Vacation Leave

- **Intermittent Employees** do **not earn leave** of any kind, including:
 - Annual Leave
 - Sick Leave
 - Administrative Leave

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- Leave for inclement weather
- During **inclement weather or natural disasters**, Field Staff are paid **only for hours worked**.
- If sheltering in place at a healthcare system, pay is limited to **hours worked**.
- **Illness-related absences** are considered **non-paid days**.
- Tour changes to recoup missed hours may be discussed with the **field supervisor** and are generally appreciated.
- **Federal Employees Transferring into ONS** retain **accumulated sick leave** in storage until retirement.

Assignments & Appointment

Intermittent Appointment and Reappointment

- ONS-TC employees are placed on a **temporary intermittent appointment** for one year. They are **not considered contract employees**.
- Employees may work up to **1,872 hours per year** (approximately 11 months).
 - This total includes **all hours in paid status**, even those exceeding a traditional 80-hour pay cycle. For example, working 100 hours in a pay period adds 20 extra hours to your annual total.
- Field Staff are expected to work a **minimum of 39 weeks per year** (approximately 9 months), based on medical center needs.
- **Annual reappointments** are determined by organizational needs and compliance with employment standards.

Assignments / Deployments

- Your **first deployment** will align with your program start date unless otherwise directed by leadership.
- Assignments are selected by **ONS-TC leadership**, based on enterprise needs and your skill set. Preferences may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Field Staff are limited to **60 hours per 7-day period**, unless additional hours are approved due to a site emergency.
- Staff are expected to work **40 hours per week** or **80 hours biweekly** during assignments.
- **Overtime** may be worked with **prior approval** from your on-site supervisor.

Consecutive Assignments

- Assignment **extensions** may be approved based on program needs and are limited to **9 months per site**.
- Staff may not exceed **1,875 hours per year**, regardless of assignment timing.
 - Staff are responsible for **tracking their own hours** to avoid exceeding limits.

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- Remaining time at a site will be **cancelled** if the maximum hours are reached.
- Staff are responsible for understanding **tax laws and codes**. Questions should be directed to the **IRS or a tax professional**, as the program does not provide tax guidance.

Time Off Between & During Assignments

- Time off should be **requested when submitting a new assignment request**.
 - Time off during assignments must be **pre-approved** by site leadership and communicated to program leadership.
 - Other time-off requests are reviewed **case-by-case**.
- Most staff **preplan follow-up assignments** toward the end of their current deployment.
- When not working, staff are in a **non-pay status** but remain ONS-TC employees.
- During non-pay status:
 - Employees may choose to **incur a debt** or **pay FEHB premiums** directly.
 - For **dental and vision coverage** through BENEFEDS, payments can be made directly to the insurance carrier.

Training/Orientation

- Site orientation varies based on your **experience** and the **position**.
- **ONS-TC program orientation** begins on your **report-to-duty date**.
- Field Staff are deployable to specialty areas based on **current competency and experience**.

Accepting a Permanent Position within the VA

- ONS-TC Field Staff are **not under contract** and may apply for **permanent VA positions** at any time.
 - Transitions should not disrupt assignments or **Veteran care**.
 - Staff must complete **out-processing**, including clearance of **vouchers and travel card payments**, before transferring.

TRAVEL

Lodging

- All travel must comply with **federal travel regulations**.

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- These regulations are not created by ONS-TC but are **mandatory** for all employees.
- Field staff are required to work with the program **Travel Coordinator** for arrangements.
 - Options may include hotels, extended-stay suites, or corporate housing.
 - **RV use** is permitted but may affect travel allotments.
 - Lodging must accept the **VA travel card**.
 - **Federal room rates** must be booked before considering other options.

Reimbursement

- Salary is paid **biweekly**, on the Friday following the close of the pay period.
- Travelers receive a **government credit card** for lodging and authorized expenses.
 - You are financially responsible for your **travel card** and any **unpaid charges**.
- **Meals & Incidental Expenses (M&IE)** are based on **GSA rates** for long-term travel:
GSA M&IE Rates
 - Typically around **\$35/day**, reduced for long-term lodging.
- Staff must complete a **monthly travel voucher** for lodging and approved expenses.
 - In high-cost areas, vouchers may be required **biweekly**.
 - **Transportation from airport to lodging** (e.g., cab, Uber, Lyft) is reimbursable with receipts when a courtesy shuttle is not available.

Travel Companions

- Travelers are responsible for **all additional costs** related to companions or pets.
 - This includes hotel fees, airfare, and any itinerary changes.
 - **Pet-friendly lodging** is limited but may be available in corporate housing.
 - No reimbursement is provided for companion or pet-related expenses.

Additional Travel Notes

- **Travel pay** is separate from hourly pay.
- VA Form **10091** is used to set up your travel profile in the **CONCUR/CGE system**.
- **ONS-TC per diem (meals)** is based on **55%** of the GSA rate for 13-week/90-day tours.
 - Example: If the meal rate is \$76, you receive **\$41.80/day**.
 - **First and last day** of travel per diem is **75%** of the rate (e.g., \$57/day if the rate is \$76).
- The **Travel Team** provides lodging information once your tour is confirmed.
 - Acceptable lodging includes **hotels (via CONCUR)** or **corporate lease housing** (discussed during travel training).
- If a **government vehicle (GOV)** is available, **rental cars are not authorized**.

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- Declining a GOV and using a **privately owned vehicle (POV)** may result in reduced mileage reimbursement or denial of local commuting mileage.
- If driving instead of flying, a **cost comparison** will determine the most **cost-effective option** for reimbursement.
- **Airfare** is based on your **Home of Record (Stateside/CONUS)** address on file with HR.
- Upon acceptance into the ONS-TC program, **Travel and IBA (US Bank Government Credit Card Program) training** will be scheduled.
 - Training includes **travel authorization (TA), IBA card use, and voucher processing.**