

RECEIVER RAISES PRISON PHYSICIAN SALARIES
Action will improve quality of care, aid in recruitment of doctors

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Contact: Rachael Kagan, Director of Communications 408 436-6867, 510 387-1292
(cell), rachael.kagan@cprinc.org

SAN JOSE, Calif. – Federal Receiver Robert Sillen today announced salary increases for physicians working in California’s 33 adult prisons, in a move that will better compensate qualified doctors, aid in recruitment efforts and provide improved access to quality care for the state’s nearly 173,000 inmate patients.

“We cannot expect to attract the number and quality of physicians we need at the salaries currently offered,” said Sillen, who has been appointed by the federal court to improve medical care in the state prisons. “Enhancing the pay scale is just one step – but a very important one – to recruiting and retaining qualified physicians to join the team and turn the prison system around. We’re going to do whatever is necessary to get the prison system staffed appropriately with good, trained, qualified people.”

The Receivership is the result of a 2001 class action law suit - *Plata v. Schwarzenegger* - that found the medical care in California’s 33 adult prisons violates the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which forbids cruel and unusual punishment. U.S. District Court Judge Thelton E. Henderson appointed Sillen as Receiver in February 2006 and charged him with taking over the operations of the state’s prison medical care system, in order to bring it up to constitutional levels.

California prisons have a 20 percent vacancy rate statewide for primary care providers (physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants), the most recent available data show. High vacancy rates for prison medical staff negatively impact the quality of patient care, and make it difficult to achieve systemic improvements, because there are so few permanent staff to implement and maintain remedial efforts.

The new salary structure, which was arrived at in collaboration with the Union of American Physicians and Dentists, creates a three-part range based on categories of board certification. The total annual cost for the increases is \$5.9 million. A net savings is expected over time as state-employed physicians are hired, reducing the reliance on costly contract doctors. (\$86.54-\$96.16 per hour for state physicians v. \$250 per hour paid to contractors.)

“The new salaries will recognize physicians who have demonstrated core competency in their practice area, reward the good doctors we already have, and attract a new cadre to join the efforts to improve medical care for inmate patients,” Sillen said.

Position	Qualification	New Salary/Year	Previous Salary/Year
Physician and Surgeon (clinic line doctor)	Non-Board Cert. Lifetime Board Cert. Time-limited Board Cert.	\$180,000 \$189,996 \$200,004	\$168,360
Chief Physician and Surgeon (first level institution supervisor)	Non-Board Cert. Lifetime Board Cert. Time-limited Board Cert.	\$189,996 \$200,004 \$210,000	\$ 174,696
Chief Medical Officer (top level institution supervisor and some positions in headquarters)	Non-Board Cert. Lifetime Board Cert. Time-limited Board Cert.	\$200,004 \$210,000 \$219,996	\$ 184,596
Chief Deputy Clinical Services (includes Regional Medical Directors)	Non-Board Cert. Lifetime Board Cert. Time-limited Board Cert.	\$210,000 \$219,996 \$230,004	\$185,000
Statewide Medical Director	Non-Board Cert. Lifetime Board Cert. Time-limited Board Cert.	\$219,996 \$231,000 \$242,544	\$185,000

The raises will be effective March 1 2007, though they may not appear in paychecks until the end of April due to the complexities of implementing the new pay scales and the workload of staff at the Department of Personnel Administration and the State Controller's office.

Today's action follows a salary adjustment last year for most other prison medical staff that delivered increases ranging from 5 to 64 percent over time for critical health care positions and brought their salaries closer in line with those paid at University of California hospitals. That batch of new salaries took effect September 1 2006 and already is having a salutary effect on the recruitment and hiring of prison health care workers.

The medical staff salary adjustments spring from an October 17 2006 court order in which Judge Henderson granted the Receiver's request to waive state law, allowing him to raise salaries of prison medical (not mental health or dental) staff. The narrowly drawn order waives specific provisions of California law and regulation that designate the state's Department of Personnel Administration as the agency responsible for establishing and adjusting salary ranges for civil service classifications. The court's action allows the Receiver to exercise that authority, in the case of certain prison medical staff positions, including those in nursing, pharmacy, medical transcribing, X-ray, medical records and dietary services. In addition, nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs) received raises. Physician raises now follow. The Receiver is still evaluating the pay scales of certain other positions and classifications in medical care and medical care support functions to determine whether salary adjustments are necessary.

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