

Ward Program Administrator (WPA) Frequently Asked Questions

Why did we decide to develop the Ward Program Administrator position?

Our hospital is under a Systems Improvement Agreement (SIA) with CMS to come into compliance with the CMS Conditions of Participation. The hospital leadership along with our consultants have identified the addition of Ward Program Administrators (WPAs) as a critical priority to address the lack of a single point of accountability at the ward level. They made this suggestion to help WSH better coordinate all services on the wards and make it easier for clinical staff to provide quality care and ensure safety for all patients and staff.

We plan on hiring 28 WPAs beginning mid-September, and this is the first staffing addition of what we hope will be many toward establishing a center-based model of care within our wards.

What will be the role of Ward Program Administrators?

Ward Program Administrators are responsible for the day-to-day operations of their assigned ward. WPAs provide administrative management and support of the ward, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.

The WPAs promote patient and staff safety and support clinical staff, ensuring the ward runs smoothly and effectively. They have authority to ensure that their ward is in compliance with hospital policies, procedures, CMS Conditions of Participation, and other regulatory compliance bodies. WPAs will help in non-clinical auditing, which will free up valuable clinical staff time, allowing clinical staff to focus on maintaining high standards of clinical care.

WPAs take a leadership role by building and supporting healthy and effective relationships with all ward employees, and they regularly communicate with all ward staff. They respect the multidisciplinary nature of both administrative and clinical treatment operations, ensuring that the ward can effectively serve our patients.

What will NOT be the role of Ward Program Administrators?

WPAs do not provide clinical direction; instead, they coordinate all disciplines to ensure the wards are functionally maintained and provide quality care. WPAs ensure that all ward staff are working together in a professional and seamless manner to maximize the patient recovery experience, promote timely deployment of resources to positively impact discharge readiness, and maintain a safe environment.

How is this role different than our former structure of Ward Program Managers?

Years ago, each ward was assigned a "Ward Program Manager," but there were many issues with their roles, responsibilities, and an unclear chain of command. Hospital leadership recently heard feedback from supervisors and their input helped inform the Ward Program Administrator job description.

The key change is that these administrators focus on administrative duties, leaving clinical decisions up to qualified members of the treatment team.

How will WPAs fit into the current organizational chart of the wards and leadership?

WPAs will report to Center Directors in their respective areas and be an integral part of center-based management teams.

Who will do my performance evaluation?

WPAs will conduct the performance evaluations of staff as it relates to administrative duties, while the clinical supervisor will address clinical performance.

What is the benefit to the patients of Western State Hospital?

Staff will have more time to focus on the needs of their patients, and decisions about patient treatment will be made with greater organization and speed.

What is the benefit to the staff of Western State Hospital?

Staff will be more specialized in their daily tasks, working more closely within their job descriptions to serve patients and improve safety. Staff will also have a go-to advocate in their WPA for hospital-wide questions and concerns.

Will this change my role, or will I lose my job?

No jobs will be lost in the addition of WPAs. This change will **not** diminish the role of the clinical supervisors. Clinical supervisors are critical to the hospital's operations, mission and to our efforts in improving care. These supervisors will now be freed up from administrative duties to further focus on the quality of the clinical services provided by discipline staff.

Why don't we just hire more direct care staff?

WPAs are only a small part of the overall staffing increases that WSH is currently requesting from DSHS, the majority of which includes requests for additional staff to provide direct care and services. The WPAs will help coordinate the great work staff does to maximize resources, so that wards are not stretched so thin. It will especially help clinical staff focus on providing treatment rather than administrative tasks.

What will WPAs be paid?

The state pay range for our WPAs is \$85,000-\$93,000 annually.

What is the timeline for hiring WPAs?

Although we have received permission to hire, the HR paperwork is waiting for approval. We anticipate being able to post the WPA positions by September 15. An announcement will be made on the WSH Intranet/Employee Bulletin Board, and soon you can look Human Resources for details and application deadlines. (<http://careers.wa.gov>)