

Chapter: Employee Awards and Recognition	Effective Date: 10/15/13
Title: Merit Awards	Page: 1 of 3
ACA: N/A	Replaces: PRS.10.03, 12/1/11
Statute(s): Gov't Code §659.255	

(a) **Policy.**

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) may award a merit salary increase or a one-time merit payment to an employee in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

(b) **Definitions.**

For definitions of certain terms used in this policy, see the [PRS Glossary](#).

(c) **Applicability.**

- (1) This policy does not apply to employees in non-classified positions (e.g., teacher aides hired before September 1, 1999, and other unclassified education positions).
- (2) The provisions for merit salary increases do not apply to juvenile correctional officers (JCOs) at a pay level lower than the maximum for their current career ladder.

(d) **General Information.**

- (1) Merit salary increases and one-time merit payments are considered only if funds are available.
- (2) Merit salary increases and one-time merit payments are not automatic even if an employee meets eligibility requirements and funds are available.
- (3) Merit salary increases take effect only on the first [calendar day](#) of a month and are not prorated or retroactive.
- (4) Supervisors should not discuss a merit recommendation with an employee until after the recommendation has received final approval or disapproval.
 - (A) After a performance evaluation has been signed by the second-line supervisor, the supervisor may delay providing the evaluation to the employee until a merit recommendation has been approved or disapproved.
 - (B) The delay must not result in the performance evaluation being provided later than one calendar month after the due date.

(e) **Eligibility Criteria.**

- (1) Except as provided in (2) below, an employee must meet the following criteria to be considered for a merit salary increase or one-time merit payment.
 - (A) Within the six-month period before the effective date of the increase:
 - (i) the employee has been continuously employed in his/her current position;
 - (ii) the employee has not been promoted, demoted, or reclassified to a higher salary group;
 - (iii) the employee has not received a JCO [career ladder adjustment](#), merit salary increase, or one-time merit payment;
 - (iv) the employee has not received any disciplinary action, as defined in [PRS.35.01](#).

- (B) The employee's most recent performance evaluation is:
- (i) satisfactory and indicates that the employee's job performance and productivity in his/her current position are consistently above that normally expected or required;
 - (ii) current (i.e., completed within the last 12 months); and
 - (iii) signed by the second-line supervisor.

- (2) An employee may receive a one-time merit payment within six months from a previous promotion, merit salary increase, or one-time merit payment if the employee's performance during a natural disaster or other extraordinary circumstances warrants a merit payment.

(f) **Merit Amounts.**

- (1) The amount of a merit salary increase or one-time merit payment may exceed the limitations in this policy only with written approval from the executive director.
- (2) A merit salary increase may be any dollar amount from a minimum of \$50 monthly up to a maximum of 10.2% of the employee's monthly salary. The amount of a merit salary increase may not result in the employee exceeding the maximum salary rate for his/her current salary group.
- (3) A one-time merit payment:
- (A) may be any dollar amount from \$100 up to 10.2% of the employee's annual salary, rounded down to the nearest whole dollar (no cents).
 - (B) is paid in one lump sum and is not added to the employee's base salary; and
 - (C) may be awarded even if the employee is receiving the maximum salary rate for his/her salary group.

(g) **Procedures for Submitting and Approving a Merit Recommendation.**

- (1) The employee's supervisor must contact the appropriate facility business coordinator or the appropriate budget analyst in the Finance Division to determine if funds are available before recommending an employee for a merit salary increase or one-time merit payment.
- (2) If funds are available, a supervisor in the employee's chain of supervision submits the completed Recommendation for Merit Salary Increase or One-Time Merit Payment form, [HR-409](#), to the local human resources administrator (HRA).
- (A) When determining the recommended amount of the merit salary increase or one-time merit payment, the supervisor should consider the provisions in Section (f) above and:
- (i) the percentage of the highest possible ratings the employee received on the employee's current performance evaluation (e.g., 75%, 90%, 100%);
 - (ii) the employee's achievements and the impact of the achievements on the facility, department, or agency; and
 - (iii) the employee's current salary compared to other outstanding performers of similar tenure within the same [job classification](#) or salary group.
- (B) The recommending supervisor must describe how the employee's job performance and productivity in the current position held are consistently above normal expectations or requirements.

- (3) The HRA notifies the recommending supervisor whether the employee meets the eligibility criteria.
 - (A) If the employee does not meet the eligibility criteria, the HRA files the original  [HR-409](#) form in the employee's personnel file.
 - (B) If the employee meets the eligibility criteria, the HRA submits the HR-409 form to the appropriate [division director/department head](#) or designee for further consideration.
 - (4) For eligible employees, the division director or designee must sign the HR-409 form indicating approval or disapproval of the merit recommendation.
 - (5) The division director or his/her designee is the final approval authority for:
 - (A) an increase that does not exceed 3.4% of the employee's current monthly salary; or
 - (B) a one-time merit payment that does not exceed 3.4% of the employee's current annual salary and is at least six months after the employee's most recent promotion, merit salary increase, or one-time merit payment.
 - (6) The executive director or his/her designee is the final approval authority for:
 - (A) an increase that exceeds 3.4% of the employee's current monthly salary; or
 - (B) a one-time merit payment that:
 - (i) exceeds 3.4% of the employee's current annual salary; or
 - (ii) is within six months of the employee's most recent promotion, merit salary increase, or one-time merit payment, and is awarded in relation to the employee's performance during a natural disaster or other extraordinary circumstances.
 - (7) Once the merit recommendation has received final approval, the final approval authority returns the HR-409 form to the local HRA to process the personnel action request. The HRA advises the supervisor that the merit recommendation has been approved and provides the supervisor with a copy of the HR-409 form to give to the employee.
 - (8) If the merit recommendation is not approved at any step of the approval process, the HR-409 form is returned to the local HRA. He/she notifies the recommending supervisor of the disapproval and files the HR-409 form in the employee's personnel file.
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