

NIH Office of Intramural Research (OIR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Staff Clinician (SC) Research Physician Titles

1. What is a SC title?

The titles of Assistant, Associate or Senior Research Physician were created in 2016 to reflect the varied and vital roles that NIH physician-scientists play in the Intramural Research Program (IRP). While the official NIH Intramural Professional Designation (IPD) remains “Staff Clinician,” these Intramural Research Program (IRP) titles may be used in professional correspondence, websites, and CVs, as equivalent to the titles of Assistant, Associate and Full Professor in extramural academia. More information can be found [here](#).

2. Where can I find guidance about the steps for SC title nomination and templates for CVs and letters of reference?

We recommend that you speak to your supervisor about the steps needed in your IC to request the nomination. Details for putting the nomination package together, with templates, can be found in the NIH Sourcebook [here](#). Please email SC_Council@nih.gov or carl.hashimoto@nih.gov with any questions about these materials or how best to prepare your SC title nomination package materials.

3. Which hiring mechanisms are used to appoint SCs?

There are several hiring mechanisms available for SCs, including [Title 5 General Schedule \(GS\)](#), [Title 5GS with Title 38 pay](#), [Title 42](#), (*log into SharePoint site for Title 42 pay band table*) and [Commissioned Corps](#).

4. Can you receive a title if you are a part-time employee, contractor, or NIH special volunteer?

A SC can receive a title if they are > 50 percent of a full-time equivalent (FTE) NIH position. You cannot receive a title if you are a contractor or an NIH special volunteer.

5. How are SC titles (Research Physician) different from Staff Clinician 1 (SC1) and Staff Clinician 2 (SC2)?

SC1 and SC2 are the official NIH IPDs approved by DHHS to define the position function of a Staff Clinician and their salary level. They are different from the SC titles. SC1 and SC2 are used by the NIH to define mechanisms under which a physician or dentist, who spends most of their time providing clinical care, may be employed by the various Institutes or Centers (ICs). SC2 is used to hire individuals who based on their clinical specialty and credentials, require salaries above Executive Level IV, and fulfill additional HHS-required criteria. SC2 positions must first go through the Title 5 exhaustion process, established through the Office of Human Resources (OHR). If a suitable candidate is selected, then the individual must be reviewed and recommended by the NIH Clinical Compensation Panel (NCCP) and approved by the Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR). More information can be found [here](#).

6. What are the differences between the Senior Research Physician title for SCs and the Senior Clinician IPD?

The Senior Research Physician title is distinct from the Senior Clinician IPD. A Senior Clinician is an NIH employee who has been selected via a Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR)-approved national search. The individual is a manager of a large Institute or Center (IC) research or clinical program/department with responsibility for substantial resources (≥\$2M budget including personnel and space). Senior Clinicians may be granted independent research resources, which are subject to review by the IC Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC). More information can be found [here](#).

7. Is every SC required to have a Letter of Agreement?

Yes, all SCs are required to have a Staff Clinician Letter of Agreement with their IC, and this is stated in the OIR policy in the NIH sourcebook. This agreement sets out protected time for research, resources (if applicable), web presence, and a travel and training budget. Please see the [Staff Clinician Agreement Template \(Word Document\)](#).

8. Does a SC title come with increased pay?

The titles are used to signify the career advancement of a SC. The titles are not directly tied to pay tiers, or grade or step increases, but may be used to support a promotion review under the relevant hiring mechanism (i.e., [Title 5 Pay \(General Schedule\)](#), [Title 5 with Title 38 Pay](#), [Title 42](#), and [Commissioned Corps](#)).

9. Who is on the SC Title Review Committee (SCTRC), how frequently does the committee meet for titles, and how long does the process take overall?

The SCTRC consists of SCs who current or former members of the Staff Clinician Council, or their designees. Assistant Research Physician titles are given within each IC and not reviewed centrally. For Associate and Senior Research Physician titles, the SC promotion package is reviewed internally within each IC, then submitted centrally to the Office of Intramural Research (OIR). The SCTRC completes central peer-review and provides recommendations to the Deputy Director for Intramural Clinical Research (DDICR) on whether the submitted package is complete and meets the criteria for promotion. The timeline of the process within ICs may vary, but it should ideally take less than 4 months from initiating the request within the IC for supporting documents and letters of reference to conferral of the title by the DDICR in OIR. The SCTRC meets once a month and makes a recommendation to the DDICR within a month of receipt for packets with complete documentation and required elements. Additional time may be required if additional letters or supporting documents are requested.

10. Which research funding mechanisms are available for SC?

The SC position is not an independently funded investigator position. SCs may have access to research funds via their supervisor or within their lab or branch. SCs may participate as collaborative co-PIs in intramural funding mechanisms such as the [NIH Director's Challenge](#), which must be coordinated with independently funded IRP Principal Investigators (PI) or may compete for funding programs such as the [Bench-to-Bedside](#). SCs based in the NIH Clinical Center are eligible to apply for [Research Award for Staff Clinicians \(RASCL\)](#) funds.

Staff Clinicians may be listed as co-investigators on extramural grants such as U01 grants though direct funds may not be accepted from extramural NIH. Associate Research Physicians and Senior Research Physicians may be the primary recipient of funds through Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA) agreements after approval by the technology transfer office within their IC, more information on CRADAs can be found [here](#). Funds gifted via the NIH Foundation and other outside or professional societies may be accepted pending ethics and technology transfer review.

To avoid confusion, for **any** funding mechanism (intramural or otherwise), SCs are advised to **communicate directly** with the point of contact for the granting mechanism as well as their Scientific Director or designee to determine whether or not they are eligible as a SC to apply and/or receive funds via that particular mechanism. Early discussion with the respective technology transfer office within each IC is advisable for external collaborations.

11. What is the role of Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC) or quadrennial reviews in evaluation for titles or other SC professional development in the NIH IRP?

Each IC sets their own policy for whether SCs undergo BSC review, but quadrennial review is required for all SC, more information can be found in the [NIH Sourcebook here](#). In some ICs, SCs who are the Principal Investigator of clinical protocols are required to undergo BSC review. While SCs are hired under various mechanisms, all SCs should undergo formal review every four years (i.e., quadrennial review). These reviews are not necessarily timed with the title review, but a BSC or quadrennial review can be used as supporting documentation for a title nomination, or vice versa.

12. What opportunities are available to SCs for NIH loan repayment?

SCs can apply for NIH loan repayment programs for intramural employees. More information on the criteria for these programs can be found here: <https://www.lrp.nih.gov/eligibility-programs#intramural-tab>.