

Important Note: This Fact Sheet is for informational purposes only. It reflects OPM revisions to the Uniform Allowance regulations at [5 CFR part 591, subpart A](#), effective July 13, 2026. OPM will post revisions at that time. This draft is provided to help agencies plan for these changes, and the fact sheet language may change before posting. For more information, see the [direct final rule dated April 14, 2026](#), and confirmed via a second [Federal Register Notice dated June 26, 2026](#).

Draft Fact Sheet: Uniform Allowances

Description

This fact sheet provides a general overview of the uniform allowance authority for civilian employees in Executive branch agencies, including the meaning of uniform, when agencies may pay an allowance or furnish uniforms, how agencies may apply different maximum uniform allowance rates based on actual uniform needs, and ways agencies and employees may reduce uniform costs.

Employee Coverage

OPM's uniform allowance regulations at [5 CFR part 591, subpart A](#), apply to Federal civilian employees in an Executive agency as defined in [5 U.S.C. 105](#). Some agencies also operate under separate statutory or appropriations authorities for uniforms or uniform allowances and should only apply the title 5 uniform allowance authority to the extent it is applicable.

Definition of "Uniform"

A "uniform" is a specified article or articles of clothing or other required items that an agency requires an employee to wear to provide a distinctive and easily identifiable appearance in performing the job. Examples include hats, shirts, slacks, skirts, neckties, outerwear, name pins or tags, flag pins, rank insignias or cords, or patches. A "uniform" does not include personal protective equipment (PPE) required to be donned for an employee's safety; normal business or work attire (when an employee is not required to wear his or her required uniform); tools, communication devices, or other equipment required in the performance of an employee's job duties; personal items worn at the discretion of the employee (for example, jewelry or undergarments); or any items worn based solely on a reasonable accommodation.

Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Uses of Uniform Allowances

Appropriate Uses

Uniform allowances must only be used to procure items that meet the definition of a "uniform" in [5 CFR 591.102](#). Examples may include—

- Shirts, blouses, slacks, skirts, dresses, trousers, shorts, sweaters, vests, neckties, and scarves when required as part of a prescribed uniform.
- Hats, caps, visors, seasonal outerwear, and appearance-based shoes or boots when required as part of a distinctive and identifiable uniform. This may include a specific style shoe or boot required for appearance-based purposes, but it does not include footwear required solely for safety under a published safety standard (see the section below on PPE).
- Required identification items such as name pins or tags, rank insignia, patches, cords, hat bands, tie clips, or flag pins when they are part of the prescribed uniform.
- Specialized clothing such as lab coats, scrubs, station uniforms worn by firefighters, or kitchen apparel when the agency requires those items as the employee's uniform.

Inappropriate Uses

Uniform allowances may not be used for the procurement of items or services that do not meet the definition of a "uniform" in [5 CFR 591.102](#). Examples of **excluded uses** may include—

- Ordinary business suits, normal business or work attire (when an employee is not required to wear his or her prescribed uniform), or other customary business attire, merely because an agency prefers a professional appearance.
- Personal protective equipment, as described below.
- Tools, communication devices, or other equipment required to perform job duties, including smartphones, radios, tablets, headsets, flashlights, tool belts, holsters, harnesses, measuring instruments, and specialty tools used to perform the job.
- Personal items worn at the employee's discretion, including jewelry, ordinary undergarments, religious apparel, or other personal items.

- Items worn solely as a reasonable accommodation.
- Services such as cleaning, tailoring, alterations, laundering, dry cleaning, or similar upkeep services, unless a separate legal authority applies (see [FLRA v. Air Force, No. 10-1299](#) (D.C. Cir. May 27, 2011)).

Personal Protective Equipment

Uniform allowances may not be used to purchase personal protective equipment. Appropriations available for the procurement and maintenance of special clothing and equipment for the protection of personnel in the performance of their assigned tasks are authorized at [5 U.S.C. 7903](#).

Rules regarding safe working environments including the use of PPE are found at [29 U.S.C. 668](#), [29 CFR part 1960](#), and [29 CFR part 1910, subpart I](#). Examples of PPE include ballistic-resistant vests, safety helmets, face shields, respirators, and safety glasses; protection worn by firefighters during fire operations; and footwear required within a published safety standard by the Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the employing agency, or another authorized agency and worn solely for safety purposes. This does not include footwear worn for appearance-based purposes, such as a specific style shoe or boot when required as part of a distinctive and identifiable uniform.

When an item serves both appearance and safety functions, agencies should classify the item based on its primary purpose for the covered category of employees.

Costs of Uniforms – Maximum Allowance Rates

Under [5 U.S.C. 5901](#), when an employee is required to wear a uniform in the performance of official duties, the head of an Executive agency, out of funds available, must either pay an allowance for uniforms not to exceed \$1,500 a year or furnish uniforms at a cost not to exceed \$1,500 a year per employee.

Agencies are not required to pay the maximum rate of \$1,500 for every employee required to wear a uniform. Agencies should determine rates based on the actual uniform needs and estimated costs for each category of employees consistent with [5 CFR part 591, subpart A](#). The uniform allowance and/or the furnishing of uniforms is meant to defray the costs of purchasing uniforms for employees and is not intended to cover the full cost of all uniform items an employee may need. (See [U.S. Congress, Congressional Record, 100, p.15037](#), August 18, 1954.)

Different groups of employees may have different maximum allowance rates or actual uniform costs. For example, agencies may establish a higher initial maximum rate for newly covered employees under [5 CFR 591.104](#), and agencies may set different annual allowance rates for employees in the same occupation when duty-station conditions affect the cost of required uniform items, such as winter outerwear for colder climates. Agencies may designate any period of 12 consecutive months as the basis for applying the maximum annual uniform allowance rates. (See [5 CFR 591.102](#), definition of “Year”.)

Higher Initial Maximum Uniform Allowance Rate

Under [5 CFR 591.104](#), the head of an agency may establish one or more higher initial maximum uniform allowance rates above the Governmentwide maximum when the minimum basic uniform for a category of employees has an unusually high initial cost. Agencies may consider using this authority when first-year uniform costs are materially higher than ordinary annual replacement costs.

Direct Furnishing

An agency may either pay a uniform allowance or furnish uniforms directly under [5 U.S.C. 5901](#). When an agency furnishes uniforms directly, the furnished items generally remain Government property and may be subject to return requirements when they are no longer needed for official duty.

Vendor Service Charges

When an agency purchases uniforms directly from a vendor on behalf of one or more employees, the agency may pay any related vendor assessed service charges, including but not limited to shipping and handling, credit card processing fees, and other administrative or transaction-based service fees. The combined amount of the uniform cost and up to 4 percent of the service charges may not exceed the employee’s applicable annual maximum furnished uniform allowance rate. (See [5 U.S.C. 5901\(a\)](#) and [5 CFR 591.103\(b\)](#).)

Treatment of a Uniform Allowance or the Furnishing of Uniforms as Compensation

Any uniform allowance paid, or uniforms furnished directly to employees, are not wages for Social Security or Federal employment-tax or wage-withholding purposes under [5 U.S.C. 5901\(c\)](#). In addition, uniform allowances are not considered part of an

employee's rate of basic pay for any purpose, are not used to compute other payments or benefits, and are not subject to the aggregate limitation on pay ([5 U.S.C. 5307\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)](#)).

Additional Information

Agency headquarters-level HR offices may contact OPM. Agency components and field offices should consult their headquarters-level HR office. Employees and supervisors should contact their agency HR office or uniform coordinator for additional information.

Resources

- [Uniform Allowance Federal Register Notice \(91 FR 19057, April 14, 2026\)](#)
- [Uniform Allowance Federal Register Notice \(91 FR 12976, June 26, 2026\)](#)
- [Final Regulations on Uniform Allowances, Compensation Policy Memorandum, CPM-2026-06, and attachments](#)

Resources on PPE (not covered by uniform allowances)

- [OSHA Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)/National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\) Personal Protective Equipment page](#)
- [CDC/NIOSH PPE-Info database](#)

References

- [5 U.S.C. 5901 through 5903](#)
- [5 CFR part 591, subpart A](#)
- [5 U.S.C. 7903](#) (regarding the procurement and maintenance of protective clothing and PPE)