

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs

Chicago Oversight Division
230 S. Dearborn Street, DPN-30-6
Chicago, IL 60604-1687

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [The appellant]

Agency classification: Supervisory Medical Support Assistant
GS-679-7

Organization: [Appellant's organization/location]
Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Affairs Medical Center

OPM decision: Supervisory Medical Support Assistant
GS-679-7

OPM decision number: C-0679-07-01

/s/

Ricardo Sims
Operations Supervisor

August 23, 2002

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

Appellant:

[The appellant's address]

Agency:

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Introduction

On April 3, 2000, the Chicago Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management accepted a classification appeal from [the appellant]. Her position is currently classified as Supervisory Medical Support Assistant, GS-679-7, in the [appellant's organization/location], Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), Department of Veterans Affairs. The appellant believes her position should be classified as Health Administration Specialist, GS-0303-9. We received the complete administrative report from the agency on April 25, 2002. We have accepted and decided her appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

A representative of the Chicago Oversight Division conducted a telephone audit with the appellant and a telephone interview with her immediate supervisor. In deciding this appeal, we fully considered the audit and interview findings and all information of record provided by the appellant and her agency, including her current work assignments and position description of record. The appellant, her supervisor, and the agency certify that the appellant's position description [number], is current and accurate.

Position Information

The appellant serves as the Supervisory Medical Support Assistant for the [appellant's organization/location]. The appellant's position is the only supervisory position for administrative support located at [appellant's unit]. The appellant has responsibility for the administrative support function in the primary care service line including both inpatient units and outpatient clinics at the [appellant's unit]. These functions include administrative processing for initial inpatient and outpatient registration, determining eligibility for care, ensuring appropriate administrative follow-up, completing means tests, verifying insurance and updating patient demographics. The unit also completes administrative processing associated with beneficiary travel, burial details, patient funds, telephonic requests, and dental eligibility. The appellant supervises one GS-303-6, 5 GS-303-5s, 3 GS-679-5s, and 14 GS-679-4s. The appellant exercises full supervisory responsibilities for medical clerks and patient service assistants spread throughout the [appellant's unit]. Her subordinates are stationed at locations in several different buildings on the Center grounds including Buildings 1, 51, 52, and 53. The appellant has responsibility for the unit's work and collaborates with nurse supervisory personnel and other health care providers to maintain adequate coverage in all patient care areas to assure the administrative workload is accomplished in a timely manner.

The appellant's immediate supervisor is the Health Administration Officer (HAO) who is located at [name of unit]. The HAO oversees the Health Administration Section for the medical center's Primary Care Service Line. The appellant independently carries out programs within the framework of applicable laws, procedures, and objectives. In most situations, she addresses problems or provides solutions and informs her supervisor after the situation has been rectified. The work is normally accepted as technically sound and reviewed only to assess the effectiveness of implementation of health administration programs at [appellant's unit].

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency determined that the appellant's position is properly classified in the Medical Support Assistance Series, GS-0679, which is covered by the Job Family Standard (JFS) for Assistance and Technical Work in the Medical, Hospital, Dental and Public Health Group, GS-0600 (issued in WCPS-1, dated August 2001). The agency determined that the position fully meets the coverage requirements of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG) for titling and evaluation as a "supervisor", thus titled the position Supervisory Medical Support Assistant in accordance with the titling instructions in the GS-0600 JFS. We concur with the agency's title and series determination.

The appellant believes her position should be classified in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-0303. We find that it is inappropriate to assign her work to that series. The GS-0303 series includes positions that perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work involving specialized work for which no appropriate occupational series has been established. The primary work of this position is to supervise employees who are providing specialized services or performing clerical work in support of the care and treatment given to patients in a ward, clinic or other such unit of the medical facility. This work requires a practical knowledge of the medical facility's organization and services, the basic rules and regulations governing patient treatment and a practical knowledge of the standard procedures, medical records and medical terminology of the unit supported. Since the GS-0679 series covers that type of specialized work (17 of the 23 positions she supervises are classified in that series), the appellant's position is properly classified in that series.

In addition, the appellant states:

"Another factor to mention is I monitor and process all involuntary commitments for both divisions and patients admitted to mental health and have legal guardians. I am very knowledgeable of the [state] Mental Health Law. Approximately 10 years ago Medical Administration closed the release of Information office at the Division. I was then given the duties of typing interrogatories for the psychiatrists at the Division. I also assist the psychiatrist in typing and processing petitions for ECT. I am responsible for tactfully and intelligently discussing commitments and guardianships in person and/or by telephone with lawyers, public administrators, court clerks, staff members or family members when coordinating legal hearings or when problems or questions arise. Acts as legal assistant at this Medical Center and liaison between the Medical Center, Regional Counsel and the [state] Mental Health Coordinator for the State. Due to the legal forms that I prepare for the physicians and petitions for court I became a notary for the hospital 6 years ago. The supervisors in Health Administration Section at [unit] are not involved with these duties."

The appellant's non-supervisory work described above is similar to that described in the position descriptions of her subordinate employees that are classified by the agency below the appellant's current GS-7 level. The responsibility for initiating and processing legal documentation on all committed patients and assuring that all VA and other legal requirements regarding commitments are met has been evaluated by the agency at the GS-6 level, and is described in a position subordinate to the appellant's, i.e., Patient Services Assistant, GS-0303-6. The appellant's position, however, is primarily for the

supervision of the clerical work performed in support of the care and treatment of patients as found in the GS-0679 series. She spends the majority of her time performing supervisory functions which we have evaluated below by application of the grading criteria in the GSSG (reissued in WCPS-1, August 2001). Although she performs some non-supervisory, lower graded work as described above, it is neither series nor grade controlling and therefore we have not evaluated it in this decision.

Grade determination

The General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG) is used to determine the grade of General Schedule supervisory positions in grade GS-5 through GS-15. The GSSG employs a factor-point evaluation method that assesses six factors common to all supervisory positions. To grade a position, each factor is evaluated by comparing the position to the factor-level descriptions for that factor and crediting the points designated for the highest factor-level which is fully met, in accordance with the instructions specific to the factor being evaluated. The total points assessed under all factors are then converted to a grade by using the point-to-grade conversion table in the GSSG.

The appellant disagrees with factors 3 and 6. We have reviewed factor 1, 2, 4, and 5, and agree with the agency determination. Therefore, our decision will discuss only those factors contested by the appellant.

Factor 3 – Supervisory and Managerial Authority Exercised:

This factor considers the delegated supervisory and managerial authorities that are exercised on a recurring basis. To be credited with a level under this factor, a position must meet the authorities and responsibilities to the extent described for the specific level. Levels under this factor apply equally to the direction of specialized program management organizations, line functions, staff functions, and operating and support activities. Where authority is duplicated or not significantly differentiated among several organizational levels, a factor level may apply to positions at more than one organizational level. The agency credited Level 3-2c for this factor. The appellant believes that Level 3-3b is appropriate.

The appellant's position has responsibility for all ward/outpatient administrative support to the Primary Care Service Line located at the [appellant's unit] division. She is the only supervisor located at [the unit] for the Health Administration Section. Her subordinates are spread over several inpatient and outpatient wards/units located in 4 buildings at [her unit]. The appellant has responsibility for supervising the patient registration and eligibility, patient funds, beneficiary travel and the details program for the Primary Care Service Line at [her unit].

The appellant's position meets Level 3-2c. At this level, the supervisor exercises most of the usual authorities associated with first-level supervision. Consistent with the factor-level description, the appellant has authority to plan work to be accomplished by subordinates, assign work to subordinates, evaluate work of subordinates, advise on

administrative matters, interview candidates for positions within the organizational unit that she supervises, resolve complaints from subordinates, identify developmental needs of subordinates, effect measures to improve work productivity and quality, and develop performance standards.

At Level 3-3, supervisors typically exercise managerial authorities over lower organizational units and subordinate supervisors or leaders, or have second level authority and responsibility. At Level 3-3, the supervisor must meet one of two conditions. To meet Level 3-3a, the supervisor must exercise delegated managerial authority to set a series of annual, multiyear, or similar types of long-range work plans and schedules for in-service or contracted work. This level essentially concerns managerial positions closely involved with high level program officials (or comparable agency level staff personnel) in the development of overall goals and objectives. Managers at this level typically direct the development of data to track program goals, secure legal opinions, and prepare position papers or legislative proposals, or comparable objectives.

The appellant's position lacks significant responsibility in these areas and does not meet Level 3-3a. The appellant's duties to provide and coordinate training for her subordinates are already credited at Level 3-2c. The appellant does not have delegated supervisory or managerial authority over subordinate programs nor does she develop long-range program plans beyond the unit level.

To meet Level 3-3b, the supervisor, in addition to exercising the authorities and responsibilities at Level 3-2c, must meet at least 8 in a list of 15 criteria that establish a level of authority significantly higher than Level 3-2c. This level is intended to credit supervisors who direct at least two or more employees who are officially recognized as subordinate supervisors, leaders, or comparable personnel. Further, the supervisor's subordinate organization must be so large and its work so complex that it requires using those two or more subordinate supervisors or comparable personnel.

This position does not meet Level 3-3b. The appellant does not direct subordinate supervisors or comparable personnel. She relies on senior positions to provide training to less experienced subordinates and fill in for positions when their incumbents are absent. These senior employees are not comparable to leads or subordinate supervisors. The appellant is not required to perform to the extent described in level 3-3b since such responsibilities belong to higher level positions.

The overall evaluation of this factor is Level 3-2c for 450 points.

Factor 6 – Other Conditions

This factor measures the extent to which various conditions contribute to the difficulty and complexity of carrying out supervisory duties, authorities, and responsibilities. Conditions affecting the work for which the supervisor is responsible (whether performed by Federal employees, assigned military, contractors, volunteers, or others) may be

considered if they increase the difficulty of carrying out assigned supervisory or managerial duties and authorities. The agency assigned Level 6-1 but the appellant believes that Level 6-3a should be assigned.

The appellant collaborates with nurse supervisory personnel and other health care providers to maintain adequate coverage in all patient care areas to assure the administrative work load is accomplished in a timely manner. The appellant's subordinates work in various inpatient and outpatient clinics/wards and units housed in different buildings at [appellant's work location]. Her supervision requires coordination within the Health Administration Section to ensure timeliness, accuracy, quality, and quantity standards are met. Though the incumbent works independently at the [work location], 20 minutes from her supervisor, she does not have full and final technical authority over the work. The appellant has telephone and face-to-face time with her supervisor for limited assistance in unusual situations.

At Level 6-1 the work supervised or overseen involves clerical, technician, or other work comparable in difficulty to the GS-6 level, or lower. This could vary from basic supervision over a stable workforce performing work operations that are routine, to a level of supervision which requires coordination with the unit to ensure that timeliness, form, procedure, accuracy, quality and quantity standards are met in individual cases. The appellant supervises one GS-303-6, 3 GS-679-5s, 5 GS-303-5s, and 14 GS-679-4s. The appellant did not disagree with the agency's determination that the highest grade that best characterizes the nature of the basic work is the GS-5 level. We accept the agency's determination that the GS-5 level represents the base level of work supervised. The appellant's work meets Level 6-1.

At Level 6-2 the work supervised involves technician and/or support work comparable in difficulty to GS-7 or GS-8, or work at the GS-4, 5 or 6 level where the supervisor has full and final technical authority over the work, which requires coordination and integration of work efforts, either within the unit or with other units, in order to produce a completed work product or service. The appellant is required to be independent and make decisions without constant guidance; however, she does not have full and final technical authority over the work. At Level 6-2b the position directs subordinate supervisors of work comparable to the GS-6 or lower. The appellant does not have any subordinate supervisors. The appellant's work does not meet Level 6-2, and therefore fails to reach Level 6-3.

The GSSG provides that after finding the Factor Level Definition, the Special Situations section must be reviewed to determine how many special situations are met by the position. If the position meets 3 or more of the situations, then a single level is added to the level selected in Step 1. The agency did not discuss a review of Special Situations in its evaluation of the appellant's position and the appellant did not raise the issue.

Our discussion covers only those Special Situations met by the appellant.

1. Physical Dispersion. This situation is credited when a substantial portion of the workload for which the supervisor is responsible is regularly carried out at one or more locations which are physically removed from the main unit (as in different buildings, or widely dispersed locations in a large warehouse or factory building), under conditions which make day-to-day supervision difficult to administer. The appellant's subordinates are spread about in Buildings 1, 51, 52, and 53 on the Center grounds. The supervisor's job is made more difficult because day-to-day supervision requires observing and communicating with employees located in several separate buildings and located on different floors within the buildings.

Since the appellant's position meets only 1 of the special situations, no additional level may be added to this factor. The overall evaluation of this factor is Level 6-1 for 310 points.

Summary

In summary, we have credited the position as follows:

	Factor	Level	Points
1.	Program Scope and effect	1-1	175
2.	Organizational setting	2-1	100
3.	Supervisory and managerial authority exercised	3-2c	450
4.	Personal contacts/Purpose	4-A2	50
		4-B2	75
5.	Difficulty of typical work directed	5-3	340
6.	Other conditions	6-1	310
	Total		1,500

A total of 1,500 points falls within the GS-7 grade level point range of 1,355-1,600 points in the Grade Conversion Table.

Decision

The appellant's position is correctly classified as Supervisory Medical Support Assistant, GS-679-7.