

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability  
Classification Appeals Program

Chicago Field Services Group  
230 South Dearborn  
Chicago, IL 60604

**Job Grading Appeal Decision**  
**Under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [appellant's name]

**Agency classification:** Cook  
WG-7404-6

**Organization:** Food Production  
Nutrition and Food Service  
Patient Care Service  
[name] Medical Center  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
[location]

**OPM decision:** Cook  
WG-7404- 6

**OPM decision number:** C-7404-06-01

/s/ Robert D. Hendler

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Robert D. Hendler  
Classification and Pay Claims  
Program Manager

August 11, 2005

Date

As provided in section S7-8 of the *Operating Manual: Federal Wage System*, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in section 532.705(f) of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (address provided in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section H).

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant's name and address]

[name]  
Chief Resources  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Medical Center (001R-HR)  
[location]

[name]  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
AFGE Local [number]  
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Team Leader for Classification  
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## **Introduction**

On December 1, 2004, the Chicago Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a job grading appeal from [appellant] who occupies a job graded as Cook, WG-7404-6. His job is located in the Food Production, Nutrition and Food Service, Patient Care Service, [name] Medical Center, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in [location]. The appellant believes that his job should be graded as Cook, WG-7404-8. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). We received a complete administrative report for the appeal on January 4, 2005.

To help decide the appeal, we conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on April 20, 2005, and a telephone interview with the appellant's second-level supervisor on April 27, 2005. In reaching our job grading decision, we have carefully reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency.

## **Background information**

According to the agency evaluation statement, the appellant's job was never evaluated by the activity using the current 7404 Cook job grading standard (JGS) dated February 1992. The JGS was applied following a desk audit conducted by the classifier from the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 11 in [location]. The resulting JD of record [(number)] was classified on December 4, 2002, which downgraded the job from the grade 8 to grade 6. The appellant filed a job grading appeal with his agency on October 18, 2004, and the agency sustained the current grade of the job.

## **General issues**

The appellant states that prior to the December 2002, revision of his JD, he trained the grade 6 cooks whose jobs were then evaluated at the grade 4 level. The same day that the appellant's job was downgraded to grade 6, the grade 4 Cook jobs were upgraded to grade 6.

The appellant makes various statements about the agency's evaluation of his job and the grading of other cook jobs in his workplace. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper grading of the appellant's job. By law, job grading decisions must be based solely upon a comparison between the actual duties and responsibilities of the job and the appropriate JGS's (5 U.S.C. 5346). Since comparison to JGS's and guidelines is the exclusive method for grading jobs, we cannot compare the appellant's job to other jobs that may or may not be graded properly as a basis for deciding the appeal. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

## **Job information**

The appellant agreed that the JD is accurate for the duties he performs. However, he stated during the telephone audit that the duties that he performs have not changed since his job was evaluated at the grade 8 level. The second level supervisor certified the accuracy of the official

JD. In it, the supervisor identifies those duties that are no longer required to be performed by the appellant. Specifically, those duties are: directing preparation of all food items; providing instruction or guidance to lower grade cooks; requisitioning, taking inventories, and checking food and supplies; and, relieving the cook foreman as necessary and assuming all other duties and responsibilities as assigned. During the audit, the appellant stated that he still provides guidance to the other grade 6 Cooks, but while questions may arise during the work day that the appellant may answer, the first level supervisor, a grade 6 Cook Supervisor, is on site and available to provide any needed guidance.

The appellant works in Food Production which is comprised of: approximately 31 jobs: a Cook Supervisor, WS-7404-10, a Cook Supervisor, WS-7404-6, 5 Cooks, WG-7404-6, 3 Supervisory Food Service Workers (FWSs), WS-7408-3, 15 full-time FWS's, WG-7408-1-4, and 6 part-time FWSs. The organization provides meals for the medical center's patients and approximately six doctors.

The duties performed by the appellant and the other cooks are assigned according to a six week rotation among the three available shifts in the kitchen. When assigned to the 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. shift, the appellant performs breakfast preparation and preparation of baked goods. These baked goods are predominately frozen pies and cookies that are not prepared from scratch. The appellant may also gather ingredients for the next morning meal. The 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. shift involves the preparation of meats and sauces for the lunch and dinner meals. The 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. shift involves the preparation of starches and vegetables.

Depending on the shift to which the appellant is assigned the appellant prepares a variety of meats, vegetables, starches, salads, and other menu items according to diet restrictions, such as low sodium, and regular diet items. He sometimes modifies standardized recipes to accommodate an increase in the number of meals that need to be prepared. With the use of the computerized production sheets (menus) menu items are listed along with portions to be served and utensils needed to serve. The appellant operates and cleans a variety of kitchen equipment, and cleans his immediate work area after use.

The appellant performs day-to-day tasks independently. He works under the general supervision of the Cook Foreman, who is typically present throughout the shift. Completed work may be spot-checked if nurses call from patient floors regarding problems with patient meals. We find that his official JD contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellant and we incorporate it by reference into our decision.

### **Occupational code, title, and standard determination**

The agency placed the appellant's job in the 7404 Cook occupation, titled it Cook, and used the 7404 JGS to determine the grade level of the job. The appellant does not disagree with the assigned occupational code or title of his job. Based on our review of the record, we agree and find that the appellant's job is properly titled and coded as Cook, WG-7404.

## Grade determination

The 7404 JGS uses four factors for grade determination: *Skill and knowledge, Responsibility, Physical effort, and Working conditions.*

### *Skill and knowledge*

At the grade 6 level, cooks prepare a variety of foods and have basic knowledge of food preparation principles and a practical understanding of the physical changes involved in cooking an entire meal including the different preparation methods for various food items, the necessary time for cooking these different items, and how to schedule and coordinate their preparation to produce a properly cooked meal on time. They evaluate a variety of raw and cooked food items to decide if they are fresh and whether cooked foods are done. They know the principles of food spoilage, food borne illness, and food safety. They adjust standardized recipes for the number of servings required for large quantity cooking and perform yield testing for selected food items to determine the serving weight or volume after preparation. Some cooks at this level may have a working knowledge of special diets, and of the cooking techniques to use in following the adjusted recipes. Grade 6 cooks are skilled in operating and cleaning specialized equipment such as a cook tank, agitating kettle, pump fill station, tipper tie, blast chiller and vacuum packer. They know how to operate, breakdown, and clean the standard food service equipment they use such as a food processor, slicing machine, rotary or convection oven, and a deep fat fryer. At grade 6, cooks have a practical knowledge of methods and procedures necessary for ordering, issuing, and storing food items. As an example of work at this level, cooks, working alone or with a higher grade cook, roast, broil, bake, fry, boil, steam and stew meats, fish, and poultry. They prepare soups, stocks, broths, gravies, sauces, and puddings and a variety of other dessert items without the use of packaged mixes.

The grade 6 level is met. The duties of this job require the appellant to exercise a sound basic knowledge of food preparation. The appellant uses a variety of food preparation methods involving various food items, e.g., roast, broil, bake, fry, boil, steam, and stew meats, fish and poultry, or prepare other food items requiring skills comparable to the grade 6 level. Garnishments and cold platters are prepared and designed for an appealing appearance. The patient census averages approximately 140 and the appellant, like cooks described at the grade level 6, makes determinations in adjusting recipes for the number of servings required in large quantity cooking. The appellant operates specialized equipment such as a tilting skillet, convection ovens, and floor mixer, and deep fat fryer, which characteristic of grade 6 level work. As at the grade 6 level, he must have a working knowledge of special and modified diets, e.g., low salt, and the cooking techniques to use in following the adjusted recipes.

At the grade 8 level, cooks exercise a thorough knowledge of a full range of food preparation and procedures needed to develop new or revise current recipes. They prepare or coordinate the preparation of entire meals and prepare, season, and determine serving portion food for all meals by following standardized recipes at different levels of difficulty. They prepare menu items using special or difficult recipes that require numerous interrelated steps, many ingredients, and lengthy preparation time. They may be required to organize and coordinate the work of lower

grade cooks as well as provide guidance to them. Cooks at this level also test and evaluate new food products and develop and modify standardized recipes, including detailed equipment lists.

The grade 8 level is not met. While the appellant is an experienced cook, the duties of his job are routine in nature. The appellant does not regularly develop new recipes and may only occasionally modify current recipes. Serving portions of current menu items are predetermined and do not require modification by the appellant. The current six week shift rotation does not require or permit the appellant to coordinate entire meals. The first-level supervisor is responsible for providing guidance and direction to less experienced cooks. While this does not preclude the other cooks and FSW's from asking the appellant questions due to his experience, providing guidance is officially the responsibility of the Cook Supervisor.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the grade 6 level.

### *Responsibility*

At the grade 6 level, cooks receive oral instructions or written direction in the form of a cook's worksheet, menus, standardized recipes, and special work orders. They plan, coordinate, and time their work to assure food items are prepared on time and are at the proper temperature. Cooks at this level make judgments about the recipe modifications needed to meet changes in the number of servings required. They adjust the amounts and proportions of ingredients in recipes while maintaining the original balance between ingredient quantities and the number of portions needed. They suggest adaptations of standardized recipes. Cooks at this level may assist in training lower grade cooks and advise them on how to improve their work methods. They are responsible for operation, breakdown, and cleaning of standard food service equipment they use such as a food processor, slicing machine, rotary or convection oven, and a deep fat fryer. Work at this level is evaluated in terms of the timeliness, quality, flavor, and appearance of prepared foods and conformance to sanitation and safety standards.

The grade 6 level is met. The appellant is responsible for the preparation of a variety of food items similar to those described above including the judgments associated with them or the greater variety of equipment used to prepare them. He is permitted to make recipe modifications or adjustments as needed. His work may be spot-checked if complaints are received from nurses regarding patient meals.

Grade level 8 cooks work under the direction of a supervisor who establishes written daily work assignments and provides general instructions orally or in writing. At this level, cooks are responsible for the independent analysis and correction of production problems. Further, at this level the cook may be responsible for coordinating the cooking of items prepared by other cooks at one or more work center. Cooks at this level know the type and quantity of food to prepare from the cook's worksheet or oral instructions. They calculate and determine serving portions from quantities of food issued such as roasts.

Grade level 8 is not met. While the appellant may modify a menu or recipe based on a change in the patient census or substitute a vegetable for the vegetable on the menu, the meals prepared at the medical center are standardized in nature. As the appellant explained during the audit, the

menu rotates every three weeks, and he rotates for six week periods to one of three work shifts. He performs an established set of duties for each of those shifts. The cooks at the medical center, including the appellant, work from computerized production sheets that list the food items to be served and portions amounts to be served. The appellant is not required to supervise or train other employees because the first level supervisor is on-site to provide such guidance to staff members.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the grade 6 level.

#### *Physical effort and Working conditions*

*Physical effort* and *Working conditions* are described the same in the standard for all grade levels. Because they do not have grade level impact, and the appellant's work meets the levels described in the JGS, we will credit both factors as being met and will not address them further.

#### **Summary**

Since *Skill and knowledge* and *Responsibility*, are evaluated at the grade 6 level and the other factors do not have grade level impact, the job is graded at the 6 level.

#### **Decision**

The appellant's job is properly graded as Cook, WG-7404-6.