

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

Philadelphia Field Services Group
600 Arch Street, Room 3400
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1596

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

Appellants: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Food Service Worker
WG-7408-2

Organization: Nutrition and Food Service Program
Allied Health Services
Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Department of Veterans Affairs
[location]

OPM decision: Food Service Worker
WG-7408-2

OPM decision number: C-7408-02-01

/s/

Marta Brito Pérez
Associate Director
Human Capital Leadership
and Merit System Accountability

January 31, 2005

Date

As provided in section S7-8 of the *Operating Manual: Federal Wage System* (FWS), 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 the 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:

PERSONAL

[appellant's name and address]

[representative's name and address]

[name]

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Introduction

On May 10, 2004, the Philadelphia Field Services Group, of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a job grading appeal from [appellant's name]. He occupies a job currently graded as Food Service Worker, WG-7408-2. He believes that his job should be graded as Food Service Worker, WG-7408-3. The appellant works in the Nutrition and Food Service Program, Allied Health Services, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Department of Veterans Affairs, [location]. The appellant's agency issued its job grading appeal decision on April 21, 2004. We received the complete appeal administrative report on June 8, 2004. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5346 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

In his appeal letter, the appellant states that his job description (JD) is accurate in that it is 7408 food service work, but that his duties involved in serving on the tray line is grade 3 work. He bases his rationale on information contained in an agency personnel circular letter.

Our job grading decisions for jobs covered by the Federal Wage System (FWS) must be based solely upon a comparison between the actual duties and responsibilities of the job and the appropriate job grading standards (JGS) (5 U.S.C. 5346). Agency job grading guidance does not take the place of OPM JGSs and may not be used as a basis for job grading decisions.

A JD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position or job by an official with the authority to assign work. A job is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Job grading appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a job and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities currently assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision grades a real operating job, and not simply the JD. Therefore, this decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant and sets aside any previous agency decision.

Job information

The appellant's JD (# [number]), certified by the appellant and his supervisor as current and accurate, states that the appellant sets up cafeteria lines and steam tables with hot and cold items such as including meats, vegetables, salads, deserts, bread, margarine and beverages. Other duties include serving food in uniform portions on cafeteria lines based on instructions, assembling and tossing fresh fruit or salads, apportioning food items into standard serving sizes using proper utensils, making coffee and tea, processing fruits and vegetables, and making cold sandwiches using prepared ingredients. The appellant transports trays to patients' bedsides, noting and reporting on food acceptance and/or comments or complaints. He is responsible for maintaining proper water and detergent levels in pot, pan, and dish washing machines and cleaning machines after use. The appellant is responsible for keeping work areas clean and orderly.

The appeal administrative report clarifies the description of tray line work in the JD. It states that the cafeteria line refers to both placing food on a plate and delivering it directly to the customer and placing food on a tray for later delivery. It says that the Nutrition and Food

Service Program has switched from hand written diet cards to computerized meal tickets (tray tickets). The hand written diet cards required the tray line worker to review the diet and a list of likes and dislikes and then make a choice of what the patient was to receive. The computerized tray ticket lists exactly what the patient is to receive. Texture or diet modifications are included in each food item name so that the worker does not need to refer to the type of diet. Health technicians prepare the tickets for the tray line and are responsible for monitoring that process. The tray line worker does not need to decide what food to place on the tray and are supposed to serve what is listed on the ticket. A higher graded worker is responsible for checking the tray before it is ready for delivery to the patient.

The record shows that the appellant regularly works on a tray line rotating through four positions. One position involves placing silverware, condiments, milk and other items on the tray. The front and back server positions put the entrée and other components of the main course on the tray. The “middle” position puts bread, fruit, supplements, etc., on the tray and places stickers on the containers. The appellant also prepares box lunches using tray slips defining the items to be included. On a rotating basis, the appellant delivers tray carts to wards whose staff serves the patients and also delivers carts to wards where he serves the patients.

In addition to a telephone audit with the appellant on September 21, 2004, we conducted a telephone interview with his first-level supervisor, [name], on September 22, 2004. In deciding this appeal, we carefully considered the audit and interview findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency at our request. We find that the JD of record contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellant and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

Occupational code, title, and standard determination

The agency determined that the appellant’s job is covered by the 7408 Food Service Worker occupation, is titled Food Service Worker, and is evaluated properly by using of the directly applicable 7408 JGS.

Grade determination

The 7408 JGS uses four factors to determine grade level: *Skill and Knowledge*, *Responsibility*, *Physical Effort*, and, *Working Conditions*.

Skill and Knowledge

Grade 2 food service workers have skill and knowledge to perform tasks involving several procedures. They have the ability to concentrate on work assignments despite interruptions and distractions. They have knowledge of basic arithmetic in order to count the number of tables and meal trays required or determine the number of servings a container will yield. They have a working knowledge of sanitation standards, such as the need to keep wiping cloths in a sanitizing solution. They have a working knowledge of procedures to prevent contamination, such as the need to clean equipment previously used for raw food before further use and the need to use a chemical sanitizer or maintain proper water temperature when cleaning dishes.

Typical grade 2 work includes setting up cafeteria lines, steam-tables, dining room tables, and side service stands with hot and cold food items including meats, vegetables, salads, desserts, bread, butter, and beverages; serving food cafeteria style by placing uniform portions of food on customers' plates; and breaking down and cleaning their assigned area when the meal is finished and return food to the main kitchen. Grade 2 workers set up dining room tables for service, place food and beverages on tables, and replenish items as necessary; return soiled trays and dishes to the dish room after meals; and deliver meal trays to the patient's bed. They brew coffee according to the number of servings required; assemble and toss fresh fruit or green salads in quantity using prepared dressings and portion into standard serving sizes; apportion other food items (e.g., gelatins, juices, and desserts) into standard serving sizes using the proper utensils and containers; and make cold sandwiches using prepared ingredients and pack box lunches.

Food service workers at this level typically set up and operate a mechanical dishwasher, including the continuous conveyor belt feeding dishwasher. They remove inspection doors, strainer pans, screens, and spray arms for preventive maintenance and cleaning. Grade 2 food service workers scrape, soak, scour, and scrub the heavier cooking utensils such as mixing bowls and pots which, because of their large size and weight, are awkward to handle. They perform heavy-duty cleaning tasks throughout the food service and related areas, such as cleaning ceilings and transoms; cleaning exhaust hoods; cleaning spaces under and behind kitchen equipment, including moving the equipment; washing floors and walls with powered cleaning equipment; cleaning walk-in refrigerators and freezers; and sanitizing garbage rooms. Grade 2 food service workers may unload food from delivery trucks. They move heavy garbage cans when collecting and transferring trash from the work area to the disposal area.

In contrast, Grade 3 food service workers apply knowledge of special procedures in preparing food and serving patients. They have skill to organize their work assignments in a logical sequence, execute tasks quickly and accurately, and meet strict meal schedules. They read and understand diet cards when working on the tray assembly line. They know color codes that signify regular or modified diets and special diet card notations. They memorize the most frequently used modified diets to place food items and beverages on the patient's tray, especially where the diet card indicates only the kind of diet and does not provide a precise listing of foods. They understand food terminology, measurements, and serving information in standardized recipes and regular and modified menus. They apply knowledge of general sanitation principles to safeguard food against spoilage and waste, e.g., the temperature range where the potential of bacterial growth in food is greatest and the requirement to keep hot food in heated holding equipment or immediately refrigerate it. They have knowledge and skill to apportion food items according to approved portion control practices; i.e., they use the correct measuring utensil or a portion control scale regularly and do not rely on visual estimates of food quantity. They have a thorough understanding of the routine methods and procedures used in all functional areas of the food service operation and skill to train lower grade workers in such methods and procedures.

Typical grade 3 work involves selecting and placing food items on patient trays as they proceed down the tray assembly line according to a regular or modified menu, individual diet cards, or patient selections. Grade 3 food service workers can identify obvious discrepancies between the prescribed diets and the food items designated by the menu. They decide what food items to serve for the most common diets when the diet card identifies only the kind of diet called for, such as a liquid diet or diabetic diet. They set up their assigned station on the tray line with the

correct supplies and food items, and break down and clean the station after the serving period. Some grade 3 workers deliver trays to the patient's bed and report the patient's comments and complaints to the supervisor or dietician. Food service workers at this level provide assistance to cooks in the food preparation area by weighing, measuring, and assembling ingredients according to standardized recipes. In some work situations, they prepare uncooked food items such as sandwich spreads and salad dressings.

The appellant performs the full range of work described at the grade 2 level. He also performs limited aspects of grade 3 worker. However, a level may be credited only if the work fully meets the factor level described in the JGS. Tray line work at the grade 3 level requires applying the knowledge and skill necessary to work directly with diet cards that require the worker to make decisions, i.e., make selections based on diet requirements. The appellant's work does not require or permit him to make these decisions. While he is expected to recognize when selections on the tray ticket conflict with the diet identified, e.g., high calorie items on a low calorie diet tray ticket, he is not permitted to substitute or remove items as discussed at the grade 3 level. He may bring the apparent high calorie item or other discrepancy to the tray checker's attention prior to preparing the tray for resolution. Alternatively, he may prepare the tray in accordance with the ticket to be checked and returned by the tray checker with specific deletions to be made.

In contrast to the special procedures used at the grade 3 level, e. g., measuring cups and spoons, or portion control scale to apportion food, the appellant primarily uses simple food measuring devices and techniques. These include a large and small portion scoop for potatoes and similar items, one piece of meat for a small portion and two pieces for a large portion, etc. The scoops are identified by color. Vegetables are measured visually using a slotted spoon. Many food items are prepackaged, e.g., ice cream, crackers, salt, pepper, and supplements like ensure pudding. The appellant occasionally uses a food scale to weigh protein for patients on a protein restricted diet. However, this work is infrequent, is not regular and recurring work within the meaning of the FWS and, therefore, cannot control the grade of his job. The appellant reports patient complaints and comments when raised by patients, but they are not within the context of grade 3 work where the comments, in addition to the taste of the food, would pertain to items selected by the food service worker from menu. In addition, health technicians are responsible for regularly discussing meal satisfaction with patients. Although the appellant assists the cooks by preparing vegetables by cleaning and cutting them and weighs out specified amounts, he does not perform the more demanding food preparation functions found at the grade 3 level; i.e., weighing, measuring, **and** assembling ingredients for cooking according to standardized recipes. Because the appellant's work does not fully meet the grade 3 level, this factor is credited at the grade 2 level.

Responsibility

Grade 2 food service workers receive assignments from their immediate supervisor who provides specific instructions when changes in the work routine or new assignments are made. They are expected to work as scheduled, knowing what steps or sequence of tasks are needed to complete the work. Some judgment is used in maintaining established standards of sanitation, safety, and service. They are responsible for the correct operation and care of equipment such as mechanical dishwashers, potwashers, tray conveyors, and coffee urns. The supervisor is available to resolve

problems and answer questions, and work is periodically checked to verify that it is being accomplished on time and according to instructions.

In contrast, grade 3 food service workers complete assignments individually or as part of a team under the general supervision of the immediate supervisor. Assignments are made either orally or in writing and detailed instructions are provided only for special projects. The work involving diet tray assembly is usually performed as a team with the worker being expected to know the commonly used diets in order to place items on a tray. Completed diet trays are checked by a higher level food service worker. Work involving actual food preparation is accomplished under the guidance of a cook who provides technical instruction and checks work in progress and upon completion for conformance with acceptable food service practices. Food service workers know daily routines and work from guides such as diet cards, menus, portion control charts, standardized recipes, and employee assignment sheets. Questions on unusual or difficult tasks are referred to a higher grade worker or supervisor for clarification and advice. Work at this level is evaluated in terms of accuracy and timely completion of assignments.

The level of responsibility described at the grade 3 level is based on performing work requiring the level of skill and knowledge described at that level in the JGS; i.e., responsibility for applying the knowledge and skill necessary to work directly with diet cards that require the worker to make decisions such as food selections based on diet requirements; assisting in food preparation by following standardized recipes; and regularly using measuring utensils, as discussed previously, or portion control scales to apportion food. As discussed previously, the appellant is not required to exercise the attendant decision-making functions necessary to fully meet the grade 3 level. Because the appellant's work does not fully meet the grade 3 level, this factor is credited at the grade 2 level.

Physical Effort

Food service workers at the grade 1 level perform work requiring light to moderate physical effort. They are subject to continuous standing and walking, and frequent stooping, reaching, pushing, pulling, and bending. They frequently lift or move objects weighing up to 9 kilograms (20 pounds) unassisted (e.g., pushing small carts of dirty dishes) and occasionally lift or move objects weighing more than 9 kilograms (20 pounds) (e.g., filling beverage dispensers) with the assistance of other workers.

In addition to the physical efforts found at the grade 1 level, some grade 2 workers may be required to perform heavy work, such as scouring and scrubbing large-size cooking utensils and pushing heavy carts and trucks in unloading, storing, and delivering supplies. They also may be required to work on ladders and use powered cleaning equipment. They frequently lift or move objects weighing up to 18 kilograms (40 pounds). Grade 3 work requires the same physical effort as found at the grade 2 level.

The appellant's regular and recurring work involves the physical demands found at grades 2 and 3. He routinely pulls heavy carts used to deliver trays to patient wards and is regularly assigned to scour and scrub large cooking pots. Because this factor is the same for both the grade 2 and 3 levels, it does not affect the overall grade of the appellant's job and will not be addressed further.

Working Conditions

Grade 1 work is performed in kitchen areas where the steam and heat from cooking and dishwashing equipment often cause uncomfortably high temperatures and humidity. The work area is well lighted but usually noisy from food service activities, and there is danger of slipping on floors where food or beverages have been dropped. Food service workers are regularly exposed to hot liquids, sharp cutting blades, hot working surfaces and extreme temperature changes when entering walk-in refrigeration or freezing units. The working conditions are the same at all grade levels described in the JGS. Because they do not have grade level impact, and the appellant's work meets the levels described in the JGS, we will credit this factor as being met and will not address it further.

Decision

The appealed job is properly graded as Food Service Worker, WG-7408-2.