


MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel & Labor Relations

To: Ron Kreher
Chief, Public Assistance Field Operations,
Division of Public Assistance
Department of Health and Social Services

Date: August 11, 2010

From: Pat Morrissey
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Re: Staff Response to the Eligibility Technician/Workforce Development Specialist
Study Effective July 1, 2010

This memorandum is in response to the letter presented to Mr. Ron Kreher (Chief, Public Assistance Field Operations) on July 8, 2010, by staff from the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Public Assistance (DPA), Northern Region, Coastal Region, and Gambell offices. The letter was forwarded by DHSS to the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations with the intent of maintaining positive dialogue and providing additional clarifications for the concerns and issues expressed with regards to the conclusion of the FY 2010 Eligibility Technician job class study.

The signatories of the letter did not dispute the findings of the study that increased the salary ranges of the Eligibility Technicians III and Eligibility Technicians IV to ranges 16 and 17, respectively, nor reclassified the Eligibility Technicians tasked with administering the Denali Kid Care (DKC) program from Eligibility Technicians I to Eligibility Technicians II. Rather, their concern resides in the differences in composition of administered programs between the DKC Eligibility Technicians II and their contemporaries in the full service offices. The signatories present the argument that a DKC Eligibility Technician administers a single, non-cash assistance, program while contemporaries in full service offices administer multiple programs—including up to three cash assistance programs—and, therefore, should be maintained as a separate job class aligned to salary range 15.

When conducting job analyses and grouping positions according to work and determining the appropriate structure of a conceptual job class, positions are grouped based on similarities of duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision received and given, and minimum qualifications in such a way that: the same title may be applied to each position; the same minimum qualifications for initial appointment may be established for all positions; the same rate of basic pay can be fairly applied to all positions; and, employees in a particular class are considered an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall. Job classes are constructed to as broad a spectrum of work as feasible while still meeting the above criteria.

The final analysis of the work of Eligibility Technicians indicated that four levels of work—entry (Eligibility Technician I), journey (Eligibility Technician II), advanced/lead (Eligibility Technician III), and supervisory (Eligibility Technician IV)—were still appropriate. The work of the Eligibility Technicians III and IV was further distinguished as both classes performed specific responsibilities (e.g., formal supervision or direction of lower level staff, significant responsibility to provide training and quality assurance reviews) that were not typically found within the work of either the Eligibility Technician I or Eligibility Technician II. All information provided throughout the entire study process—by both the staff and management of DPA and the Office of Children’s Services—continually supported the determination that four levels of Eligibility Technician remained appropriate. There was no conspicuous indication for the need to develop an intermediary class between either the Eligibility Technician I and Eligibility Technician II levels or the Eligibility Technician II and Eligibility Technician III levels; nor was this finding disputed at any time by agency management. As such, positions not performing duties ascribed to the advanced/lead or supervisory classes would be appropriate to either the entry or journey level classes.

During the analysis of the PDs and interview notes and subsequent contrast to the former Eligibility Technician job class specifications, careful consideration was given with respect to both the number of programs and the complexity of each unique program a given position administered. The analysis included consideration of individual caseload composition, as well as other program characteristic factors including unique interpretive complexity, duration of benefits, approximate monthly recipients, requisite training, geographic scope of clientele (when quantifiable), and potential consequence of determination error.

Trying to define distinctions between the entry and journey class levels that are established upon specific programs is not consistent with sound classification practice as programs change and otherwise evolve—be they discontinued, reduced, expanded, or re-titled, etc. When defining job class concepts, it is an imperative of sound classification practice that the defining criteria of a job class must be presented in broad enough terms so as to maintain the relevancy of the class specification throughout a reasonable duration of time. Essentially, the class structures and the job class specifications need to be developed in such a way that they do not become obsolete with a change in governmental administration and its resultant priorities and mandates. Trying to define distinctions that are established purely upon a specified minimum number of administered programs may not adequately consider the broad spectrum of complexity of public assistance programs in the composition of a position’s caseload. In the final job analysis, the defining characteristics were based upon similar characteristic factors across a broad range of the more complex programs administered.

When classifying and allocating positions, the work performed was compared and contrasted based upon the factors of: the nature, variety, and complexity of regular duties and responsibilities; the nature of supervision received; the nature of available guidelines; the latitude of initiative and originality; the purpose and nature of person-to-person work relationships; the nature and scope and recommendations, decisions, commitments, and consequence of error by a prudent employee; the nature and extent of supervision exercised over other employees; and, the knowledge, skills and other qualifications required for successful performance of the work.

Conversely, work was not factored according to volume of work; or, the financial need, relative efficiency, unusual qualifications, scarcity, length of service, or personality of given employees.

The job class specifications provide distinctions for the full spectrum of work that is appropriate to the Eligibility Technician II job class. Allocation of the DKC Eligibility Technicians to the Eligibility Technician II job class did not serve to diminish or otherwise lessen this spectrum of work in any substantial way with respect to the final salary determination. That determination was based upon careful review and analysis, which exhaustively compared and contrasted the full spectrum of performed work to that of other State of Alaska technical and professional job classes according to internal alignment and sound classification principles. Significant consideration was given to the most complex aspects of the spectrum of work performed by Eligibility Technicians II during this analysis and narrowing that spectrum to exclude the DKC Eligibility Technicians would not have altered the final salary determination in any fundamental manner.

cc: Maritt Miller, Human Resource Manager
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Classification and Statewide HR Operations