

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

Atlanta Field Services Group
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 1018
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

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

Appellant: [appellants]

Agency classification: Medical Supply Technician
GS-622-5

Organization: [name] Section
[name] Service
[name] Health Care System
Department of Veterans Affairs
[location]

OPM decision: Medical Supply Technician
GS-622-5

OPM decision number: C-0622-05-03

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

June 25, 2004

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:

PERSONAL

[appellants' names]

Department of Veterans Affairs

[name] Healthcare System

[location] Campus

[name] Section

[address]

[location]

Director

Department of Veterans Affairs

[name] Healthcare System

[location] Campus

[address]

[location]

Office of Human Resources Management (054B)

Department of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Avenue, NW.

Washington, DC 20420

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human

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Introduction

On February 23, 2004, the Atlanta Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a group classification appeal from ten appellants who occupy identical additional positions (hereinafter referred to as position) classified as Medical Supply Technician, GS-622-5, in the [name] Section, [name] Service, [name] Healthcare System, Department of Veterans Affairs, [location]. The appellants believe that the agency did not properly consider the recommendations they make for substitution medical supply items and request that their positions be upgraded to the GS-6 grade level. We received the complete appeal administrative report from the agency on March 17, 2004. The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

To help decide the appeal, we conducted a phone audit with one of the appellants, designated as spokesperson for the group, and we interviewed the group's second-level supervisor. In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellants and their agency, including their official position description, number [#], which we find contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellants.

Background

The appellants appealed to their agency in September 2003, and the agency issued a decision on December 4, 2003, sustaining the position's existing classification. They subsequently appealed to OPM.

The agency's administrative report showed that two of the appellants were assigned to position number [#] and the rest were assigned to position number [#]. The supervisor identified assignment to position number [#] as an error and requested corrective action by the human resources office. The human resources office subsequently corrected the employees' records to document their assignment to position number [#].

Position information

Both the appellants and the supervisor certified the accuracy of the official position description. The appellants are assigned to the [location] campus which is one of the two main campuses in the [name] Healthcare System, comprised of the [names] Medical Centers and nine outpatient clinics. The appellants rotate among various duty assignments involving decontamination, sterile-preparation, and distribution of a complete range of medical supplies, instruments, and equipment used at the medical centers. They clean, disinfect, or pre-sterilize complex diagnostic equipment and medical apparatus, some requiring disassembly and assembly. The appellants perform troubleshooting to determine working order of equipment cleaned, check for cracks or other observable deficiencies, perform basic maintenance, such as lubrication of metals and moving parts or screw tightening or replacement, and identify need for repairs. They determine appropriate sterilization methods and complete assembly, packaging, and terminal sterilization of all trays, sets, and packs for use throughout the facility, including operating rooms. They perform routine operational tests and cleaning of the decontamination and sterilization

equipment. The appellants record all sterilization data in the organization's records. They also orient or train medical personnel on sterile supply techniques and procedures and assist with the equipment supply and control functions.

The appellants work with approximately 400 surgical and other instrument trays including 20 different orthopedic trays. They clean equipment including a variety of scopes (videoscopes, urethoscopes, cystoscopes, and bronchoscopes), pumps (electronic sequential compression machines, PCA pumps, Kangaroo pumps, etc.), respirators, EKG machines, fibulators, carts, wheelchairs, etc. They suggest substitution items to medical staff when requested or standard items are not stocked or unavailable.

The appellants work under the general supervision of the section chief or section subordinate supervisor or the direction of a higher grade Medical Supply Technician. The section works in shifts operating from 6:30 a.m. until 2:30 a.m. the next morning during the week and has more limited operating hours on the weekend when surgeries are infrequent. The two supervisors or higher grade technicians are typically present throughout the shifts. Two of the appellants are assigned to the weekend shifts. The other appellants are assigned to these shifts when the designated appellants are absent. Few surgeries are performed on weekends. The appellants also rotate to the [name] campus two days a week and while there primarily perform decontamination and supply duties. All sterilization functions are performed at the [name] campus. The appellants are responsible for independently planning and carrying out work assignments and they consult with the supervisor on unusual problems or issues that develop. The appellants keep the supervisor informed of work progress. Work is reviewed through observation and through discussion with the employee and feedback from medical staff.

The appellants' position description and other material of record furnish more information about their duties and responsibilities and how they are performed and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency classified the appellants' positions in the Medical Supply Aide and Technician Series, GS-622, and titled them Medical Supply Technicians. The appellants do not disagree with the series or title determination. We concur. The grading criteria in the directly applicable published GS-622 standard are used to evaluate nonsupervisory positions.

Grade determination

The GS-622 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are assigned for each of nine factors. The total is converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in the standard. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level.

The appellants disagree with the agency's determination of Level 1-3 for Factor 1. After careful review, we concur with the crediting of Levels 3-2, 4-2, 5-2, 6-2, 7-1, 8-2, and 9-2 and have so credited the position. Our analysis of Factors 1 and 2 follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the kind and nature of knowledge and skills needed and how they are utilized in doing the work.

At Level 1-3, employees have sufficient knowledge of the way infection is spread in order to understand the importance of clean and sterile medical supply operations and practices to patient care and the precautions to take with contaminated supply items. This level also requires knowledge of the technical names, general uses, physical characteristics, and the procedures for inspecting, disassembling, and reassembling; decontaminating; packaging; sterilizing; storing; and issuing the full range of medical supplies and equipment used in the wards and clinics of the hospital. In addition, the medical supply technician must have knowledge to operate various kinds of processing equipment such as washer-sterilizers, ultrasonic instrument cleaners, steam-vacuum and gas sterilizers, and aerators and to test the proper operation of the equipment, adjust operating conditions, and report malfunctions.

At Level 1-4, employees apply a practical knowledge of microbiology, human anatomy and physiology, and medical and surgical procedures combined with an intensive knowledge of asepsis techniques and the functions and activities of the wards, clinics, and operating room suites. This knowledge is used to meet recurring, emergency, or special individual medical supply and equipment needs and to advise medical personnel on the availability and economical use of supplies and equipment, appropriate sizes, possible substitutes, and the proper use and troubleshooting of equipment. Employees have knowledge of technical names, uses, physical characteristics, maintenance procedures, and assembly, adjustment and processing procedures for the full range of medical and surgical equipment. This includes the more delicate and costly equipment such as microsurgery instruments, camera lenses, and complex medical equipment which requires expert care, careful attention, and precise adjustments.

Level 1-4 is met. As at that level, the appellants support a full range of medical and surgical procedures. The work requires comparable knowledge of the use, operation, maintenance, assembly, and disassembly of the full range of medical supplies, instruments, and equipment and specific cleaning, sterilizing, and storage requirements of each. Their work requires a basic understanding of microbiology relative to the need for cleanliness and sterilization and of human anatomy to aid in identifying equipment associated with trays and possible substitution items. As requested or when supplies are not available, the appellants recommend substitutions, e.g. alternate use of Hollister items or tubing, clamps, and trays. The appellants work with approximately 400 instrument sets, some with as many as 120 instruments, used in all of the facilities' units and must be able to meet the recurring or special needs of medical personnel. Equipment is costly and delicate and includes very delicate eye instruments, over 30 types and varieties of surgical trays, a variety of scopes, and electronic equipment.

Comparable to Level 1-4, the appellants disassemble and assemble the full range of trays, instruments, and equipment, e.g., remove filters and tubing from ventilators and hoses from

pumps, take apart moving parts, remove knobs. They perform Level 1-4 troubleshooting in that they check movement of parts after assembly, perform minor maintenance, such as tightening or replacing missing screws and lubricating parts, and visually inspect for cracks, pitted metal, broken pieces, frayed cords, etc. The appellants have to know how to connect and hook up the equipment for cleaning, e.g., attaching scopes, with or without caps as appropriate, so that water flows through all the channels and the attached camera is not damaged. Precise instructions for sterilizing special vendor equipment, e.g., orthopedic implants and instrument sets, are not always provided and the appellants' work requires sufficient knowledge of decontamination and sterilization methods and available instruction or precedent to select the appropriate sterilization method and time. The work requires proficiency in the selection, use, testing, and adjustments of the various washers, sterilizers, aerators, and other equipment, and the appropriate cleaning agents and techniques to use.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor measures how the work is assigned, the employee's responsibility for carrying out the work, and how the work is reviewed.

At Level 2-2, the supervisor assigns the work indicating what is to be done; quality and quantity expected; and limitations, deadlines, and priorities. Typically, the supervisor does this by dividing the work of the medical supply unit into work assignments and providing a written work routine for each assignment and any additional, specific instructions as to work methods for unusual situations. The employee works in one assignment area or rotates through all areas and is responsible for being familiar with, and independently completing the work assignment. Problems or questions not covered by instructions or established procedures are referred to the supervisor for assistance or a decision. The employee is expected to accommodate special requests and emergencies within the priorities and instructions set by the supervisor. The work is spot-checked for accuracy and compliance with established instructions and procedures.

Level 2-2 is met. The appellants rotate through several work assignments which are covered by specific written procedures and guidelines or manufacturers instructions. Loaned instruments from vendors do not always have precise sterilization instructions; however, some instructions or precedent is often applicable. Like Level 2-2, the appellants are expected to perform assignments, including special requests for flash or limited sterilization or item substitution, independently, but the supervisors and higher grade medical supply technicians are available for assistance for unusual situations or problems. Comparable to Level 2-2, a supervisor or higher grade technician reviews work through observation, through discussion with the employee, and by means of feedback from other medical staff.

At Level 2-3, the supervisor assigns employees to work areas on a continuing or rotational basis. The employee then completes work assignments based on accepted work procedures. Normally, the employee will inform the supervisor of problems or unusual situations that arise with recommendations for appropriate action. On shift and weekend assignments, however, the employee independently resolves these situations through negotiation and consultations with

other medical personnel. Completed work is reviewed through on-site inspection of work areas, work reports, and comments from users and the hospital's infection committee.

Level 2-3 is not met. The intent of this level is to give credit for work situations that would require some degree of interpretation or adaptation of instructions to solve problems where the methods or rationale used in arriving at the end results are not reviewed in detail rather than a direct reading and adherence to instructions for decontaminating and sterilizing supply items, etc. The record shows that the appellants' work does not require the resolution of problems involving interpretation or adaptation of instructions or negotiation of issues that is characteristic of Level 2-3. The appellants have detailed instructions and established procedures that have to be followed in carrying out their assignments and interpretation is seldom required. They also follow manufacturers' instructions and precedent and when questions do arise, e.g., method or amount of time for sterilization of loaned equipment or priorities for equipment sterilization, they generally seek assistance from the supervisor or higher grade technicians. Additionally, unlike Level 2-3, the appellants' work does not require independent resolution of problems on night and weekend shifts. A higher grade medical supply technician is normally assigned to the night shift and on weekends the appellants may call the supervisor if unusual problems occur or refer them to the on-duty nurse.

Level 2-2 is credited for 125 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-2	75
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-1	20
8. Physical demands	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-2	<u>20</u>
<i>Total</i>		1035

A total of 1035 points falls within the GS-5 grade level point range of 855-1100 points on the Grade Conversion Table.

Decision

This position is properly classified as Medical Supply Technician, GS-622-5.