BEFORE THE PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD

STATE OF WASHINGTON

VICKIE HOLEVINSKI, Appellant, v. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, Respondent.	Case No. ALLO-03-0006 ORDER OF THE BOARD FOLLOWING HEARING ON EXCEPTIONS TO THE DETERMINATION OF THE DIRECTOR

Hearing on Exceptions. This appeal came on for hearing before the Personnel Appeals Board, GERALD L. MORGEN, Vice Chair, and BUSSE NUTLEY, Member, on Appellant's exceptions to the director's determination dated January 16, 2003. The hearing was held in the Superintendent's Conference Room at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington, on May 1, 2003. WALTER T. HUBBARD, Chair, did not participate in the hearing or the decision in this matter.

Appearances. Appellant Vickie Holevinski was present and appeared *pro se*. Craig Hamada, Human Resource Consultant, represented Respondent Department of Corrections.

Background. Appellant submitted a Classification Questionnaire signed on April 23, 2002, requesting that her Office Assistant position be reallocated to the Office Assistant Senior classification. Craig Hamada, Human Resource Consultant for the Department of Corrections, reviewed Appellant's request and on July 3, 2002, issued a written decision denying Appellant's

reallocation request. On July 30, 2002, Appellant filed for a review to the Director of Personnel asserting that her position should have been allocated to the Office Assistant Senior classification.

On October 22, 2002, Paul L. Peterson, Director's Designee, conducted an allocation review. By letter dated January 16, 2002, Mr. Peterson informed Appellant that her position was properly allocated to the Office Assistant classification.

On February 11, 2003, Appellant filed exceptions with the Personnel Appeals Board to the determination of the Department of Personnel.

Appellant's position is assigned to the Health Records Unit within the Washington State Penitentiary. The Health Records Unit has two Office Assistant positions, and Appellant is the incumbent in one of the positions. Appellant works in the outpatient health records area, and she is located in the basement away from the direct supervision of her supervisor. The two Office Assistants are responsible for the function, operation, and maintenance of the health records.

Summary of Appellant's Argument. Appellant argues that her duties have changed significantly because many additional tasks have been assigned to her position that are complex and therefore at the Office Assistant Senior level. Appellant contends that the director's designee erred when he concluded that similar positions in other institutions with the same duties are allocated at the Office Assistant and Office Assistant Senior classifications. Appellant argues that she conducted her own survey of positions assigned to medical departments at other institutions and discovered that there are no other Office Assistant positions doing the same work because the work is being done by positions designated as Office Assistant Senior, Accredited Records Technician, and Secretary Senior classifications. Appellant asserts that she and the other Office Assistant are independently responsible for their department with very little input from their supervisor. Appellant contends

that the Director's designee placed too much weight on her prior CQ and previous denial for upward reallocation without considering the exhibits she provided to show the current additional higher level complex duties. Appellant argues that she has received no assistance from her human resource consultant in preparing her classification questionnaire, nor was a desk audit conducted even though she repeatedly requested one to resolve misunderstandings about the complexity of her work.

Summary of Respondent's Argument. Respondent argues that the Department of Personnel conducted a review of Appellant's position in August 1997 and concluded that the position was properly allocated at the Office Assistant classification. Respondent asserts that the duties reflected on Appellant's April 2002 classification questionnaire show no substantial change from the 1997 version. Respondent contends that the Accredited Records Technician in Appellant's unit is responsible for the actual maintenance of the health records. Respondent argues that the Department of Corrections has purposely designed the work to allow for decision making responsibilities at the higher levels. Respondent asserts that Appellant's classification questionnaire does not reflect a breakdown of Appellant's duties by percentages. Respondent contends that the higher level work must be indicated on the classification questionnaire as the primary job functions that are performed a majority (51 percent) of the time for the position to be reallocated upward. Respondent argues that Appellant's position, therefore, is correctly allocated to the Office Assistant classification.

Primary Issue. Whether the director's determination that Appellant's position is properly allocated to the Office Assistant classification should be affirmed.

Relevant Classifications. Office Assistant, Class Code 01010; Office Assistant Senior, Class Code 01011.

Decision of the Board. The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. Also, a position review is not a comparison of work performed by employees in similar positions. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class which best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Because a current and accurate description of a position's duties and responsibilities is documented in an approved classification questionnaire, the classification questionnaire becomes the basis for allocation of a position. An allocation determination must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities as documented in the classification questionnaire. Lawrence v. Dept of Social and Health Services, PAB No. ALLO-99-0027 (2000).

The primary differences between the Office Assistant job class and the Office Assistant Senior job class are whether the work performed is routine or complex and whether there is limited decision making authority or an independent performance of assignments.

The definition and distinguishing characteristics for the Office Assistant are:

> Definition: Performs a variety of routine clerical duties.
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> Distinguishing Characteristics: Performs a variety of routine clerical duties such as processing documents and records, extracting and compiling records or data, responding to inquiries concerning services and procedures, maintaining and monitoring established record keeping, filing, and data base systems, and keyboarding or typing forms, letters, record entries, and other material.

> Duties and assignments are of a routine nature. Routine duties are recurring and accomplished by following established work methods or procedures. Within established guidelines, independently organizes, prioritizes, and initiates work activities. Decision making authority is limited to choice of appropriate methods or procedures. Guidance is provided in new or unusual situations. Deviation from established methods, procedures, or guidelines requires approval. Work is periodically reviewed to verify compliance with policies, procedures, or standards.

The definition and distinguishing characteristics for the Office Assistant Senior are:

> Definition: Performs a variety of complex clerical duties.
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> Distinguishing Characteristics: Independently performs a variety of complex clerical projects and assignments such as establishing and revising electronic or manual record keeping systems including data base files, preparing, reviewing, verifying and processing fiscal documents, resolving clerical problems, responding to inquiries regarding policies, procedures, and services, drafting correspondence, compiling reports, and reviewing, screening, verifying, and evaluating applications, forms, or requests for information.
>
> Assignments and projects are of a complex nature. Independent performance of complex clerical assignments requires substantive knowledge of a variety of regulations, rules, policies, procedures, processes, materials, or equipment. Problems are resolved by choosing from established procedures and/or devising work methods. Plans and organizes work. Guidance is available for new or unusual situations. Deviation from established parameters requires approval. Work is periodically reviewed to verify compliance with established policies and procedures.

We carefully reviewed the documentary evidence in this case. As mentioned earlier, the classification questionnaire is the basis for allocation of a position and allocation must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities. In reviewing Appellant's classification questionnaire, we find it to be defective for two reasons: 1) It does not break the duties down into percentages, and 2) it does not contain Appellant's most current additional duties as reflected in the exhibits.

The classification questionnaire does not break the duties down into percentages.

In order for the position to be allocated upward to an Office Assistant Senior, the incumbent must spend a majority of his/her time (51 percent) performing duties that are at the higher complex level.

Appellant's classification questionnaire lists a percentage of "100%" to represent all the duties listed in the body of the classification questionnaire. We are, therefore, unable to determine what Appellant's primary job functions are and what percentage of time she spends on complex duties versus routine duties.

The classification questionnaire does not contain Appellant's most current additional duties as reflected in the exhibits.

The exhibits that Appellant provided include a list of additional duties that Appellant performs with a percentage attached to each new duty. Appellant asserts that the Accredited Records Technician previously performed these duties, and that the new duties were added to Appellant's workload. Based on the examples of work provided in Appellant's exhibits, we have determined that they are complex level tasks. Appellant's supervisor, Karen Forss, concurs that Appellant performs complex duties at the Office Assistant Senior level, and she supports reallocating the position upward. However, these new duties are not reflected in Appellant's classification questionnaire. Additionally, there is no indication of how much time Appellant spends performing these high level duties, and therefore we are unable to determine whether these duties constitute a marjority of Appellant's work time.

We are troubled by Appellant's assertion that she repeatedly requested a desk audit to resolve misunderstandings about the complexity of her work, yet the agency failed to provide such an audit. The Department of Personnel Classification Questionnaire Training materials provide guideline as to when desk audits should be performed, which are:

- When there is a disagreement between the supervisor and the incumbent about the duties performed.
- When the classification questionnaire is not clearly written.
- When the allocating authority has difficulty identifying a class that fits the duties as written.
- When a class study is being considered or already in process.

- When the employee, supervisor, or allocating authority requests an audit.

Based on our finding that the classification questionnaire is defective and the additional complex duties demonstrated in the exhibits are not reflected in the classification questionnaire, we conclude that the record does not support the decision made by the Director's designee. However, the record does not provide an adequate basis at this time for us to make an informed decision as to whether Appellant's position is properly allocated at the Office Assistant classification or should be reallocated to the Office Assistant Senior classification.

Conclusion. This matter should be remanded to the Department of Corrections, and the department and Appellant should work together to conduct a position review of Appellant's duties and responsibilities. Next, the department should work with Appellant to prepare an accurate classification questionnaire that reflects Appellant's duties, with the most responsible duty underlined and the percentage of time for particular duties identified. This will allow the department to determine whether her position is properly allocated or whether it should be reallocated to the Office Assistant Senior classification.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal of Vicki Holevinski is remanded to the Department of Corrections for a determination as to whether her position is properly allocated or whether it should be reallocated to the Office Assistant Senior classification.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 2003.

WASHINGTON STATE PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD

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Gerald L. Morgen, Vice Chair

Personnel Appeals Board
2828 Capitol Boulevard
Olympia, Washington 98504

Busse Nutley, Member

Personnel Appeals Board
2828 Capitol Boulevard
Olympia, Washington 98504