

On October 27, 2008, Appellants filed exceptions to the director's determinations. Appellants' exceptions are the subject of this proceeding.

Appellants work in the communications center located in the main lobby of Western State Hospital. The majority of their duties involve emergency communications. Appellants are the first point of contact for emergencies and as such play a vital role in receiving and transmitting information concerning security, safety, medical, or behavioral situations to 911 call center staff. Appellants notify Western State Hospital (WSH) administrators, staff and security personnel of emergencies using multiple communication methods (telephone, two-way radio, public address systems, personal alarm systems, and computer). During emergency situations, their role is to relay information and messages, facilitate the exchange of information between WSH staff and the 911 operator, and direct security staff to the proper locations on the hospital grounds to meet emergency personnel dispatched by the 911 operator. Appellants do not dispatch emergency personnel.

Summary of Appellants' Arguments. Appellants argue that since 2001 they have been assigned additional higher-level duties for which they have not been fairly compensated. Appellants argue that some of their higher-level duties include monitoring the personal alarm systems worn by staff, recording and logging all communications received by phone and radio, and assigning case numbers to WSH incidents and communications. Appellants explain that they were trained by the Lakewood police department and that they run the WSH communications center like a police station. They assert that they communicate with security personnel on hospital grounds and inform security where and when to meet emergency responders to escort them to the location of an incident. In addition, when an unauthorized leave (escape) occurs, they assure law enforcement and WSH staff receive the information needed to respond to the incident. Appellants contend that their work is consistent with the majority of typical work statements found in the Communications Officer 1 class and that their positions should be reallocated.

Summary of Respondent's Arguments. Respondent recognizes that Appellants' positions are a vital link at WSH in relaying critical information between staff, security and 911 call centers. However,

Respondent argues that the majority of Appellants' duties and responsibilities involve receiving and transmitting information about security, safety, medical, or behavioral situations consistent with the duties outlined in the PBX and Telephone Operator classification. In addition, Respondent argues that the duties of implementing and escalating emergency notifications and using multiple communications methods are consistent with the PBX and Telephone Operator class. Respondent contends that Appellants' positions do not directly dispatch emergency and law enforcement personnel as found in the Communications Officer 1 classification. Rather they relay information as found in the PBX and Telephone Operator class. Respondent asserts that the PBX and Telephone Operator classification specifically addresses positions that receive emergency calls within an institution such as the calls handled by Appellants at WSH. Respondent argues that definition and the distinguishing characteristics of the PBX and Telephone Operator classification describe the duties and responsibilities of Appellants' positions and that their positions are properly allocated.

Primary Issue. Whether the director's determinations that Appellants' positions are properly allocated to the PBX and Telephone Operator classification should be affirmed.

Relevant Classifications. PBX and Telephone Operator, class code 101G, and Communications Officer 1, class code 451F.

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. 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 that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. See Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Appellants argue that they are not being compensated fairly for the higher levels of work they have performed since 2001. However, salary inequity is not an allocation criterion and should not be

considered when determining the appropriate allocation of a position. See Sorensen v Depts. Of Social and Health Services and Personnel, PAB Case No. A94-020 (1995).

Appellants also argue that they are doing higher-level work than other positions allocated to the PBX and Telephone Operator classification. In Byrnes v. Dept's of Personnel and Corrections, PRB No. R-ALLO-06-005 (2006), the Board held that “[w]hile a comparison of one position to another similar position may be useful in gaining a better understanding of the duties performed by and the level of responsibility assigned to an incumbent, allocation of a position must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to an individual position compared to the existing classifications. The allocation or misallocation of a similar position is not a determining factor in the appropriate allocation of a position.” Citing to Flahaut v. Dept's of Personnel and Labor and Industries, PAB No. ALLO 96-0009 (1996). Therefore, the allocation or misallocation of positions at other institutions is not a determining factor in the appropriate allocation of Appellants’ positions.

Appellants further argue that their duties fall within the typical work examples found in the Communications Officer 1 classification. However, in accordance with the guidance provided in the Department of Personnel Classification and Pay Administrative Guide, examples of work statements are not allocating criteria. Rather they provide guidance on the level of work typically found in the various classes within a series. The guidance provided in Classification and Pay Administrative Guide establishes that the following standards are primary considerations in allocating positions:

- a) Category concept (if one exists).
- b) Definition or basic function of the class.
- c) Distinguishing characteristics of a class.
- d) Class series concept, definition/basic function, and distinguishing characteristics of other classes in the series in question.

Jurgensen v. DOC, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-016 (2008).

The definition of the Communications Operator 1 classification states:

Serves as a senior operator in a communications center, public safety or law enforcement station, emergency system network and mobile unit, or rescue and fire

1 protection agency. Positions transmit, receive, and relay information concerning
2 public safety and law enforcement activities to, from, and between State Patrol
3 mobile units and stations, other state, county, and federal law enforcement agencies,
4 and the public by means of radio, multi-line telephone systems, computer terminals,
5 private line intercom systems, and other telecommunications devices.

6 Appellants work in the communications center at WSH. However, they do not relay information
7 to, from and between State Patrol mobile units and stations, other state, county and federal law
8 enforcement agencies, and the public. Appellants' positions do not meet the intent of the
9 Communications Officer 1 classification.

10 The definition of the PBX and Telephone Operator classification states:

11 Serving an institution, teaching hospital, or medical center, receives and routes
12 incoming calls through private branch telephone exchange (PBX) or other
13 telephone switching system, and is responsible for receiving and transmitting to staff
14 information concerning security, safety, medical or behavioral situations requiring
15 immediate investigative or corrective action.

16 Appellants serve WSH. They receive and route calls and are responsible for receiving and
17 transmitting information to 911 operators and WSH staff concerning security, safety, medical or
18 behavior situations requiring immediate action. Appellants' positions meet the intent of the PBX
19 and Telephone Operator classification.

20 In addition, the distinguishing characteristics the PBX and Telephone Operator classification state:

21 Positions in this class are expected to exercise independent judgment when dealing
22 with emergent situations which are not specifically covered by procedure, the usual
23 methods of solution, or instructions by the supervisor. Within established
24 guidelines, provides multiple communications services such as campus radio
25 dispatching, personal alarm system, emergency digital voice recording system,
26 paging system, public address system, and intercom system. Responsible for
27 implementing and escalating emergency notifications as the situation demands.

28 Appellants exercise independent judgment when dealing with emergent situations. They provide
29 multiple communications services including telephone, radio, computer, public address systems,

1 and personal alarm systems. They are responsible for implementing and escalating emergency
2 notifications including escape notifications. Appellants perform duties and responsibilities
3 encompassed by the distinguishing characteristics of the PBX and Telephone Operator
4 classification.

5
6 Each classification within the state personnel system encompasses a range of duties. The multiple
7 positions allocated to each class typically do not perform the full scope or range of duties described
8 in the classification. In this case, we recognize that Appellants' positions have changed and that
9 they have taken on additional duties and greater responsibilities. However, when determining the
10 appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must
11 be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides
12 the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. Dudley v. Dept. of
13 Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

14
15 In this case, Appellants' positions best fit within the PBX and Telephone Operator classification. In
16 a hearing on exceptions, the Appellant has the burden of proof. WAC 357-52-110. Appellants have
17 failed to meet their burden of proof.

18 **ORDER**

19 NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeal on exceptions by Andrea
20 Mikelson, Angela Jackson, Jonell Broumley, Cheryl Shanburn, Jamel Brown and Rose Sotelo is
21 denied and the director's determinations dated September 30, 2008, are affirmed and adopted.

22 DATED this ____ day of _____, 2009.

23 WASHINGTON PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

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26 _____
JOSEPH PINZONE, Chair

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28 _____
DJ MARK, Member