BEFORE THE PERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

STATE OF WASHINGTON

NICOLE BLOCKER, KENDRA DIAMOND, CHRISTINE SHRINER, CHERRI NUSE, & PATIENCE BROWN, Appellants, vs. DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, Respondent.	CASE NOS. R-ALLO-10-015, R-ALLO-10-016, R-ALLO-10-017, R-ALLO-10-018 & R-ALLO-10-019 ORDER OF THE BOARD FOLLOWING HEARING ON EXCEPTIONS TO THE DETERMINATION OF THE DIRECTOR

Hearing on Exceptions. This appeal came before the Personnel Resources Board, LAURA ANDERSON, Chair, and DJ MARK, Vice Chair, for a consolidated hearing on Appellants' exceptions to the director's determination dated June 11, 2010. The hearing was held at the office of the Personnel Resources Board in Olympia, Washington, on October 21, 2010.

Appearances. Appellants Nicole Blocker, Christine Shriner, Cherri Nuse, and Patience Brown were present and were represented by Debbie Brookman of the Washington Federation of State Employees. Respondent Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was represented by Robert Swanson, Classification and Compensation Specialist.

Background. Appellants are employed by DSHS at Western State Hospital. Appellants' working titles are Ward Clerk. Following a reorganization and change in reporting relationships, Appellants' position description forms were updated in February 2009. In April 2009, Appellants Blocker, Nuse, Diamond, and Brown completed position review requests. Appellant Shriner completed her position review request in June 2009. By letters dated May 28, 2009, Respondent determined that the positions of Appellants Blocker, Nuse, Diamond, and Brown were properly allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification. By letter dated June 16, 2009, Respondent determined that Appellant Shriner's position was properly allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification.

Appellants filed requests for director's reviews of DSHS's allocation determinations. By letter dated June 11, 2010, the director's designee determined that Appellants' positions were properly allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification. On July 7, 2010, Appellants filed exceptions to the director's determination. In their exceptions appeals, Appellants asked that their positions be reallocated to the Patient Services Coordinator or the Patient Services Representative classification. During the hearing before the Board, Appellants clarified that they believed their positions best fit the Patient Services Representative classification.

Appellants perform support functions for the interdisciplinary treatment team on a ward. They assist all disciplines related to medical records, treatment planning, and smooth operations of the ward. Appellants schedule meetings, answer telephones, complete paperwork and create patient folders for new admissions, assemble and maintain information in patient records and charts, and type treatment orders into patient records. Appellants have minimal patient contact but have substantial contact with staff.

Summary of Appellants' Arguments. In summary, Appellants argue that the director's designee failed to consider the specialized nature of their work. Appellants acknowledge that they do not perform all the duties described in the Patient Services Representative classification, but assert that this class is the best fit for their positions. Appellants contend that the definition of the Patient Services Representative describes six different duties that define the intent of the class and that they perform those duties and meet the intent of the definition as follows:

- their positions are in a patient care area and they have responsibility for scheduling appointments and evaluation and treatment conferences;
- they handle patient inquiries on a daily basis and answer the telephone within the context of the ward setting which requires them to use the same skill set as triaging patient telephone calls;
- they do not take information from patients and enter it into the system, however, they take care of all of the paperwork and enter all of the information from the paperwork into the case system. Appellants assert they play a key role in assuring

the paperwork is completed for admissions and discharges which meets the intent of the definition;

- they maintain patient records and assemble patient charts which makes up the bulk of the work they perform;
- they do not initiate and process patient charge documents, therefore, this part of the definition does not apply to their positions;
- they transcribe physicians' orders in the sense that they transcribe the treatment plans which include, in part, the physicians' orders.

Appellants assert that the director's designee erred in her analysis and misinterpreted the requirements of the Patient Services Representative classification. Appellants argue that the Patient Services Representative class does not require incumbents to have responsibility for deciding and recommending which professional to assign to care for a patient, for deciding which activities a patient will attend, or for making recommendations about therapy. Appellants disagree that the primary focus of their positions is to provide clerical support to the ward and not to assist patients seeking medical care. Rather, Appellants contend that their positions have more in common with and meet the intent of the Patient Services Representative classification and that this class is the best fit for their positions.

Summary of Respondent's Arguments. Respondent argues that Appellants perform work in support of ward staff and not in support of direct patient care. Respondent agrees that Appellant's do some of the work encompassed by the Patient Services Representative classification such as scheduling appointments, setting up treatment team meetings, and maintaining and assembling patient charts so that a record is maintained on the ward. However, Respondent asserts that Appellants do not triage phone calls, do not register new patients or conduct point-of-service admission, do not maintain patients' primary medical records, and do not transcribe physicians' orders such as the results of medical examinations. Respondent explains that the duties and responsibilities of the Patient Services Representative class are patient oriented and require dealing with and providing service to patients while the duties and responsibilities of the Office Assistant 3 class are to provide support to staff. Respondent argues that the majority of Appellants' duties and

responsibilities are clerical and are performed primarily to support staff. Respondent acknowledges that Appellants perform a very important function on the ward and that they do have contact with patients but asserts that when looking at their overall duties and the intent of the classes, the Office Assistant 3 class is the best fit for the majority of their work.

Primary Issue. Whether the director's determination that Appellants' positions are properly allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification should be affirmed.

Relevant Classifications. Patient Services Representative, class code 284E; Office Assistant 3, class code 100J.

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).

The following standards, in descending order, are the primary considerations in allocating positions:

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

While not allocating criteria, the typical work statements of a class lend support and provide clarification of the type and a scope of work encompassed in a class.

The class series concept, definition and distinguishing characteristics for the Patient Services Representative classification describe positions that provide patient support services. The primary duties of this class require direct patient contact in order to perform the work.

Due to the nature of their work environment, Appellants come in contact with patients. However, direct patient contact is not an integral part of their duties and is not required in order for them to perform the majority of their assigned work. The majority of Appellants' work assignments require them to have direct contact with staff rather than with patients.

The class series concept, definition and distinguishing characteristics for the Office Assistant 3 classification describe positions that perform a variety of complex clerical/support duties for an office or unit. The primary duties of this class focus on performing duties that support the efforts of staff and the work unit. At the Office Assistant 3 level, incumbents perform complex assignments that require, in part, substantive knowledge of a variety of regulations, rules, policies, procedures and processes.

The work performed by Appellants supports the efforts of ward staff. They work independently and perform a variety of complex tasks that require them to follow and apply a variety of policies, procedures and processes.

Most positions within the civil service system occasionally perform duties that appear in more than one classification. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. See Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

In this case, the majority of Appellants' overall duties and responsibilities best fit the Office Assistant 3 classification. In a hearing on exceptions, the appellant has the burden of proof. WAC 357-52-110. Appellants have failed to meet their burden of proof.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the appeals on exceptions by are denied and the director's determinations dated June 11, 2010, is affirmed.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 2010.

WASHINGTON P ERSONNEL RESOURCES BOARD

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LAURA ANDERSON, Chair

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DJ MARK, Vice Chair