



United States
Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
September 1987
No. 10-04

Standard: [Nurse Series, GS-0610](#) (June 1977)
Factor: Title determination
Issue: Clinical Nurse vs. Nurse Specialist

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's processing of a classification appeal. The appellants, whose positions were classified as Clinical Nurse, GS-0610-9, claimed that their work in a labor and delivery section of a general medical hospital, providing the full range of services to obstetrical patients, constituted a specialty at a level consistent with Benchmark GS-0610-11-2 for Nurse Specialist.

Resolution

The title, Nurse Specialist, is intended for positions with requirements for advanced levels of competence to facilitate performance of certain highly specialized functions on a regular and recurring basis in addition to traditional direct nursing care. The cited benchmark provides examples of the nurse specialist concept by including regular and recurring responsibility for new or unusual treatment programs and serving as a role model and teacher in those areas for experienced and fully trained nurses. While most fully competent nurses may provide training and assistance to new or lower level staff, the role model concept is intended to recognize the nurse whose knowledge, skills, and leadership ability clearly exceed that of a group of fully competent professional nurses. It is not intended by the standard that most or all of the nurses in a unit could be recognized as role models.

Due to the high volume of activity at this hospital, a number of unusual cases were handled in the labor and delivery section. However, such cases were exceptions to the preponderant workload for each nurse and did not require the appellants to develop nursing techniques or administer treatment programs "unusual" to the section.

The Office of Personnel Management recognized that in situations where a nurse position is established primarily to deal with cases requiring new, experimental, or unusual treatment approaches, the position should be titled Nurse Specialist and credited accordingly for grading purposes. However, in this appeal, the appellants' positions were correctly titled Clinical Nurse because their *primary* purpose was to provide more standardized nursing care in a clinical setting.