Position Classification Standard for Optometrist Series, GS-0662

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series covers positions that require the application of professional optometric knowledges and skills in examining and analyzing the eye for diseases and defects and prescribing correctional lenses or exercises. Except for positions not involving patient care responsibility (e.g., research optometrist), positions in this series require a current license to practice optometry in a State or territory of the United States or in the District of Columbia.

This standard supersedes the classification standard for the Optometrist Series, GS-0662, which was issued in June 1967.

EXCLUSIONS

Positions which require the diagnosis and treatment by medical and surgical means, of diseases and injuries of the eye are classified in the Medical Officer Series, GS-0602.

Positions which are responsible for the performance of optometric support work where such work does not require professional training are classified in the Health Aid and Technician Series, GS-0640, or other series, as appropriate.

BACKGROUND

Many sciences have contributed to a better understanding of vision and its improvement. Modern optometry is based on the concept of functional vision. This means that in examination and correction the optometrist considers the entire visual process -- physical, physiological, and psychological.

Optometry provides visual care in the physical sense through the measurement of the refractive powers of the eye. Special instruments and techniques are utilized to find and determine defects in vision. If deficiencies are found, eye glasses, contact lenses, other types of optical aids, and corrective eye exercises are prescribed to preserve or restore maximum efficiency of vision. When evidence of pathology is present, patients are referred for medical or other treatment. The physiological and psychological processes call for a systematic survey of the patients' environment, classification of the visual tasks to be performed, and definition of standards for each such task. These standards must be integrated into a general formula suited to occupational and visual needs.

The optometrist must have a knowledge and understanding of the physiological causes of visual aberrations, ocular physiology and anatomy, geometric and physiological optics as they relate to refraction and binocular vision, neural anatomy and psychology of vision, and the recognition of ocular pathology with reference to both ocular and systemic disease.

TITLES

Optometrist (Clinical) is the title for positions located in hospitals or other clinical settings which involve professional optometric practice and responsibility.

Optometrist (Industrial) is the title for positions located in industrial health programs or similar settings which involve professional optometric practice and responsibility as described for Optometrist (Clinical) and in addition, involve technical, administrative, research, or specialized services and responsibilities in conjunction with an occupational vision program.

Research Optometrist is the title for positions which involve the performance of research for which a full professional knowledge of optometry is a paramount requirement.

The general title *Optometrist* is appropriate for all other nonsupervisory positions. The prefix Supervisory is used in the title of positions that require supervisory qualifications.

GRADE-LEVEL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The grade levels in this standard are based primarily on three factors: assignment characteristics, control over the work, and qualifications required. The factors are identified and briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

Assignment Characteristics

This factor takes into consideration the scope of the professional duties performed and aspects which affect the inherent difficulty of these duties. The difficulty may be reflected in and/or affected by the types of vision-care services provided.

For example:

1. Eye examination and vision analysis
   - Acuity of vision (determines how well patient sees form, light, and color at various distances)
   - Opthalmoscopy (detects evidences of diseases and injuries in the eye, and ocular manifestations of bodily diseases which may require referral of patients for medical care)
   - Refraction (measures refractive error of the eyes, relates objective and subjective tests)
   - Tonometry (measures intraocular pressure for detection of glaucoma)
   - Perimetry (measures peripheral field of vision)
   - Retinoscopy (gives an objective finding of the amount of lens correction needed)
   - Phorometry (measures extra ocular muscle balance, coordination, breadth of fusion, and relates to binocular performance)

- Ophthalmometry (measures the front curvature of the cornea; also used for fitting contact lenses and measuring corneal astigmatism)
- Slit lamp biomicroscopy (detailed study of tissue structure and change that may occur as a result of disease or injury; detailed study of cornea-contact lens relationship)

2. Orthoptic or visual training;
3. Contact lens adaptation; and
4. Subnormal vision care and rehabilitation.

In occupational vision programs, the optometrist (industrial) is primarily concerned with stimulating and coordinating the efforts of management officials to assure the effective utilization and conservation of eyesight through the following:

- Analyses of visual performance of the work force;
- Determination of the visual abilities and defects of all personnel;
- Determination of eye-hazardous jobs;
- Supervision of eye protection;
- Promotion of proper lighting; and
- Indoctrination and education of employees.

Control over the work

This factor measures the extent to which the optometrist needs to seek or receive help from others in either completing professional optometric work on patients or developing new criteria, standards, or devices to control or eliminate industrial vision problems. Supervisory controls over the optometrist's work may be exercised by the establishment of administrative practices and by definition of the limits of the optometric services to be provided.

Qualifications required

This factor considers the extent of professional experience and training in optometry and the knowledge and skills needed to carry out the assigned professional duties. All positions require a thorough knowledge and understanding of ocular pathology with reference to both ocular and systemic diseases.

NOTES TO USERS OF THIS STANDARD

Criteria for evaluating research optometrist positions are not provided in this standard, although such positions are classifiable to this series. Grade levels for positions engaged primarily in research can be determined by the criteria in the Research Grade Evaluation Guide.

In some cases, research in physiological optics may be performed either by optometrists or by individuals who come from another professional discipline, such as physics. In such cases, guidelines concerning interdisciplinary positions may be applied.

When supervisory duties and responsibilities constitute a substantial part of an optometrist position and are of such significance as to require supervisory qualifications, these responsibilities should be evaluated with reference to the General Schedule Supervisory Guide.

This standard provides grade-level criteria for optometrist positions in clinical settings at GS-9 through GS-11, and optometrist positions in industrial settings at GS-9 through GS-12. It does not include grade-level criteria for positions above those levels. Such positions, if established, would have special and highly individualized features. Therefore, it is not practicable to include criteria for such positions in this standard.

Such positions should be evaluated by extension of the criteria and considerations discussed in this standard and by application of general classification principles.

OPTOMETRIST (CLINICAL), GS-0662-09
OPTOMETRIST (INDUSTRIAL), GS-0662-09
OPTOMETRIST (CLINICAL), GS-0662-09

Assignment characteristics

GS-9 optometrists independently perform the full range of optometric procedures and instrumentation techniques with little or no guidance or consultation. They perform such duties as:

- Interviewing (and securing or reviewing case histories of) patients and conducting examinations;
- Analyzing visual functions -- far acuity, near acuity, field of vision, depth of perception, ocular coordination, and color perception;
- Using objective and subjective methods for the detection of evidence of ocular and systemic disease apparent in the eyes and recommending the referral of cases for medical or other diagnosis;
- Performing refractions to assess the degree of hyperopia, myopia, astigmatism, presbyopia and other visual deficiencies requiring correction;
- Prescribing subnormal vision aids, contact and conventional lenses, and corrective eye exercises; and
- Verifying new prescriptions and determining previous prescriptions worn by patients through the process of neutralizing lenses by use of the lensometer or vertometer.

Control over the work

Under the administrative supervision of a physician or professional supervision of another optometrist, GS-9 optometrists perform duties substantially on their own initiative and responsibility. Unusual problem cases, departures from normal operations or practices, or changes in program emphasis are discussed with the supervisor. They consult with, and/or refer cases to, other optometrists, opthalmologists, otolaryngologists, and other specialists.

Qualifications required

The assignments at this level require the level of knowledge, skill and ability represented by graduation from an accredited School of Optometry and licensure to practice as an optometrist in a State or territory of the United States or in the District of Columbia. They also require experience in the employment of optometric procedures and instrumentation techniques.

OPTOMETRIST (INDUSTRIAL), GS-0662-09

Assignment characteristics

GS-9 optometrists (industrial) provide to industrial employee-patients professional optometric care similar to that described for Optometrist (Clinical) GS-9. In addition, they perform work requiring substantial additional specialized knowledge of the field of occupational vision. Generally, GS-9 optometrists participate as assistants in planning, organizing, and implementing all phases of an occupational vision program. They study the problems of workers in occupations which appear to be eye-hazardous or non-eye-hazardous and makes recommendations on matters pertaining to visual conservation, visual protection, and visual efficiency.

Control over the work

GS-9 optometrists (industrial) work independently with little or no day-to-day direction from supervisors in matters pertaining to eye examinations and prescriptions for eyewear. However, they receive detailed instructions and supervision in the application of the work to the specifics of industrial practices. The adequacy of surveys of eye-hazardous occupations and employees with visual deficiencies, and the adequacy of the scheduling, screening, and testing of workers are subject to review in terms of effectiveness in reducing eye accident rates.

Qualifications required

Assignments at this level demand professional knowledge and experience in the employment of optometric procedures and instrumentation techniques. In addition, the optometrist must have some knowledge and understanding of the various environmental conditions that may cause discomfort to wearers of eye protection devices.

OPTOMETRIST (CLINICAL), GS-0662-11
OPTOMETRIST (INDUSTRIAL), GS-0662-11
OPTOMETRIST (CLINICAL), GS-0662-11

Optometric duties at this level differ from those described for the GS-9 level in that Optometrists GS-11 regularly:

- Provide optometric services that require the application of advanced instrumentation, procedures, and techniques in the detection and correction of unusual visual deficiencies; and
- Serve as an authoritative source of information for the conduct of optometric practice in any phase of the optometry program.

Assignment characteristics

GS-11 duties typically include performing several or all of the following kinds of professional work for a preponderant portion of the time:

- Applying procedures for the detection of neuromuscular impairment or anomalies of binocular function and their correction;
- Prescribing telescopic spectacles and other subnormal vision aids and providing optometric rehabilitation to meet the needs of the individual patient;
- Prescribing fitting, and adjusting contact lenses for the correction of eye problems;
- Providing orthoptics and visual training for the correction of strabismus (squint or crossed eyes) and in the development or reeducation of the visual skills for the improvement of visual performance;
- Determining previous prescriptions of various kinds for unusual visual deficiencies (i.e., subnormal vision aids and contact lenses), in addition to conventional lenses, by use of the lensometer, vertometer, keratometer, or other specialized instruments; and
- Giving instructions to students on clinical optometric procedures and techniques (in teaching hospitals).

In addition, GS-11 assignments may include substantial administrative responsibility for:

- Planning, developing, and adjusting the various elements of the optometry program to meet the needs of the hospital or clinic and patients served;
- Planning, developing, and preparing budget estimates for optometry programs and managing the expenditure of allotted funds;
- Maintaining liaison with, and providing advisory services to, personnel of other professional disciplines on patient or program problems of overlapping or mutual interest; and
- Maintaining proper records and making necessary reports.

GS-11 optometrists serve as authoritative sources of information for the conduct of optometric practice in any phase of the optometry program. Some optometrists are responsible for coordinating the duties of other optometrists or technical personnel performing optometric or related work.

Control over the work

GS-11 optometrists typically work under administrative rather than professional supervision. Generally, they give rather than receive professional advice and assistance. However, when evidence of pathology is present, the patient is referred for other professional care. There may be occasions when GS-11 optometrists may consult with physicians, ophthalmologists, and other medical specialists concerning problems likely to arise during the care of patients with ocular pathology or ocular manifestations of systemic disease.

Qualifications required

GS-11 assignments require a thorough knowledge and understanding of advanced optometric procedures and instrumentation techniques and their various applications in the detection and correction of unusual visual deficiencies.

OPTOMETRIST (INDUSTRIAL), GS-0662-11

Assignments at this level differ from industrial assignments described at grade GS-9 in that the GS-11 optometrist (industrial) has professional and management responsibility for occupational vision programs, or one or more important segments thereof in industrial establishments. This responsibility to industrial employee-patients is similar to that described for Optometrist (Clinical) GS-11.

Assignment characteristics

GS-11 optometrists (industrial) typically perform the following kinds of duties or their equivalent in both difficulty and responsibility:

1. Evaluation of visual performance of the work force in relation to:
   -- Preemployment standards,
   -- Job placement,
   -- Qualifications for special duty,
   -- Restriction of the visually handicapped,
   -- Retirement and disability,
   -- Certification for licensing,
   -- Continuing exposure to specific eye hazards,
   -- Progressive visual deterioration, and
   -- Documentation for medicolegal and other reasons;

2. Conduct of on-the-job surveys, on his own initiative or by invitation, for the determination of job visual requirements and the identification of eye hazards;
3. Conduct of mass vision screening programs for the establishment of current visual performance data and to insure the maintenance of a visually capable work force;
4. Selection, procurement, dispensing, and maintenance of eye protection equipment.

GS-11 optometrists are relied upon as authoritative sources of information and advice within the organization concerning a specialty.

Some GS-11 optometrists have complete administrative and management responsibility for occupational vision programs in an establishment in which there is a variety of activities such as welding, spray painting, founding, equipment repair and testing, and the like. Frequently, the GS-11 optometrist is required to modify and extend existing techniques and methods to eliminate or reduce potential eye injuries and accidents associated with these and similar activities. In carrying out these responsibilities, such optometrists.

- Plan, organize, and direct the operation of the occupational vision program;
- Review and make recommendations on intra-agency matters concerned with health and sight; and
- Conduct analytical studies relating to the development of suitable protective optical devices for use of personnel in industrial establishments.

In connection with analytical studies, optometrists develop the plan for such studies in terms of methods, procedures, and techniques to be followed; evaluate results; and prepare data from which criteria are developed for use in occupational vision programs.

Control over the work

Where GS-11 optometrists are primarily responsible for one or more segments of an occupational vision program, the work is coordinated by another optometrist with other segments of the program as well as with related programs of the establishment. Where they have complete administrative and management responsibilities for the entire program, they coordinate their own activities with related programs (e.g., industrial hygiene). GS-11 assignments are received in terms of general objectives and a time limitation for the final product. Within these limitations, optometrists proceed with relative independence from day-to-day supervision.

Results are reviewed for achievement of overall objective and adequacy of program rather than for accuracy of details.

Qualifications required

GS-11 assignments demand a thorough knowledge and understanding of the various conditions (e.g., dust, temperature, close working quarters) peculiar to a particular work environment, and the ability to develop possible remedial measures. The work also requires an extensive knowledge of guides, precedents, methods, techniques, and regulatory requirements of the industrial establishment. This requires the ability to adapt, modify, and extend existing techniques and methods for the solution of unusual problems.

OPTOMETRIST (INDUSTRIAL), GS-0662-12

GS-12 assignments differ from those described for the GS-11 level in that there is inherent in the work environment a wide array of unusual vision hazards -- chemicals, flying particles, explosives, toxic substances, or harmful radiations. There is a high potential of serious eye damage because of continuous exposure to such hazards. An example of such a work environment is a large shipyard engaged in extensive ship construction, repair, and manufacturing activities. GS-12 assignments require extreme care, and special knowledge about the nature, magnitude, and interrelationships of the physiological phenomena, work processes, and employee attitudes associated with such an environment. In such a program, there is a continuing need for the development of new methods, procedures, and devices for protection of employees engaged in eye-hazardous work.

Assignment characteristics

GS-12 optometrists have professional and management responsibility for all phases of an occupational vision program in a major industrial establishment. They typically perform the following kinds of duties:

- Develop guides, procedures, and instructions for sight conservation; and
- Devise and implement projects, programs, and standards for investigation and control of particular eye hazards or industrial vision problems.

Control over the work

In carrying out the responsibility for an occupational vision program in a major industrial activity, GS-12 optometrists are expected to develop solutions to novel problems, and to devise new criteria and standards.

The optometrists discuss plans and policies with the administrative supervisor to insure optimum coordination with related programs such as industrial hygiene, safety, and other programs.

Qualifications required

GS-12 optometrists must have the ability to create or develop theoretical or experimental means of investigating environmental conditions and factors as well as latent defects in eye protection devices. They must also be able to develop criteria, methods, and a body of data for general applicability in administering an occupational vision program in an industrial environment.