

**OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**  
**MERIT SYSTEMS OVERSIGHT AND EFFECTIVENESS**  
**DALLAS OVERSIGHT DIVISION**  
**CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION**

Under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code

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**Appellant:** [appellant's name]

**Position:** Dental Assistant, GS-681-04  
[Position Number]

**Organization:** [a department]  
Indian Health Service, Public Health Service  
Department of Health and Human Services  
[city, state]

**Decision:** Dental Assistant, GS-681-05  
(Appeal granted)

**OPM decision number:** C- 0681-05-01

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**Approved by:**

/s/ Bonnie J.Brandon  
Bonnie J. Brandon  
Classification Appeals Officer

9/30/96  
Date

**Copy of decision sent to:**

[appellant's name and address]

[name and address of appellant's servicing personnel office]

[name and address of higher level personnel office]

[name and address of agency headquarter's office]

## **INTRODUCTION**

This position is assigned to [a large department], Indian Health Service, in [city, state]. The agency has classified the position as Dental Assistant, GS-681-04. The appellant believes the position should be reclassified to a higher grade level.

This appeal is filed with the Office of Personnel Management under the provisions of chapter 51, title 5 of the United States Code. This is the final administrative decision of the Government, subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, sections 511.605 and 511.613.

## **POSITION INFORMATION**

The appellant's position is located at [a hospital], which is a general medical and surgical facility containing approximately 75 beds and serving an outpatient population. The Dental Department is comprised of approximately 10 dentists and 14 dental assistants, who treat 75 - 100 patients daily.

The appellant performs chairside assisting duties in all phases of endodontic, prosthodontic, pedodontic, and oral surgical treatment. Both the appellant and the supervisor agree that she spends approximately 50 percent of her time providing assistance to the staff oral surgeon. She receives and schedules patients for oral surgery treatment in the dental clinic and operating room, including completion of contract forms used to arrange for consulting surgeons, imaging studies, or when referring patients to outside facilities; insures surgical supplies are stocked and requisitions replenishments, as needed; coordinates autologous blood donations; operates radiographic equipment to take a variety of intra- and extra-oral dental X-rays, and develops and finishes the film; makes preliminary impressions; cleans and sterilizes instruments and maintains instrument packs used in a variety of oral surgical procedures; gives patients pre- and post-operative instructions; packages tissue specimens and routes to pathological laboratory; makes preparations for oral surgery performed in the dental clinic, including setting up the instruments and equipment; and assists the oral surgeon while the patient is under intravenous sedation in operations which include full mouth extractions, reconstruction of jaws, correction of hard and soft tissue traumatic injuries, excisional biopsies, implants, extraction of impacted teeth, removal of cysts, and removal of stones in the salivary glands. The appellant spends the remainder of her time assisting other dentists with general procedures such as routine care, treatment of pain, teeth extractions, etc. On a periodic basis, the appellant performs basic, reversible intra-oral procedures, such as restoring teeth with temporary fillings, to maintain clinical skills developed during formal training.

The appellant's duties related to assisting the oral surgeon in a variety of surgical procedures are not described in sufficient detail in her position description. However, since this work is performed for a significant portion of the time, these duties and

responsibilities were considered in our evaluation of the position. In order to fully reflect the nature and responsibilities of her work, the position description must be revised and updated.

## **SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION**

Positions in the GS-681 Dental Assistant Series involve such duties as receiving and preparing patients for dental treatment, preparing materials and equipment for use by the dentist, assisting the dentist at chairside in treatment of patients, performing intra-oral procedures under the supervision of the dentist, performing dental radiography work, and keeping records of appointments, examinations, treatments, and supplies. The appellant's duties are properly included in this series. Since the appellant's duties are not primarily concerned with the performance of reversible intra-oral procedures as described in the GS-681 position classification standard, the proper title is Dental Assistant.

## **GRADE DETERMINATION**

The position classification standard for the GS-681 Dental Assistant Series, dated September 1977, is used to make a grade level determination. This standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are evaluated by comparing the duties, responsibilities and qualifications required with nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions. A point value is assigned to each factor in accordance with the factor-level descriptions. For each factor, the full intent of the level must be met to credit the points for that level. The total points assigned for the nine factors are converted to a grade by reference to the grade conversion table in the standard.

### *Factor 1- Knowledge Required by the Position*

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the dental assistant must understand to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges.

In addition to the knowledges required at Level 1-2, Level 1-3 describes: a knowledge of instruments, materials, and standardized dental procedures used in the full variety of treatments provided in general dentistry *or* in one or more specialized field(s) of dentistry along with knowledge of related dentistry procedures to make preparations and provide chairside assistance; knowledge of and skill in detecting signs of syncope, shock or other side reactions to dental treatment in patients; and/or knowledge of dental anatomy and bony facial structure to take diagnostic dental radiographs and skill in operating and adjusting the X-ray equipment.

Level 1-4 requires a knowledge of dental and related oral anatomy, technical methods and practices of dentistry, and the working characteristics of dental instruments and

materials sufficient to perform a variety of reversible intra-oral procedures, including restoration of teeth prepared by the dentist; ability to recognize common dental disorders and conditions sufficient to perform intra-oral treatment procedures as directed by the dentist; and the skill and dexterity to perform such procedures.

The appellant spends a substantial portion of her time assisting in the full range of oral surgical procedures performed in a dental chair. She also is required to assist in the general dentistry areas of the clinic. Her duties involved with assisting the oral surgeon and the knowledges required are essentially a match for those described in Benchmark 5-1 of the standard. The knowledge and skill required to perform these duties are credited at Level 1-3. Benchmarks credited at the higher level describe procedures such as restoring teeth prepared by the dentist; seating temporary crowns; and removing and replacing temporary fillings in endodontic treatment. Although these types of duties are periodically performed by the appellant in order to maintain clinical skills, performance of these duties does not constitute a primary function of the position. Accordingly, the knowledge required by the appellant's position is properly credited at Level 1-3. 350 points are assigned.

#### *Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls*

This factor considers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

At Level 2-2, the dentist or supervisor provides instruction by generally indicating what is to be done, limitations, quality and quantity expected, deadlines, and priority of assignments. Specific instructions are provided for new, difficult, or unusual assignments. The assistant is expected to carry out recurring assignments independently, referring problems, etc., to the supervisor for decision or help. The supervisor assures that finished work and the methods used are technically accurate and in compliance with instructions and established procedures. This is the highest level described in the standard and is comparable to that of the appellant's position. Level 2-2 and 125 points are credited.

#### *Factor 3 - Guidelines*

This factor covers the nature of the guidelines used and the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-1, specific and detailed guidelines covering all important aspects of assignments are provided to the assistant. The assistant works in strict adherence to the guidelines; deviations must be authorized. Little or no judgment is required in selecting guidelines for application to individual cases. The standard indicates that most dental assistant positions are at this level.

Level 3-2 describes a situation where the number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require more judgment in selecting the most appropriate guideline and making minor deviations to adapt them for specific cases. These situations are usually encountered in the more difficult treatments provided in speciality practice areas. At this level, the assistant may also determine which of several alternatives to use, such as in completing the more complex and intricate intra-oral assignments.

The appellant has specific guidelines which include agency and manufacturer's instructions, and operating procedures applicable to a variety of oral surgery treatments. The instruments and materials used vary for the different types of surgical procedures, and the preparation for treatment of medically compromised patients varies depending on the specific medical condition involved. These variances require that the appellant use judgment in selecting guidelines for application in the specific cases. We find the judgment involved in determining the proper guidance for use in the wide variety of oral surgical situations is creditable at Level 3-2. This is supported by comparison with Benchmark 5-1. 125 points are assigned.

#### *Factor 4 - Complexity*

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed, and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

Level 4-2 describes full chairside or radiographic duties involving a variety of sequential steps and processes. The category of the particular task and consideration of readily verifiable factors determine what steps are to be taken.

At Level 4-3, the work involves factors or elements which are not readily apparent or verified. Employees must identify and analyze certain elements in carrying out assignments each time. Examples given include full assistance in difficult specialized treatments normally only provided in a specialty practice of dentistry. These treatments are usually lengthy and non-routine in nature and involve a large array of specialized instruments, materials, and techniques. They require the assistant to make significantly greater preparation of the materials, operatory, and sometimes, the patient; and the dentist requires closer assistance. Examples include assistance to surgical procedures performed in the dental clinic while patient is under intravenous sedation, e.g., excisional biopsies, cyst removal, removal of bony impactions or removal of stones in salivary gland.

The appellant's assignments involve providing assistance in oral surgery procedures using intravenous sedation. Procedures include removal of impacted teeth, full mouth extractions, fractured jaws, correction of soft tissue traumatic injuries, excisional biopsies, implants, removal of cysts, and removal of stones in the salivary glands. The

appellant works with a wide variety of procedures, materials, instruments, and specialized equipment. She must closely observe and assist the dentist, recognizing each stage of the procedure in order to furnish materials and services accurately and rapidly. She assists in monitoring patients by noting vital signs. We find the duties meet the 4-3 level of complexity. 150 points are assigned.

*Factor 5 - Scope and Effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of work products or services within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-2, the work involves recordkeeping, chairside assistance, and clinic maintenance duties which together comprise a significant segment of total dental care services. These duties facilitate the work of the dentist and affect the attitude of patients and the efficiency with which the dental clinic provides services. This level is comparable to that of the appellant's position. The appellant's duties do not meet Level 5-3 which describes relieving the dentist of many time consuming tasks by full performance of a number of complex intra-oral procedures such as adapting and placement space maintainers and restoring grossly decayed teeth.

Level 5-2 is credited and 75 points are assigned.

*Factors 6 - Personal Contacts*

Factor 6 includes face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain.

The appellant's contacts are with patients and other employees in the hospital, which is equivalent to Level 6-2. 25 points are assigned.

*Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts*

Factor 7 pertains to the reasons the contacts, as identified in Factor 6, are made.

The appellant's contacts with other employees are to exchange information and to coordinate patient services. Contacts with patients are to provide service, exchange information, explain pre- and post-operative instructions, comfort, reassure, and motivate patients to practice preventive oral hygiene measures. The purpose of the appellant's contacts is equivalent to that described at Level 7-2. 50 points are assigned.

*Factor 8 - Physical Demands*

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work.

The appellant's work requires long periods of standing, bending, and walking. This equates to Level 8-2 and 20 points are assigned.

*Factor 9 - Work Environment*

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings and the safety regulations required.

The appellant's work involves exposure to potential hazards of radiation in taking X-rays, communicable diseases, and of injury when sterilizing or sharpening dental instruments. Protective equipment is used against radiation and during treatment. This equates to Level 9-2 and 20 points are assigned.

*Grade Determination*

The point total for the nine factors is 940. Using the Grade Conversion Table outlined on Page 5 of the standard, positions falling within a point range of 855 - 1100 equate to GS-05.

**DECISION**

The appellant's position is properly classified as Dental Assistant, GS-681-05.