

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and
Effectiveness
Classification Appeal and FLSA Programs**

Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242-9968

**Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Health Systems Specialist
GS-671-9

Organization: TRICARE Flight
[a specific Medical Group and Wing]
Air Education and Training Command
Department of the Air Force
[geographic location]

OPM decision: Health Systems Specialist
GS-671-9

OPM decision number: C-0671-09-03

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

February 28, 2001

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

Appellant:

[appellant's name and address]

Agency:

[servicing personnel office]

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Introduction

On December 22, 2000, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted an appeal from [the appellant]. The appealed position is assigned to the TRICARE Flight, [a specific Medical Group and Wing], Air Education and Training Command, Department of the Air Force, [name of an Air Force Base] (AFB), [geographic location]. The agency has classified the position as Health Systems Specialist, GS-671-9. The appellant believes her position should be classified as Health Systems Specialist, GS-671-11. We have accepted and decided this appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

The appellant certified to the accuracy of the duties described in her current position description (PD) [number], dated October 3, 2000. The appellant's supervisor certified that the PD accurately reflects the duties performed by the appellant. We find the PD is adequate for position classification purposes. In reaching our classification decision, we considered information in the appellant's PD and other information submitted in writing by the appellant and her agency and by telephone from the appellant and her supervisor.

Position information

The appellant serves as the Contracting Officer's Representative for the Department of Defense Health Service [Region] TRICARE Managed Care Support Contract at [the appellant's] AFB. The [appellant's] Region covers 26 medical treatment facilities in 14 states. This position is responsible for administering a \$2.3 billion health services contract which provides a variety of medical services to [the appellant's] AFB and the surrounding area which serves over 80,000 eligible military beneficiaries. The appellant monitors and evaluates the service and operations of the contractor to determine that performance is in accordance with the terms, specifications, and conditions of the contract and that the quality of care provided meets required standards. The appellant provides administrative support in reviewing and evaluating contract proposals, developing quality assurance surveillance plans, assisting in negotiating contract and Memorandum of Understanding proposals, providing input to the Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) concerning deficiencies, preparing monthly reports concerning performance of contractors, and maintaining official contract documentation for the TRICARE medical service contract.

The Commander of the TRICARE Flight directly supervises the appellant. The appellant independently plans and carries out her day-to-day assignments, resolves most of the conflicts which arise, coordinates the work with others as necessary, and interprets requirements on her own initiative. The appellant works closely with the [appellant's] Region ACO to identify problems that may occur in monitoring the TRICARE service contract. Completed work is reviewed for conformance with contract requirements and optimal utilization of health care resources.

Series, title, and guide determination

The agency placed the position in the Health Systems Specialist Series, GS-671. The appellant has not questioned the series and title of her position. Positions in this series provide support to health care management officials by analyzing, evaluating, advising on, and/or coordinating health care delivery systems and operations. Such positions may be located within an operating health care facility or at a higher organizational level. In addition to a high degree on analytical ability, positions in this series require a specialized knowledge of the basic principles and practices related to the management of health care delivery systems. These positions do not have line authority. We concur with the agency's title and series determination of Health Systems Specialist, GS-671.

Specific grade level criteria for positions in this series have not been developed. The Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide is most appropriate for grade level determination.

Grade determination

The guide uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard or guide describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts required to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skill necessary to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, knowledge must be required and applied.

At Level 1-6, knowledge requires skill in applying analytical and evaluative techniques to the identification, consideration, and resolution of issues or problems of a procedural or factual nature. The issues or problems deal with readily observable conditions, written guidelines covering work methods and procedures such as performance and production standards, and information of a factual nature. Included at this level is knowledge of the theory and principles of management and organization including administrative practices and procedures common to organizations, such as those pertaining to areas of responsibility, channels of communication, delegation of authority, routing of correspondence, filing systems, and storage of files and records. Assignments typically involve using qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques such as literature searches; work measurement; task analysis and job structuring; productivity charting; determining staff to workload ratios; organizational design; space planning; development and administration of questionnaires; flowcharting of work processes; graphing; and calculation of means, modes, standard deviations, or similar statistical measures. Assignments require skill in conducting interviews with supervisors and employees to obtain information about organizational missions, functions, and work procedures.

At Level 1-7, in addition to the knowledge of Level 1-6, assignments require knowledge and skill in applying analytical and evaluative methods and techniques to issues or studies concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations carried out by administrative or professional personnel, or substantive administrative support functions. This level includes knowledge of pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and precedents that affect the use of program and related support resources in the area studied. Projects and studies typically require knowledge of the major issues, program goals and objectives, work processes, and administrative operations of the organization. Knowledge is used to plan, schedule, and conduct projects and studies to evaluate and recommend ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of work operations in a program or support setting. The assignments require knowledge and skill in adapting analytical techniques and evaluation criteria to the measurement and improvement of program effectiveness and/or organizational productivity. Knowledge is applied in developing new or modified work methods, organizational structures, records and files, management processes, staffing patterns, procedures for administering program services, guidelines and procedures, and automating work processes for the conduct of administrative support functions or program operations. Knowledge may also be applied in analyzing and making recommendations concerning the centralization or decentralization of operations.

Similar to Level 1-6, the appellant applies analytical and evaluative techniques in identifying and resolving problems related to the TRICARE managed care program. The appellant is responsible for implementing and administering the TRICARE service contract through coordination between the medical staff, the ACO, and the managed care contractor. The appellant evaluates all medical treatment facilities and services to ensure contractor performance of the standards specified in the contract. She identifies areas of concern through meetings, reports, site visits, and customer complaints. The appellant is responsible for initiating the investigation and developing recommendations for correcting problems.

The appellant's work does not meet the full intent of Level 1-7. Illustrations provided at this level contemplate projects and studies that are typically throughout a military command, a complex multimission local installation, or the equivalent. The illustrations refer to knowledge of organization, programs, missions, and functions of the parent military command along with knowledge to conduct staffing requirements and utilization surveys of headquarters organizations or various field installations. The appellant does not perform tasks affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations throughout an entire military command, headquarters organization, or various field installations. Her assignments involve mainly the medical facility and are related to monitoring and ensuring compliance of the TRICARE service contract. The appellant's work requires knowledge of the TRICARE service contract and all pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and precedents that are used to oversee it. She reviews data to ensure the contractor complies with the terms of the contract and notifies the ACO of any problems or discrepancies. The appellant's function to ensure that the delivery of health care services is met and provided within established guidelines is indicative of Level 1-6.

This factor is credited at Level 1-6 (950 points).

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor covers 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 2-3, the supervisor assigns specific projects in terms of issues, organizations, functions, or work processes to be studied and sets deadlines for completing the work. Where two or more projects are involved, the supervisor may assign priorities among the various projects as well as deadlines for the attainment of specific milestones within a project. The supervisor or higher grade analysts provide assistance on controversial issues or on the application of qualitative or quantitative analytical methods to the study of subjects for which precedent studies are not available. The employee plans, coordinates, and carries out the successive steps in fact-finding and analysis of issues necessary to complete each phase of assigned projects. Work problems are normally resolved by the employee without reference to the supervisor, in accordance with accepted office policies, applicable precedents, organizational concepts, management theory, and occupational training. Work is reviewed for conformance with overall requirements as well as contribution to the objectives of the study. Complete work products such as evaluation reports and staff studies are also reviewed for consistency of facts and figures, choice of appropriate analytical methods, and practicality of recommendations. Findings and recommendations developed by the employee are reviewed before release, publication, or discussion with management officials.

At Level 2-4, work is within a framework of priorities, funding, and overall project objectives. The employee and supervisor develop a mutually acceptable project plan that typically includes identification of the work to be done, the scope of the project, and deadlines for its completion. Within the parameters of the approved project plan, the employee is responsible for planning and organizing the study, estimating costs, coordinating with staff and line management personnel, and conducting all phases of the project. This frequently involves the definitive interpretation of regulations and study procedures and the initial application of new methods. The employee informs the supervisor of potentially controversial findings, issues, or problems with widespread impact. Completed projects, evaluations, reports, or recommendations are reviewed by the supervisor for compatibility with organizational goals, guidelines, and effectiveness in achieving intended objectives. Completed work is also reviewed critically outside the employee's immediate office by staff and line management officials whose programs and employees would be affected by implementation of the recommendations. Work is reviewed for conformance with overall requirements as well as contribution to the objectives of the study. Complete work products such as evaluation reports and staff studies are reviewed for consistency of data, choice of appropriate analytical methods, and practicality of recommendations. Findings and recommendations developed by the employee are reviewed before release, publication, or discussion with management officials.

Similar to Level 2-3, the appellant independently plans and carries out assignments, resolves most conflicts which arise, coordinates work with others as necessary, and interprets policy on her own initiative in terms of established objectives. Assignments are directed through overall program objectives, contract requirements, policy guidelines, available resources, and desired results. The appellant's recommendations are generally accepted without change. Although the

appellant works under the immediate supervision of the TRICARE Flight Commander, the immediate supervisor provides only administrative supervision. The appellant receives assistance with interpreting contract requirements only in unusual situations that cannot be resolved locally.

The position does not meet Level 2-4, where work assignments typically require an employee to make definitive interpretations of regulations or procedures, apply new work methods, or resolve the more controversial problems. The appellant plans and carries out assignments and selects the appropriate methods to solve recurring problems concerning interpretation of contractual requirements. The appellant makes recommendations and provides input for the resolution of controversial issues; however, the ACO makes the final decisions.

Level 2-3 (275 points) is credited.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor measures the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. Guides include reference materials, agency instructions, and operating procedures of the organization served.

At Level 3-3, guidelines consist of standard reference material, texts, and manuals covering the application of analytical methods and techniques and instructions and manuals covering the subjects involved. Analytical methods contained in the guidelines are not always directly applicable to specific work assignments. Included at this level are work assignments covered by a wide variety of administrative regulations and procedural guidelines.

At Level 3-4, guidelines consist of general administrative policies and management and organizational theories which require considerable adaptation and/or interpretation for application to issues and problems studied. Administrative policies and precedent studies provide a basic outline of the results desired, but the methods used to accomplish the project are not detailed. Administrative guidelines usually cover program goals and objectives of the employing organization, such as agency controls on size of work force, productivity targets, and similar objectives. Within the context of broad regulatory guidelines, the employee may refine or develop more specific guidelines such as implementing regulations or methods for the measurement and improvement of effectiveness and productivity in the administration of operating programs.

Comparable to Level 3-3, the appellant's standard guidelines consist of oral and written regulations and policies governing the TRICARE program. The guidelines are not always directly applicable, however, and the appellant must independently use judgment in choosing, interpreting, or adapting available guidelines to analyze results and recommend changes. Unlike Level 3-4, the appellant does not refine or develop more specific guidelines from broad regulatory guidelines to measure or improve the effectiveness and productivity of an operating program.

Level 3-3 (275 points) is credited.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor measures the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality in performing the work.

At Level 4-3, the work principally involves dealing with problems and relationships of a procedural nature rather than the substance of work operations, issues, or other subjects studied. At this level, the employee analyzes the issues in the assignment, then selects and applies accepted analytical techniques such as task analysis, work simplification, work-flow charts, workload measurement, and trend analysis to the resolution of procedural problems affecting the efficiency, effectiveness, or productivity of the organization and/or workers studied. Projects usually take place within organizations with related functions and objectives, although organization and work procedures differ from one assignment to the next. Typical organizational efficiency assignments involve observing work in progress to identify and resolve problems in work-flow, work methods and procedures, overall workload, forms and record keeping, span of control, and organizational structure. Typically, the employee prepares a narrative report containing a statement of the issue or problem, background, observations, options for change, and recommendations for action. Findings and recommendations are based upon analysis of work observations, review of production records or similar documentation, research of precedent studies, and application of standard administrative guidelines.

At Level 4-4, the work involves gathering information, identifying and analyzing issues, and developing recommendations to resolve substantive problems of effectiveness and efficiency of work operations in a program or program support setting. This is in addition to improving conditions of a procedural nature which relate to the efficiency of organizations and workers described at the previous level. By way of contrast with Level 4-3, work at this level requires the application of qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques that frequently require modification to fit a wider range of variables. Subjects and projects assigned at this level usually consist of issues, problems, or concepts that are not always susceptible to direct observation and analysis. Difficulty is encountered in measuring effectiveness and productivity because of variations in the nature of administrative processes studied. Information about the subject is often conflicting or incomplete, cannot readily be obtained by direct means, or is otherwise difficult to document. Characteristic of this level is originality in refining existing work methods and techniques for application to the analysis of specific issues or resolution of problems.

Similar to Level 4-3, the appellant's work includes a variety of administrative support activities that involve different and unrelated processes, procedures, and methods to determine compliance with the TRICARE service contract. The appellant gathers information, identifies and analyzes issues, provides monthly surveillance reports, ensures compliance with contractors, reports on noncompliance issues, and conducts additional inspections to ensure that identified deficiencies are corrected. The appellant's responsibility extends to serving as a member of various teams who ensure that the desired services of health care delivery is accessible.

The position does not meet Level 4-4. One illustration at that level describes an employee who improves information and systems for disseminating information about an agency's programs and work force to managers at many organizational echelons or geographic locations. Another illustration under Level 4-4 indicates that an employee at this level serves as a management advisor in a bureau or command headquarters of an agency with responsibility for performing a range of analytical studies and projects related to field program operations in the areas of management and productivity improvement. Conversely, the appellant serves as a technical advisor at the field level and her assignments and recommendations relate directly to the TRICARE service contract and medical treatment facility operations. The appellant's work deals primarily with procedural aspects rather than substantive administrative operations.

This factor is credited at Level 4-3 (150 points).

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor measures the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to plan and carry out projects to improve the efficiency and productivity of organizations and employees in administrative support activities. Employees at this level identify, analyze, and make recommendations to resolve conventional problems and situations in workflow, work distribution, staffing, performance appraisals, organizational structure, and/or administration. Employees may be assigned portions of broader studies of largely administrative organizations, or they may participate in the evaluation of program effectiveness at the operating level. Work may also involve developing detailed procedures and guidelines to supplement established administrative regulations or program guidance. Completed reports and recommendations influence decisions by managers concerning the internal administrative operations of the organizations and activities studied. The work may involve identifying problems and studying, analyzing, and making recommendations concerning the efficiency and productivity of administrative operations in different components of an organization.

At Level 5-4, work involves establishing criteria to measure and/or predict the attainment of program or organizational goals and objectives. Work at this level may also include developing related administrative regulations, such as those governing the allocation and distribution of personnel, supplies, equipment, and other resources, or publishing program guidance for application across organizational lines or in varied geographic locations. Work contributes to the improvement of productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency in program operations and/or administrative support activities at different levels and/or geographical locations within the organization and affects the plans, goals, and effectiveness of missions and programs at these various levels or locations.

The scope and effect of the position meet Level 5-3. The purpose of the appellant's position is to carry out administrative assignments to ensure beneficiaries have access to high quality medical care. Within the limitations of authority delegated to her, the appellant is responsible for

resolving problems related to the contracts supporting the TRICARE Managed Care System. This includes implementing new guidance and procedures as they are issued. The appellant inspects, analyzes, and evaluates the services and operations provided by the contractors and ensures performance is in accordance with the terms, specifications, and conditions of the contract and the quality of care provided meets the standards. The appellant identifies problems, researches information, and makes recommendations concerning contractor efficiency and productivity.

The appellant's position does not fully meet Level 5-4. Although the appellant does contribute to the improvement of productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency in the operation of the TRICARE service contract within the [appellant's Region of the] Department of Defense's Health Service, her work does not regularly affect many different echelons or geographic locations as envisioned at Level 5-4. The TRICARE service contract is a multiagency contract that affects and provides services for active duty and retired Army, Air Force, Marine, Navy, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration personnel and their dependents. However, the appellant's work does not meet the breadth and depth of assignments characteristic of Level 5-4.

Level 5-3 (150 points) is credited.

Factor 6, Personal contacts, and Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

Factor 6 covers the people and conditions or settings under which contacts are made. It includes face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Factor 7 covers the reasons for the contacts described in Factor 6.

For Factor 6, personal contacts at Level 2 are with employees, supervisors, and managers of the same agency, but outside of the immediate office, or employees and representatives of private concerns in a moderately structured setting.

At Level 3 of Factor 6, personal contacts are with persons outside the agency and may include consultants, contractors, or business executives in a moderately unstructured setting. This level may also include contacts with the head of the employing agency or program officials several managerial levels removed from the employee when such contacts occur on an as needed basis. The Primary Standard (the "standard" for FES classification standards) states that contacts at this level are not established on a routine basis, the purpose and extent of each contact is different, and the role of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact.

The appellant's personal contacts meet Level 2 of Factor 6 in that the contacts are primarily with employees, supervisors, managers, other Air Force personnel, and contractors involved with TRICARE. Although the appellant has contacts with contractors, the full intent of Level 3 is not met. The appellant's contacts do not occur in a moderately unstructured setting as envisioned at Level 3.

Factor 7 is evaluated at Level b. The purpose of the appellant's contacts is to exchange information; resolve operational problems; make recommendations; communicate

interpretations, guidance, and implementation instructions; and solve problems or concerns within the context of monitoring the contractor's compliance with the health care contract. This purpose is comparable to Level b, where contacts typically involve such matters as identification of decision-making alternatives, appraisals of success in meeting goals, or recommendations for resolving administrative problems. Level c is not met. There is no evidence that the appellant must influence managers or other officials to accept and implement findings and recommendations and that there is resistance by those officials as described at Level c.

These factors are credited at Level 2b (75 points).

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor measures the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment, including the agility and dexterity required and the extent of physical exertion.

The physical demands on the appellant meet Level 8-1. As is typical at this level, the appellant's work is primarily sedentary and she may sit comfortably to do the work. There may be some walking, bending, or carrying of light items, but there are no special physical demands required.

Level 8-1 (5 points) is credited.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor measures the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required.

The appellant's work environment meets Level 9-1. As is typical at this level, the appellant's work is performed in adequately lighted and climate controlled work spaces.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 (5 points).

Summary

In summary, we have evaluated the appellant's position as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-6	950
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts and 7. Purpose of contacts	2b	75
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
TOTAL		1,885

By comparison to the grade conversion table in the guide, the total of 1,885 points converts to the GS-9 grade level (1,855 to 2,100 points).

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Health Systems Specialist, GS-671-9.