
Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll and Timekeeping

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Significant Points

- About 17 percent work for Federal, State, and local governments.
- Employment will grow as human resources assistants assume more responsibilities.
- Job opportunities should be best for those with excellent communication and computer skills and a broad based knowledge of general office functions, as assistants assume more responsibilities.

Nature of the Work

Human resources assistants maintain the human resource records of an organization's employees. These records include information such as name, address, job title, and earnings; benefits such as health and life insurance; and tax withholding. They also undertake a variety of other personnel and general office related tasks.

On a daily basis, these assistants record information and answer questions about and for employees. They might look up information about absences or job performance, for instance. When an employee receives a promotion or switches health insurance plans, the human resources assistant updates the appropriate form. Human resources assistants also may prepare reports for managers. For example, they might compile a list of employees eligible for an award.

In small organizations, some human resources assistants perform a variety of other clerical duties, including answering telephone calls or letters, sending out announcements of job openings or job examinations, signing for packages, ordering office supplies, and issuing application forms. When credit bureaus and finance companies request confirmation of a person's employment, the human resources assistant provides authorized information from the employee's personnel records. Assistants also may contact payroll departments and insurance companies to verify changes to records.

Some human resources assistants are involved in hiring. They screen job applicants to obtain information such as their education and work experience; administer aptitude, personality, and interest tests; explain the organization's employment policies and refer qualified applicants to the employing official; and request references from present or past employers. Also, human resources assistants inform job applicants, by telephone, letter, or e-mail, of their acceptance for or denial of employment.

In some job settings, human resources assistants have more specific job titles. For example, *assignment clerks* notify a firm's existing employees of upcoming vacancies, identify applicants who qualify for the vacancies, and assign those who are qualified to various positions. They also keep track of vacancies that arise throughout the organization, and they complete and distribute forms advertising vacancies. When

completed applications are returned, these clerks review and verify the information in them, using personnel records. After a selection for a position is made, they notify all of the applicants of their acceptance or rejection.

As another example, *identification clerks* are responsible for security matters at defense installations. They compile and record personal data about vendors, contractors, and civilian and military personnel and their dependents. The identification clerk's job duties include interviewing applicants; corresponding with law enforcement authorities; and preparing badges, passes, and identification cards.

Work environment. Human resources assistants usually work in clean, pleasant, and comfortable office settings, but prolonged exposure to video display terminals may lead to eyestrain for assistants who work with computers. They usually work a standard 35- to 40-hour week.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Employers prefer to hire people who have a high school diploma. Computer, communication, and interpersonal skills are important.

Education and training. A high school diploma or GED usually is preferred for these jobs. Generally, training beyond high school is not required. However, training in computers, in filing and maintaining filing systems, in organizing, and in human resources practices is helpful. Proficiency using Microsoft Word, Excel, and other computer applications also is very desirable. Many of these skills can be learned in a vocational high school program aimed at office careers, and the remainder can be learned on the job.

Formal training is also available at a small number of colleges, most of which offer diploma programs in office automation. Many proprietary schools also offer such programs.

Other qualifications. Human resources assistants must be able to interact and communicate with individuals at all levels of the organization. In addition, assistants should demonstrate poise, tactfulness, diplomacy, and good interpersonal skills in order to handle sensitive and confidential situations.

Employment

Human resources assistants held about 168,000 jobs in 2006. About 17 percent work for Federal, State, and local governments. Other jobs for human resources assistants were in various industries such as health care and social assistance; educa-



Human resources assistants explain the organization's employment policies, screen job applicants, and request references.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Human resources assistants, except payroll and timekeeping	43-4161	168,000	187,000	19,000	11

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

tional services, public and private; management of companies and enterprises; administrative and support services; and finance and insurance.

Job Outlook

Employment of human resources assistants is expected to grow as fast as the average for all occupations. Job opportunities should be best for those with excellent communication and computer skills and a broad based knowledge of general office functions, as assistants assume more responsibilities.

Employment change. The number of jobs for human resources assistants is expected to grow by 11 percent between 2006 and 2016, as fast as the average for all occupations. In a favorable job market, more emphasis is placed on human resources departments, thus increasing the demand for assistants. However, even in economic downturns there is demand for assistants, as human resources departments in all industries try to make their organizations more efficient by determining what type of employees to fire or hire, and strategically filling job openings. Human resources assistants may play an instrumental role in their organization's human resources policies. For example, they may talk to staffing firms and consulting firms, conduct other research, and then offer their ideas on issues such as whether to hire temporary contract workers or full-time staff.

As with other office and administrative support occupations, the growing use of computers in human resources departments means that much of the data entry that is done by human resources assistants can be eliminated, as employees themselves enter the data and send the electronic file to the human resources office. Such an arrangement, which is most feasible in large organizations with multiple human resources offices, could limit job growth among human resources assistants.

Job prospects. Job opportunities should be best for those with excellent communication and computer skills and a broad based knowledge of general office functions, as assistants assume more responsibilities. For example, workers conduct Internet research to locate resumes, they must be able to scan resumes of job candidates quickly and efficiently, and they must be increasingly sensitive to confidential information such as salaries and Social Security numbers.

In addition to positions arising from job growth, replacement needs will account for many job openings for human resources assistants as they advance within the human resources department, take jobs unrelated to human resources administration, or leave the labor force.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of human resources assistants in May 2006 were \$33,750. The middle 50 percent earned between \$27,430 and \$41,080. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$22,700 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$48,670. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest number of human resources assistants in 2006 were:

Federal executive branch.....	\$37,000
Local government	35,440
Management of companies and enterprises	34,260
Colleges, universities, and professional schools	33,870
Employment services	29,330

In 2007, the Federal Government typically paid salaries ranging from \$33,336 to \$42,236 a year. Beginning human resources assistants with a high school diploma or 6 months of experience were paid an average annual salary of \$26,685. The average salary for all human resources assistants employed by the Federal Government was \$37,835 in 2007.

Some employers offer educational assistance to human resources assistants.

Related Occupations

Human resources assistants maintain the personnel records of an organization's employees. On a daily basis, these assistants record information and answer questions about employee absences and supervisory reports on employees' job performance. Other workers with similar skills and expertise in interpersonal relations include bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks; communications equipment operators; customer service representatives; data entry and information processing workers; order clerks; receptionists and information clerks; secretaries and administrative assistants; stock clerks and order fillers; and tellers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information about human resources careers, contact:

► Society for Human Resource Management, 1800 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Internet: <http://www.shrm.org>