

Position Classification Standard for Medical Technical Assistant Series, GS-0650

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SERIES DEFINITION¹

This series includes all classes of positions the duties of that are to supervise and perform technical work which is subordinate to professional work in medicine and dentistry, in penal and correctional institutions.

INCLUSIONS

Positions in this series involve work covered by the [Nurse Series, GS-0610](#), and at least two other series in the [Medical, Hospital, Dental, and Public Health Group, GS-0600](#); and may involve additional work covered by series in other occupational groups. Positions in this series require practical knowledge and skill in the application of required procedures, methods, and techniques but they do not require formal training equivalent to that represented by completion of full professional training in nursing and in other professional fields.

All positions in this series have a further responsibility for the custody, discipline, and training of inmate patients and workers. Positions included in this series are presently found only in the Federal penal and correctional institutions operated by the Bureau of Prisons.

EXCLUSIONS

Positions involving work covered by fewer than three occupational fields in the GS-0600 Group; and positions involving work covered by three or more series in the GS-0600 Group when the positions do not involve work covered by the Nurse Series, GS-0610. Such positions, if one subject-matter series predominates, will be classified in that series in accordance with established classification principles, or, if not, will be classified in the [Health Aid and Technician Series, GS-0640](#).

SPECIALIZATIONS AND TITLE STRUCTURE

Part I, Medical Technical Assistant. -- Includes (a) positions the incumbents of which receive training in performance of the medical care services described in this standard, and (b) positions which involve supervision of inmates in the performance of, and personal performance of, the medical care services described in this standard.

¹ These standards were prepared by the Public Health Service of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Part II, Chief Medical Technical Assistant. -- Includes positions charged with direction of the medical care services (under competent medical authority) described in this standard, which are provided by other medical technical assistants and by inmates. There is never more than one of these positions in each penal and correctional institution.

It should be noted that all positions beyond the entrance level in this series are supervisory in nature in that they are charged with the responsibility of directing the work of inmates. The vast majority of positions covered by Part I, however, do not direct the work of other nontrainee medical technical assistants.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT:

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Public Health Service is directed by law to supervise and furnish medical treatment, psychiatric, and related technical and scientific services and advice on sanitation for penal and correctional institutions of the United States. In order to carry out these responsibilities, the Public Health Service has established medical facilities at each of the Federal penal and correctional institutions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEDICAL SERVICE OF THE BUREAU OF PRISONS

The medical care activities are administered by the Medical Director of the Bureau of Prisons. The personnel responsible for carrying out the medical care services in the Federal penal and correctional institutions are Public Health Service employees.

The size and composition of the medical staffs vary with the size and special requirements of each institution. At one institution the medical staff may consist of the chief medical officer, other medical officers, consultants, dentists, psychologists, and medical technical assistants. At another institution the medical staff may consist of only a part-time medical officer or consultant and one or more medical technical assistants.

At the larger institutions, one or more medical technical assistants may be assigned to each of three shifts. Medical officers are usually on duty from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but are available for emergencies on a 24-hour basis. In cases where 24-hour nursing care is required, medical technical assistants are assigned to provide the service. Inmate help is utilized to provide the nursing care required during the night, except for the administration of narcotic and certain sedative drugs. Inmates are trained at the institution by medical technical assistants to perform regular nursing functions, and to assist with or perform laboratory, x-ray, pharmacy, dental, and physical therapy functions. They are also trained in record-keeping.

At the smaller institutions, the plans of operation must be adjusted to provide the maximum medical care with a limited number of professional and nonprofessional medical personnel.

It is necessary for medical technical assistants to be capable of caring for emergencies until the services of medical officers can be obtained, and to exercise good judgment as to when a medical officer should be called.

Reference is made in this standard to the "medical facility." This term is used to avoid repetition and lengthy descriptions. The term is intended to indicate the building or rooms and the equipment used to provide the medical care discussed in this standard.

Medical technical assistants are usually assigned to rotating shifts and to all services or departments within the medical care facility auxiliary to the work of the medical and dental officers. This description of functions is not intended to reflect the grade-level of work performed in each specialization, nor is it intended to be all-inclusive. Specific grade-level information must be obtained from the classification standards covering each specialization.

Medical technical assistants play an important role in maintaining continuity of medical service in penal institutions. (This is especially true at the smaller institutions where part-time or only one medical officer is assigned.) The assignments of medical officers are usually changed at least every two years, while the assignments of assistants remain stable. Assistants also help to orient newly assigned medical officers to the peculiarities of the medical service that must be provided by penal institutions.

MEDICAL CARE PROCEDURES

Inmates, on arrival at an institution, are retained in a special admission and orientation unit, usually for 30 days, and are given a complete physical examination and inoculations for smallpox, typhoid fever, tetanus, and, for youthful offenders, polio. During this special retention period, the presence of any communicable diseases is detected and psychological tests and psychiatric, social, and other interviews are conducted for classification purposes. The medical technical assistants make a preliminary inspection which is later followed by complete physical examinations, including tests, by medical officers.

Sick lines are usually conducted once a day, while emergencies must be cared for as they arise. Medical technical assistants arrange for scheduling the hospitalization of patients for diagnosis, treatment, or surgical procedures, as directed by the medical officer. After physical examination of the inmates by the medical officer, medical technical assistants advise custodial staffs as to work details and recreation for each patient. Because of the monotony of life in penal and correctional institutions, a large number of inmates report for medical attention when there is no actual condition present which warrants attention, i.e., symptoms and complexes which are caused by emotional problems arising from incarceration. It is impracticable for a medical officer to examine every inmate reporting at sick call. The preliminary screening of the inmates requiring medical attention from those who are feigning illness is one of the most important and most difficult and responsible elements in the medical technical assistant positions.

I. General medical duties:

As assistants to the medical officers and under their supervision medical technical assistants perform a wide variety of general medical duties, of which the following are representative but not all-inclusive examples. These duties are performed throughout the medical facility. Medical technical assistants interview to obtain medical history, and make preliminary screening examinations of new inmates and those reporting to sick line. They perform such tasks as taking blood pressure and temperature; checking eyes, ears, nose, and throats for gross abnormalities and inspecting for the presence of vermin, venereal disease, and other conditions which are obvious. They appraise the reported symptoms, and classify conditions, discriminating between those which are indicative of an emergency or serious nature and those which are chronic.

Medical technical assistants determine, from conditions found, whether patients should be referred to medical officers, hospitalized for observation and treatment, given minor treatment, excused from work detail, or returned to full duty. Cases which show characteristics of an emergency or serious nature are given emergency treatment, and are referred to medical officers or are hospitalized until such time as medical officers are available.

Under the supervision of the medical officer medical technical assistants administer required inoculations, and they treat less serious conditions such as colds, gastric ailments, various infections, bruises, cuts, sprains, and burns. They treat emergencies, making necessary decisions, as they arise. Medical technical assistants conduct follow-up interviews to obtain information from inmates on background and environment, and assist psychologists and medical officers in conducting psychological tests.

Medical technical assistants supervise inmate workers in the cleaning of the outpatient facility, storing of supplies, sterilizing of instruments, and maintaining records.

II. Nursing:

Medical technical assistants personally perform, and train and supervise inmates in the performance of, the following duties:

General ward duties. -- This includes taking and charting temperature, pulse, and respiration; bathing patients; administering prescribed treatments; changing dressings and assisting medical officers in applying dressings; setting up surgical charts; providing pre- and post-operative care of patients in accordance with the procedures outlined; observing patients symptoms and reactions; ordering diets for patients; making beds; cleaning facilities; and caring for and sterilizing instruments. Medical technical assistants conduct inspections at intervals during each tour of duty to determine that inmate workers are carrying out functions in accordance with instructions, and make required daily reports.

Operating room duties. -- This includes cleaning and sterilization of instruments, equipment, and supplies such as linens, binders, and bandages; preparation of major and minor packs; preparation of solutions for sterilization; cleaning of operating rooms and equipment; assisting surgeons in preparation for operations; preparing and positioning patients for surgery; and following through on post-operative care of patients. Medical technical assistants issue instructions on the special preparation to be made of patients as required by the surgeon, and check supplies and equipment to determine that all required items are available in sufficient quantity.

III. Physical therapy duties:

Medical technical assistants personally perform, and train and supervise inmates in, administration of infrared, ultraviolet, hydrotherapy, massage, and other treatments in accordance with instructions or at the determination of the incumbents on the basis of interviews with patients to determine their needs.

IV. Medical laboratory duties:

Medical technical assistants personally perform, and train and supervise inmates in, urinalyses, blood tests such as blood counts, gastric analyses, icteric index, bacteria count, urethral smears, sputum and stool examinations, spinal fluid cell counts, blood chemistries, and other tests. They train inmates in the proper precautions to take in making such tests and standard procedures to use, and in keeping equipment and facilities clean, sterile, and in good operating condition.

V. Medical radiology duties:

Medical technical assistants personally perform, and train and supervise inmates in performing, x-rays of various parts of the body as requested by medical officers or as deemed necessary, depending upon the nature of symptoms. For example, if a medical technical assistant believes that a patient may have suffered a fracture, he will take or order an x-ray. They position and instruct patients, determine times of exposures and other technical factors, exercise caution to protect patients and technician trainees from radiation hazards, operate machines, develop film, examine films for evidence of gross abnormalities, maintain records, and keep equipment and facilities clean and in order. They may prepare patients for, and assist medical officers in the performance of, fluoroscopic examinations.

VI. Electrocardiography duties:

Medical technical assistants personally perform, and train and supervise inmates in performing, electrocardiographic examinations by instructing patients, attaching electrodes, calibrating and operating equipment, eliminating artifacts, making preliminary readings, processing tracings, maintaining records, and keeping equipment and facilities clean and in order.

VII. Pharmacy duties:

Medical technical assistants compound certain medications and medicinal preparations in accordance with standard pharmaceutical practice; prepare solutions, ointments, emulsions, etc.; and dispense standard biologicals, analgesic drugs, sedative drugs, poisons, and other preparations at the direction of the medical officers. Narcotics are dispensed only by order of a medical officer. They train and supervise inmates in performing such functions as the preparation of certain standard solutions, ointments, emulsions, etc.; cleaning and sterilization of equipment and facilities; and maintenance of records.

VIII. Dental duties:

Medical technical assistants personally perform, and train and supervise inmates in, keeping equipment and facilities clean and sterilized, keeping records, and in the performance of the following duties:

A. When dental officers are on duty, assistants or inmates seat and prepare patients, provide required instruments, prepare fillings, sterilize instruments, take and develop x-rays of the mouth and teeth, and otherwise assist dental officers.

B. When dental officers are not on duty, assistants and inmate helpers scale, clean, and polish teeth; give emergency care for abnormal gum conditions (e.g., gingivitis, pyorrhea, and Vincent's infection), and for the control of pain; and administer routine post-operative care as ordered.

C. Assistants or inmate helpers may perform work in construction or repair of dental prosthetic appliances.

IX. Administrative duties:

Chief medical technical assistants perform functions necessary for the administration of the medical facility. These duties include, but are not restricted to, the following: procurement of equipment and supplies, preparation of budgets, participation in meetings in which progress of inmate workers is discussed, composing medical and administrative correspondence, etc.

Qualifications Statement:

The following qualifications statements are applicable to all levels and are not repeated at the various grade levels. Positions in this series require a general knowledge of the physiology and anatomy of the human body; knowledge of standard bedside and surgical nursing techniques and procedures and, in addition, knowledges required in several other series within the GS-0600 Group; and knowledge of the principles, standard practices, methods, and techniques in the field of medical care in penal and correctional institutions. Such positions also require the ability to

work with and supervise inmate personnel; ability to detect, analyze, evaluate, and interpret manifestations and conditions observed; and ability to stimulate inmates to improve attitudes and abilities. These positions also require other qualities such as mature judgment and emotional and mental stability as required for the work assignments.

In addition to the above, chief medical technical assistants also require the ability to perform administrative functions.

USE OF THE STANDARD

The grades of medical technical assistants are based upon (1) the highest level of work performed on a regular and recurring basis, (2) the principles governing penological positions which are discussed in pp. 4 through 8 of the standards for [Correctional Institution Administration Series, GS-0006](#), and (3) in the case of positions in Part II only, the presence or absence of a full-time medical director.

The steps to be taken in the classification of all but trainee positions are as follows:

(1) Evaluate the component parts which are described in the [Explanatory Statement](#), Parts II-VIII, on the basis of relevant standards to determine in which components the highest level of work performed appears, and to determine the grade-level of the work of that component. The component which usually is of the highest grade level is II. Nursing. (The term "work performed" includes supervisory work performed. Thus, if the nursing component of a medical technical assistant position is at the Head Nurse GS-7 level, GS-7 will be the "level of work performed.") Credit the entire position with the grade-level so determined.

(2) Award penological credit by adding one grade to the grade determined in step (1) above. The awarding of this additional credit is based upon the principles expressed in the standards for [Correctional Institution Administration Series, GS-0006](#), pp. 4-8. Under the provisions of these principles, the number of grades (0, 1, or 2) to be added to the basic grade level is dependent upon the circumstances of security, guidance, and training in each position. In view of the grade-level value of the basic work performed by medical technical assistants it has been determined that a direct application of the Penological Chart should not be made. This principle is similar to that stated on page 8 of the GS-0007 standards with respect to professional positions. Since the circumstances surrounding security, guidance, and training are essentially the same for all medical technical assistant positions, they are all to be assigned the same penological credit -- one grade.

(3) In the case of those positions which are covered by Part II only, and are located in institutions to which no full-time medical officer is assigned, increase the grade-level, determined by the previous steps, by one grade. This provision is added to provide proper credit to chief medical technical assistant positions in institutions which are visited by a physician for a few hours per day. Chief medical technical assistants in such situations must decide when an emergency is sufficiently serious to require the services of a physician

(usually in private practice), then obtain the services of a physician, arrange for the patient's transfer to a private hospital for emergency procedures as directed by the visiting physician, and must, in any event, provide medical care for the patient in the absence of a professional practitioner of medicine.

The standards for the Director of Nursing classes, [Nurse Series, GS-0610](#), are based, among other elements, on operating bed capacity. Some modification of the GS-0610 evaluation pattern is necessary in recognition of differences between the activities managed by directors of nursing in hospitals and those managed by chief medical technical assistants.

For example, in hospitals the daily average patient load normally is 70 percent to 80 percent of operating bed capacity, but in correctional institutions the percentage typically is significantly less than the normal for hospitals. However, this difference is offset by the considerably greater volume and kinds of services for the nonhospital bed patients in correctional institutions. Therefore in measuring the scope of nursing management responsibilities in chief medical technical assistant positions, only the operating bed capacity will be used rather than a combination of operating bed capacity and equivalent number of outpatient visits.

This standard does not express or imply that medical technical assistants perform professional nursing or any other duties that are exclusively professional. However the medical technical assistant positions are given full grade-level credit for nursing responsibilities (step (1) above) based on a comparison of the broad scope of technical duties and responsibilities of the medical technical assistants with the narrower but more intensive duties of the professional nurse.

PART I

MEDICAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANT, GS-0650-06

Incumbents of positions in this class (1) are responsible for performance and supervision of nursing and two other specializations described under "Medical Care Procedures" in this standard; and (2) are receiving training in one or more of the other specializations so described.

MEDICAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANT, GS-0650-08

Incumbents of positions in this class supervise inmates in the performance of, and personally perform, nursing duties and five other specializations described under "Medical Care Procedures" in this standard. The method of classifying positions in this series is prescribed under "Use of the Standard," above. The following example demonstrates the classification method:

Evaluation of specializations performed:

Nursing Duties.....GS-7

Physical Therapy Duties.....GS-5

Medical Laboratory Duties.....GS-5

Medical Radiology Duties.....GS-5

Pharmacy Duties.....GS-5

Dental DutiesGS-6

Level of work performed by subject position: GS-7

Penological credit: 1 grade

Grade of subject position: **GS-8**

Example B:

Evaluation of specializations performed:

Nursing Duties	GS-8
(Director of Nursing)	
Physical Therapy Duties	GS-7
Medical Laboratory Duties	GS-5
Medical Radiology Duties	GS-5
Pharmacy Duties	GS-6
Dental Duties	GS-5

<i>Level of work performed by subject position</i>	GS-8
<i>Penological credit:</i>	1 grade
<i>Part-time Medical Officer (2 hours</i>	
<i>per day, 5 days per week maximum)</i>	1 grade
<i>Grade of subject position:</i>	GS-10