

**CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION OF THE
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
CHICAGO FIELD SERVICE OFFICE**

INCUMBENT: **[Appellant]**
POSITION NUMBER: 15580
AGENCY CLASSIFICATION: Program Support Clerk
GS-303-4
POSITION LOCATION: Department of Veterans Affairs
[Installation]
[Activity]
[City, State]

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT DECISION: **GS-675**
OPM decision number: C-0675-04-01

This appellate decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on administrative, certifying, payroll, and accounting offices of the Government. It is the final administrative decision on the series classification of the position, not subject to further appeal. It is subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in Part 511, Subpart F, of Title 5, U.S. Code of Federal Regulations.

/s/

FREDERICK J. BOLAND
CLASSIFICATION APPEALS OFFICER

12/12/96

DATE

INFORMATION CONSIDERED

- ▶ Appellant's letter of appeal, dated July 19, 1996 and earlier correspondence.
- ▶ Copy of the official description of the appellant's position.
- ▶ Copy of the classifier's evaluation statement.
- ▶ Copy of the official description of the appellant's supervisor's position.
- ▶ Copy of the appellant's performance standards.
- ▶ Copy of the organization chart and statement of functions for the [Activity].
- ▶ Audit of the position by telephone discussion of duties with the appellant on October 17, 1996, and with appellant's supervisor on November 26 and December 11, 1996.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- ▶ OPM *Medical Records Technician, GS-675, Series* standard, dated November 1991.

INTRODUCTION

The appellant contests her agency's decision classifying her position, number 15580, as Program Support Clerk, GS-303-4. The position is located in the [Activity], [Installation], [City, State]. The appellant believes her official position description accurately portrays her duties, but feels that because she developed form letters used in her correspondence, her work should be classified at a higher grade in the Correspondence Clerk, GS-309, series.

JOB INFORMATION

The appellant is one of about 13 members comprising a support team. The team includes the appellant, a GS-7 Support Services Supervisor, two GS-5/6 Medical Records Technicians, a GS-4 Medical Records Clerk, two GS-3 File Clerks, two GS-4 Clerk/Typists, one GS-3 Telephone Operator, two GS-4 Telecommunication Equipment Operators, and one GS-5 Program Assistant.

The appellant performs duties incident to the release of information contained in consolidated health records. She responds to requests from a variety of sources such as insurance companies, doctors, lawyers, and individuals who are seeking medical information on patients treated at the [Installation]. She reviews requests to ensure appropriate consents have been received, locates relevant information by searching medical records, and responds in the most appropriate fashion.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

SERIES DETERMINATION

The appellant believes the Correspondence Clerk, GS-309, series best describes her work since she answers correspondence for the most part of her day. In support of her claim, she states that she:

- responds to correspondence received from insurance companies, doctors, hospitals, lawyers, courts, individuals, and any other sources seeking information from records,
- replies to veterans requesting material and copies from their records in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974,
- responds to Social Security Administration requests for information regarding their applicants,
- replies to telephonic requests from many sources seeking information regarding present and former patients,
- handles direct personal contacts requesting release of information from records and any other matters as requested, and
- accounts for released information by completing VA Form 60-5572 (Record of Disclosure of Information Under the Privacy Act) or VA Form 07-7529 (Action or Request Under Freedom of Information Act).

The GS-309 series covers correspondence work when the work's foremost requirement is skill in the composition of letters and memoranda. The appellant typically uses standardized forms and letters requiring little modification in format. Her work demands general compositional skill, but more importantly, it requires specialized knowledge of medical records organization and familiarity with anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology in order to determine the nature of the medical requests and to locate, identify, and abstract pertinent information from the [Installation's] records. The specialized knowledge required for her work is its most demanding requirement and further restricts the labor pool of individuals who might qualify, reducing the pool from the larger group of candidates with general compositional skill, to the smaller group who also have knowledge of medical records, medical terminology, etc. Consequently, it governs the series classification of the position.

The Medical Records Technician, GS-675, series includes positions, like the appellant's, that respond to requests from patients, authorized representatives, insurance companies, and other parties for information found in medical records. Page three of the standard identifies medical correspondence as one of the functions Medical Records Clerks and Technicians may perform:

In response to inquiries from patients, their authorized representatives, and other third parties, such as law firms and insurance companies, government agencies, and researchers, medical records technicians determine the validity of each request and provide medico-legal information from medical records. They determine eligibility for release of information, abstract information from the medical record, obtain supplemental reports, write factual summaries, and complete forms for services. Technicians follow established procedures to ensure the confidentiality of health information.

Such work, like the appellant's, requires primarily a practical knowledge of medical records procedures and references, the organization and consistency of medical records, and a basic knowledge of human anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology. General compositional skill is secondary to knowledge of specialized subject matter.

DECISION

The proper series classification of the position is GS-675. The agency will exercise its first level classification authority to determine the appropriate grade and title by applying the GS-675 grading criteria.