



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON DC 20420

DEC 8 1995

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 05-95-11

POSITION CLASSIFICATION GUIDANCE
FOR
TEAM LEADER POSITIONS

1. This transmits agency position classification guidance for application to positions of team leaders over two grade interval work. This guidance draws together grade level concepts from several Office of Personnel Management (OPM) classification standards relevant to the classification of team leaders.
2. VA is in the process of actively streamlining its organizations to comply with the Administration's Executive Order directing improvement in supervisory ratios. In their streamlining plan, Department management is envisioning that "team leaders" will eventually replace many first-line supervisors. VA's goal is to reduce the number and layers of supervisory positions without adverse impact upon positions and employees. This important initiative will be an integral part of improving service to our customers as well as achieving VA's mission better, faster, easier and smarter.
3. The existing classification system does not readily accommodate current initiatives to flatten organizations by replacing first-line supervisors with team leaders. In this regard, the system is a barrier to changing agency supervisory positions at the GS 13/14/15 levels to nonsupervisory status without possible adverse grade level impact on employees. Team leader positions, which are critical to the streamlining process in VA, are envisioned as nonsupervisory positions which would currently have to be classified using the most nearly applicable Office of Personnel Management (OPM) classification standards for nonsupervisory positions. Current standards do not clearly support classification of team leader positions at higher grade levels except where the grade is based on the personal performance of grade controlling nonsupervisory duties and responsibilities.
4. This proposal would adapt the existing classification system in an innovative way to support, for the most part, the grade levels of team leaders that replace supervisors as a result of current delayering and streamlining efforts. Managers should work closely and early-on with Human Resources offices to achieve the desired target organization in a sensible and meaningful way, fully considering customer and employee needs.

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5. Questions concerning the classification of Team Leader positions should be addressed to Kent Cseplo, Position Management & Classification Service (057) on (202) 273-4982.



Ronald E. Cowles

Attachments

**Distribution: Per VAF 3-7225
SS (057)**

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**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GUIDE FOR
CLASSIFICATION OF TWO-GRADE INTERVAL
GS TEAM LEADER POSITIONS**

COVERAGE OF GUIDE

This guide is used to classify positions of VA Team Leaders who, as a regular and recurring part (i.e., at least 25%) of their assignment, lead at least five employees (or four employees where the team consists of a mix of occupational specialties performing a variety of complex duties) in accomplishing work in two-grade interval occupations in the General Schedule. Team Leaders also participate in the work of the team by performing nonsupervisory work that is usually of the same kind and level as the highest level of work accomplished by the group led. They are not considered supervisors, but rather are player coaches who work with a group of empowered team members to achieve specific tasks, produce analytical work products and services and meet long term project goals. To be classified as a Team Leader, an employee must be able to perform such duties as: facilitating; coordinating; coaching; and integrating work products.

POSITIONS NOT COVERED BY THIS GUIDE

There is a clear distinction between a leader position and the lowest level of supervisor defined in the General Schedule Supervisory Guide. This guide should not be used for:

- o Positions that meet Factor Level 3-1 in the GSSG. This includes employees who are accountable as supervisors for planning, scheduling, and directing work operations, administering supervisory personnel functions, evaluating work performance, and taking necessary action to assure that the work of subordinate employees meets standards of quantity and quality.
- o Employees who have "project" responsibility but do not lead other workers on a continuing basis and/or personally perform work at a higher level than the work led. Such jobs should be evaluated by comparison with criteria in appropriate nonsupervisory FES or narrative classification standards.

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEAM LEADERS AND SUPERVISORS

A "Team Leader" is a nonsupervisory employee who participates in the work led collaboratively with his/her team to ensure that the team completes its tasks effectively and efficiently, and meets management goals and objectives. While individual team members are responsible for determining how work goals are accomplished, the team leader is responsible for ensuring that they are accomplished on time. Leaders also maintain good working relationships and coordinate with higher level managers, customers, suppliers and others on needs, goals, priorities, team resources, productivity and achievements.

In contrast, for an employee's position to be classified as supervisory and evaluated under the GSSG, the supervisory and related managerial responsibilities require the accomplishment of work through combined technical and administrative direction of others, and must constitute a major duty occupying at least 25% of the supervisor's time. This work also includes responsibility for all four of the following: assigning and reviewing work, assuring that production and accuracy requirements are met, approving leave, and recommending performance standards and ratings. Additionally, the duties of a supervisor include four of ten other specific authorities and responsibilities, such as evaluating work performance of subordinates, planning, prioritizing and scheduling work, effecting minor disciplinary measures, and finding ways to improve the quantity or quality of the work directed.

TYPICAL FUNCTIONS OF TEAM LEADERS

Team Leaders are responsible to their supervisors or managers for assuring that the work of their assigned team is carried out by performing a range of coordinating and supportive duties and responsibilities. Team Leaders utilize a variety of coordinating, coaching, facilitating, consensus-building and planning techniques. At higher levels, incumbents provide expert assistance and authoritative advice on interpretation of governing policy in the designated program area, researching the most sensitive, complex, or otherwise controversial issues, utilizing all resources available. Positions classified by use of this guide must exercise the minimum authorities and responsibilities required for coverage. These include the first ten (10) and at least four (4) of the other coordinating and supportive duties and responsibilities listed below.

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Notes of Caution:

o The highest level employee assigned to the group may do work in (an) occupation(s) in which the leader is not fully qualified (as may be represented in an inter-disciplinary team). The level of such work should be used to grade the Team Leader position only where the Team Leader, although not fully qualified, has enough knowledge of the occupation(s) to lead the work involved (for example, working collaboratively with team members to accomplish the respective mission; working with the team to determine who does what and to assure quality of performance; advising and guiding the team members in program matters and resolution of broad or difficult problems; and, providing constructive and timely feedback to stimulate and reinforce the team's best efforts.)

o The highest level employee, although assigned to the group, may receive little or no leadership from the leader in performing his work (for example, where the employee is an "expert" in the work, or performs above the normal full performance level of the occupation). In this case, the grade of the highest level employee does not reflect the level of the non-supervisory work actually led, and should not be used as the base level.

Where the non-supervisory work personally done by a Team Leader is materially different from the work done by the employees led, the non-supervisory work and the Team Leader duties are graded separately. The final grade of such a position is then determined by selecting the Team Leader grade level, or the non-supervisory grade level, whichever is the higher.

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TITLES

Positions covered by this guide are identified by adding the words "Team Leader" in parentheses as a suffix to the title of the position in which the leader is qualified and which reflects the nonsupervisory work being performed by the team. For example, a team leader position over a group of personnel management specialists would be titled Personnel Management Specialist (Team Leader). (Note: Where the final grade of such a position is based on its nonsupervisory/nonleader work, the position is titled and classified as a nonsupervisory position, and not as a Team Leader.)

SERIES DETERMINATION

This guide is not intended to affect current practice regarding series classification. Positions classified as to grade by means of this guide will continue to be classified to the most appropriate classification series in accordance with definitions published in OPM's "Handbook of Occupational Groups and Series of Classes," and amplifying material in published classification standards.

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1. Being held accountable for the effective functioning of the team: articulating and communicating to the team the problem to be solved or program issues under review; coaching the team and/or individual members in identifying the parameters of a viable solution; and ensuring the organization's "vision" is integrated into the team's goals, strategies, activity plans, and work products;
2. Coordinating the assessment of team success in meeting performance goals, assessments by customers, and presentation of successes to the supervisor, while applying a wide range of qualitative and/or quantitative methods which assess and improve program effectiveness and/or complex management processes;
3. Assuring training of team members in the techniques of team building and working in teams to accomplish tasks or projects and specific administrative or professional training necessary for accomplishment of team tasks;
4. Distributing and balancing workload and tasks among employees in accordance with established work flow or job specialization, assuring timely accomplishment of the assigned tasks, and assuring that each employee has an integral role in developing the final product;
5. Keeping in touch with the status and progress of work, and making adjustments in accordance with established priorities by recommending tour of duty changes, or overtime or compensatory time, and obtaining other types of assistance from the supervisor only on major issues or problems that may arise;
6. Providing expert advice on specific tasks and making available written instructions, reference materials, and relevant background material;
7. Maintaining a current knowledge to answer questions from team members on procedures, policies, directives, etc., and to obtain needed information on decisions from supervisor on major problems and issues that come up;
8. Checking on work in progress and reviewing completed work to see that supervisor's instructions on work sequences, procedures, methods and deadlines have been met;
9. Maintaining records of work accomplishments and preparing production reports, as required;
10. Reporting to supervisor on performance, progress, and subject-matter training needs of employees, and on any performance problems;

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11. Continuously interacting with team members aimed at consensus building and serving as negotiator and coach for coordination of team initiatives;
12. Representing the team interests with other programs and external interests that are of a wider interest than a single team member's task or project;
13. Estimating and reporting on expected milestones for completion of tasks, and assuring team member participation in both short term and long term planning stages of team projects or tasks;
14. Assisting the team in assessing its strengths and weaknesses to determine how improvements can be made;
15. Approving emergency annual leave for up to three days; or a few hours for medical appointments;
16. Informing employees of available services and employee activities;
17. Resolving simple, informal complaints of employees and referring others to supervisor; and
18. Representing team consensus to supervisor in recommending promotions, reassignment, recognition of outstanding performance, and personnel needs.

CLASSIFICATION OF TEAM LEADER POSITIONS

Under this guide, Team Leader positions are classified one GS grade level above the highest GS grade level of nonsupervisory two grade level interval work led which is carried out for 25% or more of the time by a majority of team members. For example, leading a base level of GS-9 or GS-10 employees would yield a grade level of GS-11 for the Team Leader's position.

In determining the **base level** of work led, the grade to be used is typically the grade of the highest level of work within the group (other than the leader). See the OPM GSSG and VA's Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) 05-93-24 for additional discussion on the determination of base level of work. Care should be taken to assure that this grade reflects the level of most of the nonsupervisory work actually led.

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STANDARD POSITION DESCRIPTION

TEAM LEADERS

(Grade Level Determined by Base Level of Employees Led)

Under the administrative direction of the supervisor and with wide latitude for the exercise of independent judgment, the incumbent serves as a Team Leader in the (Division, Unit, Service, etc.). The incumbent is responsible for coordinating and integrating his/her own work while ensuring that the work assignments of at least 5 employees (or 4 employees, in various occupational specialties, performing a variety of complex duties) classified in two-grade interval General Schedule occupations, are accomplished in accordance with program requirements. The (Division, Unit, Service, etc.) is responsible for (summarize the primary purpose of the work. State its general nature, level and purpose. Describe the major overall end results [what is done] and the key means by which the end results are achieved [why and how it is done]. The description may include such things as: where and how workers obtain information; reasoning, planning, and decision-making involved in the work; and relationships with others to perform the work).

Team leaders possess certain knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), such as: group facilitation methods; problem-solving techniques; teambuilding; leadership; motivation; innovation and flexibility; quality measurement tools; planning and organizing skills; (an area of) subject-matter expertise; and coaching and counseling methods and techniques. Incumbent uses skills to plan, organize and direct team studies/work and to negotiate effectively with management to gain acceptance and implementation of recommendations.

Team leaders apply the techniques, practices, and tools which assist empowered team members to improve work processes and business practices, solve long-standing problems, initiate cost reduction efforts, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Specific Duties and Responsibilities:

(a) Understands the different phases of team development and how to apply the appropriate tools and techniques to help it deal with a variety of problems and situations. This leads to increased team problem solving effectiveness, increased awareness of team functioning, and fosters increased commitment to shared objectives. He/she is responsible for leading the team to consensus or otherwise dealing with issues that facilitate the team to closure on complex and sometimes emotional issues. Assesses the team's strengths and weaknesses and determines where improvements can be made.

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- (b) Trains team members in the techniques of team building. Provides the team with information and other resources they need to educate themselves about specific issues. Frames topics, problems, and questions and provides insights to the team to aid in the education process. Coaches team members on application of business process reengineering, benchmarking, analysis of customer needs, and implementation planning.
- (c) Based on the overall goals of the mission, assigns and reviews short-term work of team members, assuring that all members have integral roles in developing the final product. Assignments are made based on program priorities, selective consideration of the difficulty and requirements of the assignments, and the capabilities of team members. He/she makes an accurate diagnosis of team processes and makes appropriate interventions.
- (d) Distributes and balances the workload among team members in accordance with the work flow and priorities established by supervisors and other higher level management.
- (e) Checks on work in progress and reviews completed work to assure that production and accuracy requirements are met; amends or rejects work not meeting established standards.
- (f) Coordinates the work to be accomplished by team members, setting and adjusting short-term priorities, and reports on expected milestones for completion of the tasks, while assuring team member participation during planning stages.
- (g) Provides advice and guidance to team members on proposed strategies and problem resolution and provides analysis regarding unusual programmatic requirements, making available written instructions, reference materials and relevant background data.
- (h) Maintains accountability for workflow of team members; provides information regarding the status of work assignments and estimates the time needed to complete individual actions. Maintains a record of work accomplishments and prepares work reports, as necessary.
- (i) Authorizes emergency leave (up to three [3] days), and limited amounts of sick leave (for medical appointments) for team members, and maintains the team leave calendar. Periods of scheduled advance leave will be authorized by the supervisor.
- (j) Provides information to the supervisor relative to individual and team performance standards, ratings, promotions, and awards.
- (k) Informs team members of management decisions, available services and employee activities.

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(l) Resolves simple informal complaints of team members and refers others to the supervisor.

(m) Interacts with team members while serving as negotiator or coach for coordination of team initiatives.

Supervisory Controls:

The supervisor provides administrative direction with assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or functions. The incumbent has responsibility for planning, designing, and carrying out programs, studies, or other work independently. Results of the work are normally accepted without significant change. Review of work concerns matters such as fulfillment of mission objectives, or the effect of advice and influence on accomplishment of overall program objectives.