

May 15, 2009

TO: Terri Canopy

FROM: Holly Platz, SPHR  
Director's Review Investigator

SUBJECT: Terri Canopy v. Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)  
Allocation Review Request ALLO-08-060

The Director's review of DSHS's allocation determination of your position has been completed. The review was based on written documentation. This review covers the six month period prior to August 8, 2008, the date that DSHS's Classification and Compensation Unit received your request for review.

### **Director's Determination**

As the Director's designee, I carefully reviewed all of the documentation in the file including the duties and responsibilities described in your August 2008 Position Description form. I reviewed the Administrative Assistant series, specifically the Administrative Assistant 3 and 4 classifications. Based on my review of the documents, the available classifications, and my analysis of your assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude that overall, your position is best described by the Administrative Assistant 3 classification.

### **Background**

On August 8, 2008, DSHS's Classification and Compensation Unit received your Position Description form asking that your Administrative Assistant 3 position be reallocated to the Administrative Assistant 4 classification. DSHS reviewed your position and by letter dated August 12, 2008, determined that your position was properly allocated to the Administrative Assistant 3 classification.

On September 10, 2008, you filed a request for a Director's review of your position. In your Director's review request, you asked that your position be reallocated to the Administrative Assistant 4 classification.

### **Summary of Ms. Canopy's Perspective**

You argue that you became the support person for your supervisor in June 2006 and updated the Position Description for your position in 2007 to reflect your current duties. You contend that DSHS should not have used the 2005 position description form as a comparator to your current duties because you did not hold the position at that time. You assert that you provide direct professional assistance of a substantive nature to your

supervisor. You further assert that the duties you perform are appropriate to be performed by your supervisor but that your supervisor has delegated the duties to you. You explain that your supervisor supervises five headquarters units with eight direct reports and 37 people reporting under her. You further explain that work in the unit funnels through you to your supervisor and that you perform duties such as checking the work of unit supervisors, program managers and two administrative staff; assigning, routing and coordinating work and special projects; acting as a liaison between your supervisor and unit staff; coordinating and scheduling a variety of mid-level/upper-level management meetings for your supervisor with DSHS staff and outside entities; as delegated, acting on behalf of your supervisor; and exercising signature authority delegated from your supervisor. In addition, you coordinate legislative responses and analyses, monitor legislation proposals, collect data for fiscal impacts, and take action on day-to-day office matters.

You contend that 65% of your duties are higher-level Administrative Assistant 4 (AA4) duties and that the secretarial or clerical duties you perform are incidental to your higher-level administrative duties. You further contend that you report to the Office Chief who is the head of the sub-division and that the Office Chief reports to the Director of the division as required by the AA4 level. You further contend that the Office Chief and the Director believe you are performing AA4 level work and support the reallocation of your position.

### **Summary of DSHS's Reasoning**

DSHS agrees that you report to the Office Chief but argues that the Office Chief is not the head of a major sub-division within Children's Administration. Rather DSHS argues that the Office Chief reports to the Director of Program and Practice Improvement for Children's Administration which is a sub-division of DSHS. DSHS further argues that the duties assigned to your position do not meet the criteria found in the distinguishing characteristics of the AA4, specifically you do not perform higher-level administrative duties of a substantive nature that are appropriate to be performed by your supervisor and secretarial or clerical duties are not incidental to the administrative functions performed. DSHS asserts that the majority of your duties are found at the Administrative Assistant 3 (AA3) level. These include:

- Serving as a liaison between supervisor and other staff members, relaying assignments and requesting status information
- Performing complex secretarial duties such as typing, compiling reports, studies, developing, modifying and/or maintaining data base information, office record keeping or filing system(s) and coordinating office operations
- Representing management and serving as the primary contact in assigned program areas
- Reorganizing and/or assigning office space; modifying workflow processes to achieve efficient use of space, equipment, and personnel
- Initiating action to ensure office goals are met and having frequent contacts with clients, the public and staff members from other departments
- Establishing procedures and interpreting and applying administrative policies to the work of the unit, including assisting in devising unit standards/procedures to ensure

adherence to policies regarding tasks such as budgeting, purchasing and contract administration

- Coordinating personnel issues such as recruitment, selection, appointment and promotion.

DSHS contends that the majority of your duties fall within day-to-day administrative and secretarial functions that relieve your supervisor of coordination and processing, tracking deadlines, database input and updates, etc.; that your position is not delegated any final authority in substantive decision-making areas; and that the duties of your position have remained unchanged since March 2005. DSHS asserts that your position should remain allocated to the AA3 classification.

### **Rationale for Determination**

It is clear from the support your supervisors give to your reallocation request that your work is highly valued and that the Office Chief relies on your abilities and expertise to relieve her of day-to-day administrative support functions. However, the purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. See Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

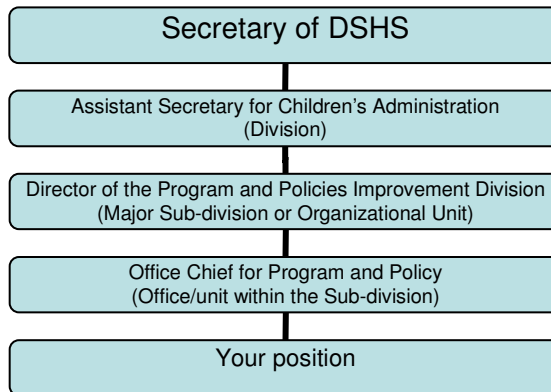
The Administrative Assistant 4 (AA4) definition reads as follows:

Positions serve as the assistant on administrative matters to the head of a state agency, the head of a major sub-division or major operating location of an agency, or to the chief administrator or head of a major organizational unit such as a school, college, or major academic/administrative department.

The Personnel Resources Board recently addressed the reporting structure required for allocation to the AA4 classification. In Norton-Nader v. Western Washington University, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-08-002 (2009), the Board recognized that the appellant's duties appeared to meet the level of work described in the typical work statements of the AA4 classification but determined that her work unit, the Faculty Senate, was not a major organizational unit. The Faculty Senate was described as "an integral partner in the shared governance of the entire University." The appellant reported to the Faculty Senate President, advised, instructed, and assisted the senate president in accomplishing the goals of the Faculty Senate and provided administrative support to the various Faculty Senate committees. However, because the Faculty Senate was not a major organization, the Board determined that the appellant did not meet the definition of the AA4 class or meet the threshold for considering the distinguishing characteristics of the AA4 class.

Your position reports to the Office Chief for Program and Policy. The Office Chief reports to the Director of the Program and Policies Improvement Division. The Program and Policy unit is one of the units/offices within the Division. The Director of the Division reports to the Assistant Secretary for Children's Administration who reports to the Secretary of DSHS.

Within Children's Administration, the Program and Policies Improvement Division is a major sub-division or a major organizational unit.



Your position does not fit within the reporting structure required for allocation to the AA4 class.

Although your position does not meet the threshold for allocation to the AA4 classification, I consider the distinguishing characteristics of the class in relation to your duties and level of responsibility. The AA4 distinguishing characteristics indicate, in relevant part:

Positions perform higher-level administrative duties of a substantive nature that are appropriate to be performed by the supervisor, manager, administrator, or professional level employee but have been delegated to the administrative assistant to perform. . . For general government positions, secretarial or clerical duties are incidental to the administrative functions performed.

For those positions in a major organizational unit such as a school, college, or major academic/administrative department, the "unit" will typically have more than 75 full-time equivalent professional and/or classified staff; . . . OR positions serve as both sole administrative support and the executive secretary reporting to the organizational head. These positions are assigned to major units, with institution-wide responsibility, that have no assistant directors, deans or managers who would share the administrative duties of the position.

At the AA4 level, sub-division level administrative duties typically include high-level, substantive work of a strategic nature such as participating in establishing financial and performance goals and short and long-term plans and participating in strategic and quality planning processes. Here, as in Norton-Nader, your position performs some of the administrative work found in the typical work of the AA4 level. However, your position does not perform this work on a sub-division level nor does your position participate in sub-division level strategic planning and goal setting.

You perform administrative support duties that relieve your supervisor of day-to-day functions and administrative details/activities of the office. The majority of your work is best described as providing assistance to your supervisor by:

- Receiving, assessing, assigning and monitoring staff assignments and special projects; routing information to staff; collecting and compiling data; drafting responses, resolving issues, and completing assignments as delegated by your supervisor
- Serving as a liaison between your supervisor and other staff and taking action within your assigned scope of responsibility
- Handling confidential personnel matters by researching, coordinating and tracking actions for your supervisor
- Exercising delegated signature authority for correspondence on behalf of your supervisor
- Representing your supervisor at meetings and appointments where you speak on behalf of the office and your supervisor.

While your assigned duties and responsibilities and delegated authority are important to the overall operation of the office, the actual scope of your work does not rise to the level of higher-level administrative duties of a substantive nature. Your work requires a high level of coordination and understanding of your supervisor's work, but your work is supportive in nature and is not at the level envisioned at the AA4 level.

The definition of an Administrative Assistant 3 (AA3) states, "[p]ositions perform varied administrative and secretarial support duties or positions are responsible for one or more major program activities under a second line supervisor."

The distinguishing characteristics of the AA3 state:

Positions are delegated higher-level administrative support duties or positions are delegated one or more major program activities that would be performed under a second-level professional supervisor, manager or administrator in WMS Band II or above or in exempt service, chief administrator, or head of a major organizational unit such as a school, college, or major academic or administrative department. Only one position will be allocated to an individual second-line supervisor for those positions performing one or more major program activities.

A major program activity is defined as a function that is a major element of the supervisor's job. The duty must stand alone and would create significant adverse consequences if poorly performed. However, full delegation can't occur if the supervisor's position requires specialized licensure such as attorneys, medical doctors, and engineers.

Higher-level administrative duties are duties of a substantive nature that are appropriate to be performed by the supervisor, manager, administrator, or professional level employee but have been delegated to the administrative assistant to perform. Areas may include but are not limited to, the following: budget development and/or management, expenditure control, office space management, equipment purchases, budget development and/or management, public relations, personnel administration, records management, and report preparation.

Incumbents in these positions represent the supervisor's and/or unit's goals and interests and provide interpretation or explanation of the supervisor's policies or viewpoints.

You perform varied higher-level administrative support duties and some secretarial duties for your supervisor. Your supervisor is a second-line supervisor, i.e., she supervises other supervisors. Your higher-level duties include office space management, equipment purchases, public relations/liaison activities, researching, coordinating and tracking personnel actions, records management, and report preparation. Your position meets the definition and distinguishing of the AA3 classification. Your position is properly allocated.

**Appeal Rights**

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board . . . . Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The address for the Personnel Resources Board is 2828 Capitol Blvd., P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

cc: Pam Pelton, DSHS  
Classification & Pay Team, DOP

List of Exhibits

**A.** Filed by employee September 10, 2008:

1. Director's Review Request form.
2. Letter of request from Ms. Canopy to DOP September 10, 2008.
3. DSHS allocation determination August 12, 2008.
4. Position Description form signed August 1, 2008.
5. Organizational Chart (Program and Practice Improvement Division)

**B.** DSHS rational for allocation October 15, 2008 with Exhibits:

1. Position Description Form – Dated 8/8/2008
2. Previous Updated PDF – Dated 3/23/2005
3. Reallocation Decision Letter – Dated 8/12/2008
4. Classification Specs Administrative Assistant 3 (105G)
5. Classification Specs Administrative Assistant 4 (105H)
6. Classification Specs Secretary Senior (100T)
7. Classification Specs Office Assistant 3 (100J)

**C.** Terri Canopy's written summary dated April 17, 2009 with exhibits attached:

1. Letter of denial of allocation from Pam Pelton (DSHS) dated August 12, 2008
2. My response to August 12, 2008 letter dated September 10, 2008
3. Email from Pam Pelton dated February 11, 2008 with attached LY70 PDF dated December 7, 2008 (original denial)
4. Current PDF for LY70 dated August 1, 2008
5. DSHS Exempt Position Description of Office Chief KF66
6. Monthly/Yearly Calendar (work example)
7. Children's Administration Organizational Chart
8. Examples of Work (emails)
9. DOP List of Administrative Assistant 1-5 Tasks – Support to Supervisor section
10. Email (Karen Wilcox) and Summary from DSHS
11. DSHS Organizational Chart
12. Assessment of Observed Job Performance