

# MEMORANDUM

## State of Alaska Department of Administration Division of Personnel

**To:** Melanie Millhorn, HRM, DOA  
Jo Nelson, HRM, H&SS

**Date:** June 14, 2002

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**Subject:** Classification Study  
Nurse Consultants

### HISTORY

The Department of Health and Social Services (H&SS) requested creation of a new job class series to include licensed nursing positions within the Division of Public Health (DPH) that serve as consultants to medical professionals in the public and private sector. These positions are currently included in the Public Health Specialist series.

A planning meeting was held on February 28, 2002 with classifiers from H&SS, the Division of Personnel (DOP), and the Division of Longevity Services (DLS) in attendance. H&SS and DLS provided new or certified position descriptions (PDs) for the positions subject to the study. H&SS provided draft class specifications.

A test allocation session was held on April 5 with classifiers from DOP, H&SS, and DLS. Beth Crile served as the facilitator. The two teams of classifiers were unable to agree on the allocation of several positions and were unable to reach consensus on any positions that qualified for the advanced level of the series. The classifiers recommended revision of the proposed class specifications and requested new PDs that better described the duties and responsibilities of the positions. The classifiers also recommended that a subject matter expert attend the next allocation session to answer questions and clarify duty descriptions.

Karen Pearson (Director of the Division of Public Health), Jackie Dailey (H&SS), and Lee Powelson (DOP) met on April 10 to review the class definitions and distinguishing characteristics, and to clarify the differences between the two proposed levels. H&SS and DLS subsequently submitted new PDs in early May, and the class specifications were revised.

A second test allocation session was held on May 14 with classifiers from DOP, H&SS, and several other departments. Karen Pearson served as the subject matter expert and Jackie Dailey served as the facilitator. The three teams of classifiers agreed on the

allocation of most positions and identified several positions for allocation to other job classes. The classifiers recommended specific changes to the class specifications and to several position descriptions.

It was determined that the supervisor of the epidemiological section should be allocated to the Public Health Nurse V. The class specifications and minimum qualifications of this class (P5136) were revised as part of the study.

Final class specifications were reviewed revised by DOP in consultation with H&SS and DLS.

## **SCOPE**

The study was limited to positions that require a nursing license and provide consultations to health care professionals in the Division of Public Health and the Division of Longevity Services.

## **ANALYSIS**

A number of positions that require licensure as a Registered Nurse have been included in the Public Health Specialist series since its creation for H&SS in 1993. Since that time the State of Alaska has experienced severe recruitment and retention problems for professional nurses coinciding with a decline in the number of professional nurses while the demand for nursing positions has grown significantly. In 2001 the Director of Personnel approved a pilot project which provided a two-range increase in the salary assignment of nursing job classes to deal with demonstrated recruitment and retention problems. Public Health Specialist is a general series that does not require a nursing license as part of the minimum qualifications; therefore, the pilot project for nursing professionals did not include this series. The Geriatric Nurse Consultant, which provides professional consultation to nursing staff at the Alaska Pioneer Homes, requires a nursing license and was included in the pilot project.

It is appropriate to separate the licensed nursing positions from the other Public Health Specialist positions. The higher professional qualifications and specialized knowledge warrant a separate job classification. Review of the revised position descriptions and discussions with managers and subject matter experts confirmed the existence of the journey and advanced level of nurse consultant. Positions serve as experts in a specialized area of nursing and provide consultation to public and private sector nurses, physicians, health care professionals, and managers. Difficult and unusual issues are referred to these positions for advice and resolution. Incumbents of these positions are expected to remain current in the latest developments in their field, to monitor and evaluate the methods and delivery of services, and respond to critical health care issues and public health emergencies.

Differences between the two levels of the series are determined primarily by 1) the level of difficulty, complexity, and sensitivity of the consultations; 2) the degree of independence with which the incumbent performs an assignment; and 3) the experience and expertise in the designated nursing specialty. All positions allocated to this class

require a valid license as a registered nurse in Alaska. (Applicants eligible for licensure may apply for positions but may not be appointed until the license is obtained.)

Job classes in the various nursing series are assigned salary ranges under the pilot project approved by the Director of Personnel. With the approval of the Director of Personnel, this expanded series is included within the pilot project for licensed nursing professionals. Comparison with other job classes not included in the pilot project is not appropriate. The Nurse Consultant II, the advanced level of the series, is the successor to the Geriatric Nursing Consultant and remains at the same salary range under the pilot project approved by the Director of Personnel. The Nurse Consultant I, the journey level of the series, is appropriately allocated two ranges lower.

## **CONCLUSION**

The expansion of the class series to include nurse consultants in the Division of Public Health is appropriate. Two levels of work were identified: the journey level and an advanced consultant. Revised class specifications and minimum qualifications that reflect current duties and responsibilities were developed; the new class specifications are attached. The Nurse Consultant I (P51412) is assigned to salary range 20. The Nurse Consultant II (P5143, formerly the Geriatric Nurse Consultant) remains assigned to salary range 22. The Public Health Nurse V (P5136) is revised and remains assigned to salary range 23. The new and revised class specifications are attached and are effective June 16, 2002.