



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Department of Administration**

DIVISION OF PERSONNEL AND LABOR RELATIONS

10<sup>th</sup> Fl. State Office Building  
PO Box 110201  
Juneau, AK 99811-0201  
Main: 907.465.4430  
Fax: 907.465.3415  
www.doa.alaska.gov/dop

## Memorandum

To: Nicki Neal  
Director

Thru: Keith Murry *KM*  
Class Studies Supervisor

From: Brandon Cullum *BC*  
Human Resource Specialist II

Date: June 28, 2012

Subject: Retirement and Benefits Job Class Study Phase II  
Retirement and Benefits Specialists I-III

### Preamble:

In 2011, The Department of Administration's Division of Retirement and Benefits requested a job class study of the Retirement and Benefits Specialist and Retirement and Benefits Technician class series.

The study request coincided with the procurement of outside consultant services to review the Division's structure. The intent of the review was to capture efficiencies and streamline workflow to better position the Division for an impending period of unprecedented growth in retirement and health plan members.

As a product of the consultative review, the Division is consolidating its Retirement and Benefits sections. This consolidation has substantial impact on the work assigned to the Division's operations-oriented professional and technical staff.

The Division's plan for consolidation necessitated a staggered study implementation. To this end, Classification implemented final recommendations for the technical group of positions effective May 1, 2012, and presents recommendations for the Retirement and Benefits Specialist component of the study in this memo. Recommendations for the Retirement and Benefits Manager job class will follow.

### **Study Scope:**

This analysis evaluates the alignment of work performed by 25 positions assigned to three of the Division's six unique job classes -- Retirement and Benefits Specialist I-III.

### **Study Contacts:**

The primary study contact in the division is Kathy Lea, Deputy Director. Other active contacts are Bernadet Blankenship, Retirement and Benefits Manager, and Jim Puckett, Director.

### **History of Job Classes:**

The Retirement and Benefits Specialist job class series was created in March of 1975. Until this time, the Division's professional operations-related work was performed by Employee Service Specialists at the journey level and Employee Benefits Officers at the advanced level. The 1975 study allocated the Division's journey level professionals to Retirement and Benefits Specialist II (SR16); advanced to Retirement and Benefits Specialist III (SR18); and Retirement and Benefits Specialist I (SR14) was established to provide an entry-level pathway to a professional career for incumbents of the Division's technical classes.

In March, 1977, the Commissioner, Department of Administration, directed Classification to realign the second and third levels of the series to SR18 and SR20, respectively.

In June, 1978, a follow up to the 1975 study established a new journey level as Retirement and Benefits Specialist II to bridge the salary gap created between the first and second levels by the Commissioner's 1977 direction. The new four level series changed the second and third levels to the third and fourth levels, and decreased salary alignment for the entry level by one range, resulting in a four class series aligned to SR13, 16, 18, and 20, respectively.

In 1994 Classification restructured the Division's professional series by abolishing the first level and replacing it with an advanced technical class aligned at SR14. The resulting three-level professional series aligned at entry, journey and advanced levels, with each assigned to SR16, 18, and 20 respectively.

### **Class Analysis:**

The State's classification plan provides for the grouping of positions into job classes when they are sufficiently similar with respect to duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision exercised and received, and entrance requirements so that: 1) the same title can be used to clearly identify each position; 2) the same minimum qualifications for initial appointment can be established for all positions; 3) the same rate of basic pay can be fairly applied to all positions; and 4) employees in a

particular class are considered an appropriate group for purposes of lay off and recall. Job classes should be constructed as broadly as feasible as long as the tests of similarity are met.

Retirement and Benefits Specialist I, II, and III constitute a professional level series that performs duties by applying a body of knowledge, skill and ability that meets the unique requirements of the Division. The series has seen broad changes since the 1994 study. Many of these changes illustrate a reduction in general responsibility, especially at the higher levels of the series. Retirement and Benefits Specialists III, for example, were defined in the 1994 study as a single position job class that runs the Division's Retirement Section; this job is allocated to a Retirement and Benefits Manager now. Similarly, the 1994 study defined Retirement and Benefits Specialist II, in part, as the supervisor over the Division's Benefits Section; that role is now assigned to a Retirement and Benefits Specialist III.

This general reduction in responsibility, however, is well balanced by the increasing complexity of the Division's mission. Since the 1994 study the Division's services have grown to include a completely new retirement plan, increased appeals and garnishments, a broader array of participating employers, a much greater number of participating members, and the substantial increase in risk that comes with increased pace of operations over a wider spectrum of services. In addition to currently identified factors of complexity, at the beginning of fiscal year 2013 the Division will implement a reorganization that combines services currently divided between the Benefits and Retirement Sections into a single Operations section. The resulting change in duties will leave both professional and technical staff responsible for delivering services associated with all available retirement and health benefit plan services, rather than just one or the other body of services.

The following definition and distinguishing characteristics establish the parameters for each level of the series under the Division's new organizational structure.

#### Retirement and Benefits Specialist I

At this level of the series, work is defined by the application of in-depth knowledge of a single Division function to lead, direct or train technical staff, complete technical processes where complicating factors require analytical considerations, and perform research to support the development of concepts and tools that increase productivity or eliminate ambiguity in policy and procedure.

At this first level incumbents work under direction to perform professional duties that are analytical, evaluative, and that require substantial knowledge of a single Division function and a general knowledge of all Division functions. Incumbents may provide limited counseling service to members and may supervise technical staff, but this work is not class controlling.

### Retirement and Benefits Specialist II

At the second level, incumbents apply broad knowledge of Division operations, policy, procedure, and statute to provide comprehensive counseling and planning services to members and maintain certifying oversight of technical processing calculations; develop training and communications materials; investigate, develop, and advocate a Division position in formal appeals; or supervise a Division payroll function.

Retirement and Benefits Specialists II work under general direction to perform duties that require the regular application of discretion, independent judgment, and substantial knowledge of the policy, procedure, and statutes that guide Division operations. Incumbents may supervise but this work is not class controlling.

### Retirement and Benefits Specialist III

At this third level, incumbents supervise professional and technical staff; coordinate resources; and oversee the development, update, and implementation of standard operating procedures in one of the Division's five distinct service channels: Counseling Services, Operations (Survivor Benefits, Health Benefit Processing, and Retirement Benefit Processing), Call Center, or the combined Appeals and Qualified Domestic Relations Orders unit.

Incumbents of this class are supervisors and have substantial responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in appointing, promoting, transferring, suspending, discharging and adjudicating the grievances of subordinates.

This level is distinguished by the general direction provided to incumbents as they perform duties that routinely require the application of supervisory skills and expert knowledge of the policy, procedures, and statutes that guide Division operations.

#### Class Title:

A class title should be the best descriptive title for the work. An appropriate class title will convey concisely and accurately the kind and level of work performed, should be brief, easily recognized, gender neutral, and understood by potential applicants.

The three levels of the Retirement and Benefits Specialist series are unique to the Division of Retirement and Benefits, perform specialized professional work, and are accurately titled.

#### Minimum Qualifications:

The minimum qualifications established for a job class must relate to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the work and must not create an artificial barrier to employment of

individuals in protected classes. Required training should be limited to the basic formal training that customarily prepares individuals for work in the field. Experience requirements are intended to ensure new employees can successfully perform the work after a period of orientation or familiarization. Required experience should be directly related to the actual duties of positions in the class and should not be equivalent to the work performed.

Minimum Qualifications for the Retirement and Benefits Specialist series have been updated to reflect changes in class titles and qualifying experience.

Minimum Qualifications		
Retirement and Benefits Specialist I	Retirement and Benefits Specialist II	Retirement and Benefits Specialist III
<p>One year of experience as a Retirement and Benefits Technician II with the State of Alaska or the equivalent elsewhere.</p> <p>Substitution:</p> <p>A bachelor's degree from an accredited college.</p> <p>Substitution:</p> <p>Two years of experience as a Human Resource Technician II, PFD Technician III, Administrative Assistant II, Insurance Licensing Examiner III, Accounting Technician II, Accountant I with the State of Alaska or the equivalent elsewhere here.</p>	<p>One year of experience as a Retirement and Benefits Specialist I with the State of Alaska or the equivalent elsewhere.</p> <p>Substitution:</p> <p>A master's degree from an accredited college in public administration, business administration, finance, or accounting.</p> <p>Substitution:</p> <p>Two years of experience as a Human Resource Specialist I, PFD Specialist I, Administrative Officer I, Budget Analyst II, Training Specialist I, Accounting Technician III, Accountant II, Payroll Specialist I, Human Resource Technical Services Supervisor with the State of Alaska or the equivalent elsewhere.</p>	<p>One year of experience as a Retirement and Benefits Specialist II with the State of Alaska or the equivalent elsewhere.</p> <p>Substitution:</p> <p>Two years of experience as a Human Resource Specialist II, PFD Specialist II, Administrative Officer II, Budget Analyst III, or Accountant III with the State of Alaska or the equivalent elsewhere.</p>

Class Outline:

A Class Code is assigned based on the placement of the job class in the classification schematic of Occupational Groups and Job Families. Occupational Groups are made up of related Job Families

and encompass relatively broad occupations, professions, or activities. Job Families are groups of job classes and class series that are related as to the nature of the work performed and typically have similar initial preparation for employment and career progression.

The three classes of the Retirement and Benefits Specialist series perform duties that support their continued placement in the PB Administrative and Office Support group of job families, which includes classes that advise on, administer, supervise, or perform work involved in administration; management; accounting and related financial management; research and statistics; supply; personnel management; information technology; and clerical and secretarial work.

Within the PB group, the PB03 Personnel and Employee Relations job family is appropriate for classes that advise on, administer, supervise, or perform work involved in the various phases of personnel or human resource management and employee relations. Retirement and Benefits Specialists continue to be suited for assignment to this family because retirement and benefits planning is commonly considered part of the broad array of compensation tools available to an organization, and compensation is generally considered to be a functional area of the broader personnel discipline.

The subject classes remain in the PB03 job family and retain their Class and AKPAY coding.

Job Class	Class Code	AKPAY Code
Retirement and Benefits Specialist I	PB0341	P1442
Retirement and Benefits Specialist II	PB0342	P1449
Retirement and Benefits Specialist III	PB0343	P1450

#### Fair Labor Standards Act

The positions in this study are covered by the minimum wage and maximum hour provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as Amended (FLSA). While exemption from the provisions of the Act are based on the specific circumstances of an individual employee on a work-week basis, there are general aspects of the classes and their influence on the exemptions for employees in bona fide executive, professional, or administrative positions that can be addressed in general.

- Retirement and Benefits Specialist I are not overtime exempt.
  - Incumbents of this class do not perform regular and recurring duties that qualify for exemption from overtime under the terms of the Act.
- Incumbents of the Retirement and Benefits Specialist II job class are overtime exempt under the terms of the Administrative Exemption as set forth in the Act.

#### Administrative Exemption

- Incumbents are paid in excess of the minimum wage requirement

- Incumbents provide professional-level employee relations support on behalf of the Division and as such perform non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers
  - Incumbents exercise discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance when they provide financial counseling to plan members and employers, resolve contentious issues with plan members, interpret statute and ambiguous policy, develop training and communications materials, represent the Division in formal appeals, or supervise a Division payroll and revenue-collection function.
- Incumbents of the Retirement and Benefits Specialist III job class are overtime exempt under the terms of the Administrative and Executive Exemptions as set forth in the Act.

#### Administrative Exemption

- Incumbents are paid in excess of the minimum wage requirement
- Incumbents provide employee relations support by supervising the provision of workforce benefits and as such perform non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers
- Incumbents perform a primary duty that includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance when they regularly develop, update, and implement standard operating procedures to guide operations in one of the Division's five distinct service channels

#### Executive Exemption

- Incumbents are paid in excess of the minimum wage requirement
- As supervisors of a unit within one of two Division sections, incumbents' primary duty is the management of the enterprise in which the employee is employed or of a customarily recognized department or subdivision thereof
- Incumbents have the authority to hire or fire other employees or make suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion or any other change of status of other employees that are given particular weight

#### **Salary Analysis:**

The salary range of a job class is determined based on internal consistency within the State's pay plans, in accordance with merit principles, with the goal of providing fair and reasonable compensation for services rendered and maintaining the principle of like pay for like work. In evaluating internal consistency the difficulty, responsibility, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics of a job are compared with job classes of a similar nature, kind, and level in the same occupational group and job family or related job families.

This salary alignment compares the three subject classes to other classes within the PB03 job family within the framework of the eight classification factors:

- Nature, variety, and complexity
- Nature of supervision received
- Nature of available guidelines
- Initiative and originality
- Purpose and nature of person-to-person work relationships
- Nature of scope of recommendations, decisions, commitments, and consequence of error
- Nature and extent of supervision exercised over the work of other employees
- Qualifications required

The following table illustrates each comparable class's defining characteristics and the general characteristics of each range within the family.

Range	Job Class	Description	Range Characteristics
14	Retirement and Benefits Technician II	perform comprehensive journey-level technical duties to deliver a single division service	journey technical work
15	Human Resource Technician III	supervise and lead technical work and perform advanced technical duties across division services	advanced technical work and staff lead
16	Human Resource Specialist I	journey professional delivery of statewide human resource services	application of professional skill in a single functional area to support the delivery of statewide human resource services
17	Human Resources Technical Services Supervisor	supervise technical payroll processing and provide professional payroll analysis within the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations	journey level professional support of a statewide human resource function with class controlling supervision
18	Human Resource Specialist II	Advanced professional delivery of statewide human resources services	application of professional skill in multiple functional areas to support the delivery of statewide human resource services, or developmental provision of statewide labor relations
18	Labor Relations Analyst I	perform entry level professional tasks to support the State's labor relations responsibilities	

			representation
20	Human Resource Specialist III	subject matter expertise in multiple functional areas and supervision of professional staff in the delivery of statewide human resources services	Subject matter expertise and supervision to support the delivery of statewide human resource services, or developmental provision of statewide labor relations representation
20	Labor Relations Analyst II	perform journey level duties to support the State's labor relations responsibilities	
21	Labor Relations Analyst III	apply advanced skill to support all functional areas associated with meeting the State's labor relations responsibilities	expertise in the delivery of statewide labor relations representation

Retirement and Benefits Specialist I

Retirement and Benefits Specialists I apply in-depth knowledge of a single division function to lead, direct, or train technical staff, complete technical processes where complicating factors require analytical considerations, and perform research to support the development of concepts and tools that increase productivity or eliminate ambiguity in policy and procedure. At this level, incumbents' apply professional skill in a single functional area of a broader discipline to support the statewide delivery of human resource services; subsequently, Retirement and Benefits Specialist I is aligned at range 16 of the PB03 job family.

Retirement and Benefits Specialist II

Retirement and Benefits Specialists II apply broad knowledge of Division operations, policy, procedure, and statute to provide comprehensive counseling and planning services to members and provide certifying oversight of technical processing calculations; develop training and communications materials; investigate, develop, and advocate a Division position in formal appeals; or supervise a Division payroll function. The requirement that Retirement and Benefits Specialist II apply a broad knowledge of Division operations, policy, procedure, and statute, to deliver the Division's broad array of services makes the class synonymous with other classes that apply professional skill in multiple functional areas to support the delivery of statewide human resource services; subsequently, Retirement and Benefits Specialist II is aligned at range 18 of the PB03 job family.

Retirement and Benefits Specialist III

Retirement and Benefits Specialists III supervise professional and technical staff; coordinate resources; and oversee the development, update, and implementation of standard operating procedures in one of the Division's five distinct service channels: Counseling Services, Operations

(Survivor Benefits, Health Benefit Processing, and Retirement Benefit Processing), Call-Center, and the combined Appeals and Qualified Domestic Relations Orders unit. Incumbents of this class are supervisors and have substantial responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in appointing, promoting, transferring, suspending, discharging and adjudicating the grievances of subordinates. Incumbents of this class are subject matter experts in a focused Division service channel, are proficient in the delivery of the wide array of Division services, and are required to be supervisors. As a subject matter expert and supervisor that delivers statewide human resource services, Retirement and Benefits Specialist III is aligned to salary range 20 of the PB03 job family.

**Conclusions:**

Class Structure and Salary Alignment

Retirement and Benefits Specialist I	SR16
Retirement and Benefits Specialist II	SR18
Retirement and Benefits Specialist III	SR20

---

The class specifications were updated to reflect the consolidation of the Division's Benefits and Operations sections into one unit.

General Interpretation on an Incumbent's FLSA Eligibility

Retirement and Benefits Specialist I	overtime eligible
Retirement and Benefits Specialist II	not overtime eligible
Retirement and Benefits Specialist III	not overtime eligible

The preceding job class revisions and subsequent position allocations are effective July 1, 2012.

Attachment:

Final class specifications

cc: Jim Puckett, Director  
Division of Retirement and Benefits  
Department of Administration

Cheri Lowenstein, Director  
Division of Administrative Services  
Department of Administration

Peggy Hart, Human Resource Specialist III  
Department of Administration