

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel

To: Dianne Kiesel
Director

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Subject: DVR Job Classes Study (**FINAL Effective 04/16/07**)

Preamble:

The Department of Labor & Workforce Development submitted a request to the Division of Personnel to conduct a complete class study and perform an internal alignment review, taking into consideration a mandated federal certification of incumbents in professional job classes in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The Division of Personnel commenced work on this project in November 2005.

Study Scope:

The study included the review of 80 technical, professional, supervisory and managerial positions allocated to the job classes of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant I-III; Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator Associate I-II; Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator I-II; Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Associate I-II; Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I-III; Vocational Rehabilitation Manager; Community Rehabilitation Program Specialist; and Assistant Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Study Method:

A planning meeting was held on September 28, 2005 and representatives of the DVR were invited to attend.

The primary reasons for conducting a study were to:

- 1) eliminate any remnants of broadbanding;
- 2) identify job class concepts, update, and collapse or expand the series;
- 3) strengthen career ladder efforts, and improve recruitment possibilities;
- 4) compare and align range assignments.

In accordance with standard classification study procedures and the Classification Study Plan approved on 10/25/2005, the objectives of the study were to:

- 1) analyze and define the body of work;

- 2) distinguish the work from other related job classes and identify the appropriate levels of work;
- 3) create class specifications that clearly describe and distinguish each class and provide appropriate minimum qualifications; and
- 4) analyze the new classes for internal alignment and determine appropriate salary ranges.

Departmental contacts and an occupational consultant were assigned to work with this analyst. The former included Gale Sinnott, Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Carol Whelan, Project Assistant, and the occupational consultant was Russ Cusack, Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation.

In November and December, 2005, DVR management made a presentation with extensive documentation, to classification staff about the organization, its mission, functions and characteristics. Updated position descriptions (PDs) were received, and management was provided the opportunity to identify positions believed to best represent the body of work. The majority of those recommended by management and other positions were selected for interviews. Audit questions were developed, and interviews were conducted in January 2006 via telephone and on-site in Juneau, Sitka, Anchorage, Wasilla, Kenai, and Fairbanks. Interviews were conducted with the incumbents of 31 positions, representing all job classes except those not having any positions allocated to them, i.e., VR Assistant III, VR Evaluator Associate I, and VR Evaluator I.

Following the interviews and a review of related documents, an analysis of duties and responsibilities was completed, and the positions were grouped into levels based upon common characteristics. The Definitions and Distinguishing Characteristics sections of the class specifications were drafted for each level, and distributed for comment to the division team. One major change was requested by DVR, which required additional time for discussion and compromise. Eventually, the Definitions and Distinguishing Characteristics were refined. Thereafter, the remaining sections (Example of Duties, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, and Minimum Qualifications) of the new class specifications for the proposed restructured job classes were developed, discussed, and revised before finalization. Throughout this process during the summer and fall of this year, meetings were held a number of times with division management to discuss and resolve problems with the job concept changes, a major change to the original study request, and the collapse and restructuring of job classes. In early November 2006, Director Sinnott approved all proposed job class specifications.

The Study Memo was drafted to explain the proposed job classes, and, with the class specifications, shared with the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, offering the opportunity for comment. Secondly, an Allocation Memo and worksheet were drafted to reflect the assessment and reallocation of individual positions against the new class specifications, and shared with the department, again offering the opportunity for comment. Finally, an internal alignment was done with related job classes in the same Job Family or Occupational Group to determine the range assignment of the restructured job classes; added to the Study Memo; and sent to the department for comment.

History of Job Class:

Before the implementation of this study, there were 80 positions allocated to fifteen job classes, which were last revised in a major way in 1994. This revision consisted of a private contractor developing a "salary banding project," that included the development of new job class specifications; skill-based criteria for each class; policy and procedure guidelines for using the criteria; and a general informational guideline. This skill-based/salary promotional system was the first of its kind in Alaska and was implemented as a pilot project. In 1999, management determined that a number of problems existed, including the competency assessment criteria tool, to the point that revisions were necessary. However, no major study revisions were implemented since the products were produced in 1994.

In order to understand how the range assignments were set and continued to exist to the present, one must note that before 1994, the original range assignments were: Developmental (trainee Associate I-R13 & Associate II-R14); Full Performance (fully trained Counselor/Evaluator I R16); and Senior/Expert (advanced Counselor/Evaluator II R18 & expert Counselor/Evaluator III R19, respectively). No documentation has been found to show that these ranges were ever changed. During this study, the job class concepts (definitions) have been revised and agree with today's classification definitions and practices, and were used in the internal alignment phase to determine range assignments.

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 layoff and recall. Job classes should be constructed as broadly as is feasible as long as the tests of similarity are met.

Analysis did identify factors that would justify changing the job class concepts of the professional job class series. They were restructured to agree with and parallel typical professional series, i.e. developmental, journey, and advanced professional job concepts. In doing so, the four Associate job classes were eliminated and merged into the first professional level, since they were in reality, developmental professional job classes. As developmental rather than trainee or entry professionals, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I (VR Counselor I) or Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator I (VR Evaluator I), already have bachelor degrees in specific disciplines; have limited case management experience; are taking graduate coursework; and perform duties typically above a basic learning mode true of entry/trainee work in general.

In addition, Minimum Qualification requirements for the professional job classes were changed to agree with federal certification requirements that are a mandate linked to the State's Plan as part of its federal funding proposal. Related to this, in order to use the title VR Counselor or VR Evaluator, one must be eligible to sit for or receive certification by a nationally recognized accreditation organization. The educational and experience requirements for certification are extensive and are reflected in the progressive Minimum Qualifications. Due to these requirements, which are based on certification criteria applicable to vocational rehabilitation

professional positions in all states, flex situations need not be established for the developmental and journey job classes as is typical for such professional levels of job classes.

The benchmarks of the specific job class series are the new journey technical, and journey and advanced professional levels: Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant II (VR Assistant II), VR Counselor II/III and VR Evaluator II/III, respectively. In classification, the benchmark level is the basis of a job class series and is critical in determining the appropriate levels above or below the benchmark level. It is the level at which most work typical of the field is performed. Benchmark is defined as work that involves a variety of assignments typical of the field or profession; incumbents independently perform the full range of assignments, using standard methods and techniques of the field. The benchmark level usually requires both knowledge and experience in the related job area as a minimum qualification for entry into the professional classes; most of these factors exist and support the journey and advanced levels as the benchmarks of the job class series. As explained below, the two benchmark professional levels require education and experience at a higher level than is typical of journey or advanced professional job classes.

Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants provide technical and administrative support to counselors, evaluators, and related staff during all stages of vocational rehabilitation services, to enable clients with multiple impediments and disabilities to achieve gainful employment.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant I is the entry level of the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant series, learning to provide direct technical and administrative support in the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. Primary focus of duties is to learn to apply organizational policies, procedures and processes necessary to perform a specific assignment such as providing routine services to individuals with disabilities.

In addition to close guidance and training received from team members, positions at this level receive classroom training in such topics as Paraprofessional Orientation, Introduction to Vocational Rehabilitation, Interviewing Skills, Caseload Management, Decision Making, Fundamental Counseling Skills for Paraprofessionals, Medical/Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities, Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs, and Orientation to Vocational Evaluation & Preparation. Such training enables Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants I to learn the skills, techniques and confidentiality requirements necessary to perform initial intake interviews and assessments with clients, and related supportive duties to team members in serving clients.

Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants I are distinguished from clerical job classes by the responsibility of the clerical job classes to perform generalized, structured office or program support duties requiring limited training in office procedures and processes. Clerical job classes, unlike Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants, typically do not exist to support a specific professional field, and do not require extensive practical experience and on-the-job training to perform substantial elements of the involved professional work.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant II is the journey level of the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant series, providing direct technical and administrative support in the delivery of

vocational rehabilitation services. Primary focus of duties is to learn how to work with clients with multiple disabilities, while providing technical assistance with rehabilitation services.

This level independently provides the full spectrum of specialized technical support to a case management team and its clients, during the stages of referral to eligibility determination to Individual Plan of Employment approval to rehabilitation services through case closure. Incumbents have completed and apply lower level specialized training and practical experience in the appropriate methods and techniques to assist clients and staff, and receive continuing training related to certain technical aspects of vocational rehabilitation counseling or evaluation. As participating team members with professional staff, VRA II positions take first line responsibility for contact with clients or applicants; provide information; conduct orientation sessions; collect an array of client information, including interacting with medical providers; and make eligibility recommendations.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant III is the advanced, lead level of the VR Assistant series, providing substantive technical and administrative support in the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. Primary focus of duties is to apply extensive practical knowledge and experience in providing quality services to clients, overseeing the daily activities and production of lower level assistants, and providing administrative support related to the program operations and work sites. As designated field administrative support staff, VR Assistants III assure the implementation of changes, uniformity, and standardization in statewide business and administrative practices, as directed by central office managers. It is anticipated that only one VRA III position will have these designated duties and responsibilities in each regional or equivalent catchment area office.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide professional vocational rehabilitation counseling to clients to address and alleviate their physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities in order to achieve the goal of an employment outcome.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I is the developmental professional level of the series, progressively learning to apply the principles, practices, and techniques of providing rehabilitation counseling to clients with disabilities to retain or obtain gainful employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors I are focused on applying professional counseling techniques while gaining appropriate experience and working towards a graduate degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling or closely related field, with the goal of receiving a national Certification in Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC) as required to function as an advanced professional. Under the review and guidance of a senior counselor, the VR Counselor I is assigned counselor duties and responsibilities related to a limited caseload; progressively learns to analyze and synthesize medical, psychological, and vocational data in order to make eligibility determinations and individualized plans for employment; and receives further classroom training. Note: this job class replaces the former VR Counselor Associate I/II, which is being abolished.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II is the journey professional level of the series, independently making decisions related to the rehabilitation process, while managing a caseload and providing vocational rehabilitation counseling to clients with physical, mental or cognitive

disabilities. Incumbents have a graduate degree in a counseling related area as defined by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counseling and are working toward completion of the required six graduate level core rehabilitation courses and experience to be eligible to sit for the national Certification in Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC).

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor III is the advanced professional level of the series, providing the full spectrum of professional counseling services to clients designated as significantly disabled with multiple impediments to employment; has authority to commit state resources through approval of eligibility determinations and individualized plans for employment; and applies considerable knowledge and training of medical aspects of disabilities, the behavioral and social sciences, and counseling to address interrelated issues and impacts on clients. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors III are nationally certified rehabilitation counselors (i.e. CRC), and as such, are recognized as masters in their specialty field.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor IV is the expert, consultant professional level of the series, providing: comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to a limited caseload of clients that experience the most significant disabilities and are representative of a limited population such as the blind or deaf; and secondly, leadership to management in planning, designing, and implementing new programs and rehabilitation service practices to this very specialized population on a statewide basis. VR Counselor IVs apply special ways and means of resolving problems; modify or develop new program practices and special procedures; train and provide consultation to staff on new types and methodologies of services based on the latest national research and technology. As nationally certified rehabilitation counselors (i.e. CRC) and recognized by peers as experts in their specialty field, VR Counselors IV articulate, advocate, and gain consensus of stakeholders to buy into major changes in the scope of state policy and programs serving clients with major, multiple disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluators are professional evaluators, specializing in and applying principles, theories and practices of vocational exploration and evaluation services to clients with significant and multiple types of disabilities. Collaborating and sharing results with VR Counselors and others, VR Evaluators select, administer, score, and interpret tests to assess aptitudes, abilities, achievements, interests, personal characteristics, disabilities, and mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders.

Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator I is the developmental professional level of the series, progressively learning to apply the principles, practices, and techniques of professional rehabilitation evaluation and assessment services to clients with disabilities. Positions at this level are progressively learning to administer and score (less complex) tests such as interest inventory; prepare draft vocational evaluation reports; and perform more difficult tasks over time, reflective of the journey level evaluator. Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluators I are focused on gaining journey professional experience and working towards the academic requirements for a national Certification in Vocational Evaluation (CVE) as required to function as an advanced professional. Note: this job class replaces the former VR Evaluator Associate I/II, which is being abolished.

Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator II is the journey professional level of the series, independently performing assessments, evaluations, and interpretations of tests of clients with multiple disabilities. Incumbents typically apply graduate level education and experience in the accurate assessment and interpretation of tests, resulting in a quality match between clients' strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, capabilities, interests and rehabilitation needs versus future employment and training options and applications. Incumbents have completed experience and academic requirements and are eligible to sit for the national Certification in Vocational Evaluation (CVE).

The Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator III is the advanced professional level of the series, providing the full spectrum of vocational evaluations, administering and interpreting the results of psychometric testing, real work assessments, and other complex tests, and working in the community with employers to establish and administer community based assessments for those clients with the most significant disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluators III are nationally certified rehabilitation evaluators (i.e. CVE), and as such, are recognized as masters in their specialty field.

Vocational Rehabilitation Manager is the first level managerial job class, responsible for directing and supervising the delivery of rehabilitation counseling and evaluation services in a regional or equivalent catchment area, to clients with disabilities. VR Managers also provide case consultation expertise and oversight to vocational rehabilitation teams, program and operational planning, and partnership and collaborative leadership in their particular geographical areas. The primary focus is to achieve the operational goal of gainful client employment. This is a supervisory class with substantial responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in employing, disciplining, or adjudicating grievances of subordinates.

Assistant Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, is a senior staff and second level managerial job class, responsible for statewide planning and evaluation of program services to assure compliance with federal vocational rehabilitation regulations and requirements; staff development; and client complaint resolution. Managerial responsibilities also include supervision and coordination of some regional or catchment area program operations. This is a supervisory class with substantial responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in employing, disciplining, or adjudicating grievances of subordinates.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist is a one-position job class. After interviewing the incumbent, this analyst believes that the work differs enough from the characteristics true of the other study job classes that it has been excluded from the study. The nature and type of the VRPS position is one of a highly specialized professional planner, identifying problems and issues; delineating goals and objectives; establishing strategy with timeframes, stakeholders, resources, etc; and developing evaluation tools. The incumbent is part of the management team, serving all organizational aspects of the division and its statewide advisory board, and assisting in producing the State's Plan, which is the long-range plan to serve those with disabilities in gaining meaningful employment.

Class Title:

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

With minor revision, the titles of the study job classes continue to be accurate and appropriate descriptors of the body of work.

Minimum Qualifications:

The minimum qualifications (MQs) 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 to be performed.

Based on verification from the federal agency that provides national leadership and expertise in the vocational rehabilitation field as related to disabilities; is the major funding source for national and state efforts; and mandates national and therefore state programmatic goals, guidelines, methodology, and personnel qualification requirements, the Minimum Qualifications for the professional job classes were updated and modified. They now reflect progressive requirements leading up to extensive and specialized educational and experience backgrounds required to attain national Certification in Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC) or Certification in Vocational Evaluation (CVE), in order to perform the full spectrum of duties as advanced professionals. Though training is required and documented to progress upward in the professional job classes, none of the professional job classes are considered flexibly staffed, since they follow national criteria for certification.

The Minimum Qualification requirements for the VR Assistant I/II/III reflect minimal changes, with the I/II being considered flexibly staffed and subject to classroom and on-the-job training; this is the only flex situation for all study job classes.

It should be noted that broadbanding no longer exists for any of the study job classes.

Class Code:

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 PF04 Job Family, Vocational Rehabilitation, consists of only the DVR job classes, and will remain the same as part of the study review. This Job Family is, however, one of the many Job Families assigned to the PF Occupational Group, Social, Benefit, and Employment Services. The latter includes families of classes that advise on, administer, supervise, or perform services in the social sciences, benefit or assistance programs, and social work and employment services.

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 determined 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.

The journey and advanced professional positions allocated to the job classes of VR Counselor II/III and VR Evaluator II/III are considered to meet the criteria of Professional exemption, and are therefore not overtime eligible (Y). The employees perform work requiring advanced knowledge in a field of science or learning that is customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction. The advanced knowledge is used to analyze, interpret, or make deductions from varying facts or circumstances. The work is predominantly intellectual in character, and requires the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment.

Confirming with the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation, that the above criteria is being met by such positions, this analyst believes approximately 27 positions should be changed to Y (overtime exempt) from N (overtime eligible). The former is only a corrective action, since it is believed that in past years, these positions were part of a flex situation at the lower trainee levels, and when training was completed, the overtime designation was not changed from N to Y as it should have been. The FLSA designation for one position is being changed from Y to N due to a reassignment of duties to the lowest level, VRC I.

Internal Alignment:

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.

(Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II-Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator II):

In internal alignment comparisons, identification of the benchmark job class is necessary and critical. As stated before, the benchmark level is typically the basis of a job class series and is critical in determining the appropriate levels above or below the benchmark level. It is the level at which most work typical of the field is performed. In this study, factors exist and support the journey and advanced professional levels, VR Counselor II/III and VR Evaluator II/III, as the benchmarks of the job class series. It just so happens that these benchmark levels require education and experience at a higher level than is typical of journey professional job classes, which are usually found, in general, at Range 16.

Since the PF04 Job Family consists of only those job classes in the study, comparison of the professional job classes was made with classes in the broader but related PF Occupational Group, Social, Benefit, and Employment Services, and the PG Occupational Group Medical,

Public Health and Related. These job classes are in the PF02 Social Work, PF05 Labor and Employment Services, and PG05 Mental and Behavioral Health Services Job Families.

Beginning with the journey professional level of the VR Counselor and VR Evaluator series in comparison to the following job classes in the PF02 Job Family, the duties, responsibilities and other characteristics were compared to those of the Children's Services Specialist II (R16), Social Services Specialist II (R16), Social Worker II (R16), and Social Worker II (Children's Services) (R17). The job concepts or definitions are full proficiency, full working, full proficiency, and full proficiency, respectively, either focused on providing the full range of social services to legally designated children in need, or to families and groups, including some clients who are mentally challenged, disabled, or have multiple behavioral and social problems. The first two job classes require bachelor's degrees in social, behavioral or closely related fields, and one year of professional experience directed at health and social services; there is also a provision allowing substitution of paraprofessional experience for the bachelor's on a year for year basis. The Social Worker job classes require possession of current Social Worker licenses by the State, again based on a bachelor's degree in social work and specific experience.

Though a journey professional level, the VR Counselor II requires a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation, psychology, social work, guidance counseling, special education or a closely related counseling discipline, or a master's that includes core voc rehab courses required to sit for national certification. No substitutions are allowed. The parallel level, VR Evaluator II, requires a bachelor's degree in the same specialized disciplines, and one year of case management experience, working with clients receiving social or benefit services. Again, no substitutions are allowed. Incumbents of positions in both job classes are working towards completion of educational and experience requirements to be eligible to sit for the national counseling or evaluation certification. It should be noted, that in reality, incumbents of VR Evaluator II positions typically possess master's degrees in one of the closely related disciplines and the required experience to perform both journey counselor and evaluator duties.

In addition to the above factor, vocational rehabilitation counseling or evaluation work is considered to be more complex, broader in scope and more extensive, than social services or social work due to the characteristics of assignments/clients and levels of responsibility. For example, VR journey professionals deal with clients who represent a wide variety of vocational, educational, and disability problems with serious impairments. Skilled counseling and evaluation assistance is required to enable clients to receive, assimilate, and make realistic educational and vocational choices, after skilled assistance is given to make clients understand and accept realistic appraisals of self problems, limitations and capabilities. Social Service Specialists and Social Workers, on the other hand, provide a more generalized range of social services counseling and case management services, to clients who have social and economic challenges. Some clients do have a full range of challenges, but the counseling skills needed typically address the provision of adequate social services or benefits offered through a variety of different sources, and do not delve into client behavior modification and acceptance of self limitations related to mental or emotional problems, etc., needed to gain employment.

It stands to reason that a higher range assignment should be made, than the typical R16 true of the majority of journey professional job classes in the PF02 Job Family in the same Occupational

Group, specifically the Children's Services Specialist II (R16), Social Services Specialist II (R16), and Social Worker II (R16). The VR Counselor II job class is considered to be more equivalent to the Social Worker II (Children's Services) at a R17; the positions in the latter job class provide indepth counseling skills and assistance to a specific client population, those children who are legal wards of the State and have numerous mental, emotional and other types of problems requiring counseling expertise and skills. In addition, the legal side of potential actions must be investigated, documented and presented to judicial and similar types of representatives; determination of the need for highly specialized professional resources are another consideration given by Social Worker II (Children's Services) positions, similarly to VR Counselor II positions.

In October, at the request of management of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, comparison was also made against numerous job classes found in a wide variety of occupational groups, the majority of which were eliminated due to not being applicable. For example, comparison was made to some job classes in the PF05 Job Family of Labor and Employment Services. These included the journey Employment Counselor II (R16) and working nonprofessional level Workforce Development Specialist I (R15), which is one level below the advanced/lead nonprofessional WDS II (R16). Of these two different job classes, the former was considered related but not equivalent to the VRC II job class, simply because of the characteristics of serving clients with less complex problems, i.e. employment related problems, and requiring a bachelor's rather than a master's degree in a specific discipline. The WDS job classes were not considered equivalent due to not being considered a professional job class series, and performing less complex case management and eligibility of benefits determination/approval work. The job classes of Community Development Specialist II (R16), Industrial Therapist (R16), Disability Adjudicator (R18), and Public Guardian (R18) were reviewed but eliminated from further consideration.

Again, at the request of DVR management, comparison was made to some job classes in the PG05 Mental and Behavioral Health Services Job Family. The latter includes the Psychological Counselor II (R17), Mental Health Clinician II (R19), and Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist I (R19) job classes.

Beginning with the journey/full working Psychological Counselor II job class, positions work inside state correctional institutions, as part of multi-disciplinary treatment teams under the direction of Mental Health Clinicians. Duties and responsibilities include the performance of specialized individual counseling, group guidance, and psychological services such as psychological test administration and interpretation, to clients that include chronically mentally ill offenders who present a variety of mental health diagnoses. This job class requires a bachelor's degree with course emphasis in the behavioral sciences, and one year of experience in social casework, counseling, or psychiatric nursing in a clinical setting; or a master's degree in psychological counseling, psychology, guidance and counseling, social work, or a closely related field. Substitution of graduate coursework in specific courses is allowed for the master's degree. This job class is both considered equivalent to the characteristics of the Social Worker II (Children's Services) and a good match to both the journey VR Counselor II and VR Evaluator II job classes. The range assignment of R17 to the journey VR job classes is further supported by this comparison.

The Mental Health Clinician I/II/III were last revised in 1974, so it is not known with any certainty as to the validity and accuracy of the class specifications. However, the specifications and file documentation do state that journey MHC II positions are expected to provide direct and indirect assessment and treatment services, and/or manage services provided and delivered through community based vendors, to medically and mentally complex client caseloads. The class specifications for the journey Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist I job class also use similar language with the focus on developmentally disabled clients. Both require master's degrees in closely related, specialized disciplines and one or two years of entry professional experience in their respective fields of work. Based only on class specification descriptions, this analyst believes that the assigned work and required educational and experience backgrounds, serving clients with numerous mental and emotional diagnoses, are actually reflective of advanced professional job concepts rather than journey professional job concepts.

Past communication in 1997, 1993, 1988 and 1986 states that there was a recognized need by involved agencies for a class study of the MHC series. The reasons were due to the definitions/job concepts of the MHC II and III not being clearly delineated; minimum qualifications not being appropriate (i.e. positions classified at the III level in order to get needed qualified applicants to perform MHC II work); and specifications not reflecting current organizational setups and functions, assigned work, and needed expertise and skills. The point is a comparison of these two series (MHC and DDPS) with another series is difficult due the surrounding circumstances. A comparison with the MHC II and DDPS I job classes does not result in a good match to the journey VR Counselor II or VR Evaluator II job classes; instead, the distinguishing characteristics of these two R19 job classes are considered to possibly be equivalent to the advanced professional VR Counselor III job concept as described in the new class specifications.

In summary, the journey VR Counselor II and VR Evaluator II job classes are assigned R17.

(Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I-Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator I)

Typically in the State's professional job class series, progressive professional levels are assigned at two-range intervals and only in cases where there exists clear current justification for deviation from that pattern does the Division assign greater than or less than this two-range difference. In the case of the DVR professional job classes, the job concepts of the series were defined and developed along fairly classic levels – an developmental level, journey, and advanced professional level with the preponderance of the work in the field at the journey and advanced levels, followed by the expert and supervisory/managerial levels.

Applying the typical two-range interval practice, the developmental professional job classes of VR Counselor I and VR Evaluator I are two ranges, i.e. R15, below the R17 assigned to the journey or benchmark professional job classes, VR Counselor II and VR Evaluator II.

In summary, the developmental VR Counselor I and VR Evaluator I job classes are assigned R15.

(Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor III-Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator III)

As stated previously, the advanced professional levels, VR Counselor III and VR Evaluator III, were identified as benchmark job classes along with the journey professional levels; incumbents of the lower levels are focused on reaching the advanced levels, specifically to gain national certification, and be recognized and perform the work as masters in their specialty fields. This is the division's (and national) programmatic goal as well, to have its professional staff gain the necessary certified background to provide top quality counseling and assessment to its clients.

Applying the classification practice of a two-grade interval, the advanced or benchmark professional job classes of VR Counselor III and VR Evaluator III are two ranges, i.e. R19, above the R17 assigned to the journey or benchmark professional job classes, VR Counselor II and VR Evaluator II.

In addition, the result of this practice is further supported by the previously mention comparison to the Mental Health Clinician II and Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist I, both R19 and both considered advanced rather than journey professional job classes by this analyst's interpretation of the class specifications. All have similar distinguishing characteristics such as complexity of long-term assessment, treatment and evaluation of client populations with numerous mental, emotional and physical problems requiring high levels of counseling expertise and skills.

For informational purposes, the Mental Health Clinician I (R17) job class is an entry professional level job class, performing general mental health services to a limited and less complex type of caseload, with the requirement of only a master's degree in specific discipline but no experience. The Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist II is an advanced, expert level (R20), responsible for planning, coordinating and/or evaluating comprehensive training and active treatment programs; it requires a master's degree in very specific fields and one year of full performance/journey experience. The latter is not considered equivalent to the advanced professional VR Counselor III and VR Evaluator III job classes, but more so to the expert professional VR Counselor IV job class (see below).

In summary, the advanced VR Counselor III and VR Evaluator III job classes are assigned R19.

(Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor IV)

As stated previously, the new expert/consultant VR Counselor IV job class is comparable in role, scope, complexity, and decision-making, with extensive background expertise, to the expert Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist II (R20). The latter applies to positions responsible for planning, delivering or arranging for services to clients with varied and severe disabilities, requiring medically complex treatment; this is true of the VR Counselor IV with the latter focused on performing the most complex level of vocational counseling services and activities to the same type of limited client population but with the goal of gaining employment for clients. Both job classes require master's degrees in very specific and similar disciplines, and one year of advanced professional level experience equivalent to Developmental Disabilities Program Specialist I or VR Counselor III; the VR Counselor IV must also have certification in rehabilitation counseling, which takes into account the educational and experience requirements previously noted.

Secondly, this analyst is less certain as to whether the duties and responsibilities, authority, decision-making, and client and other characteristics of the VR Counselor IV are comparable to the senior level Mental Health Clinician III job class (R21), for the previously stated reasons about the class specifications. The MHC III job class includes positions that provide highly skilled and psychotherapeutic casework services to patients in a hospital for the mentally ill; provide expertise as consultants in a specialty area such as child psychology; or function as coordinators of major statewide program components for the mentally ill. The minimum qualification requirements exceed those of the VR Counselor IV, in that the MHC III requires a doctorate degree in specific disciplines, or a master's degree in those same disciplines and four years of professional experience of which two years are equivalent to the journey MHC II. For these reasons, the range assignment for the VR Counselor IV job class should be set lower than the MHC III (R21) but higher than the MHC II (R19) job classes.

Third, the few positions allocated in the future to the VR Counselor IV job class will be supervised by the Assistant Chief, VR Services (R21) or the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation (R22). The range assignment of the VR Counselor IV cannot be the same as that of the immediate supervisory job class, that being the Assistant Chief; if the positions are supervised by the Chief, the result is the application of the two-range interval below the supervisory manager position.

In summary, the expert VR Counselor IV job class is assigned R20.

(Vocational Rehabilitation Manager-Assistant Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Services)

There are two positions allocated to the Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation, job class, both reporting to the division director. One is responsible for operational disability determination/adjudication services and is not part of this study. However, the parallel operational vocational rehabilitation service side of the division is managed by the second Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation (R22). This latter position was not part of the study, but the incumbent functioned as the key departmental contact/occupational consultant for the study. The Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation gives direction, leadership and supervision to one Assistant Chief, VR Services (R21), that in turn directly supervises two Vocational Rehabilitation Managers (R20) responsible for the operations of the Southeast and Northern Regions. The Chief, VR, also gives direction, leadership and supervision to four Anchorage-based Vocational Rehabilitation Managers responsible for operations in all other areas of the state.

The Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation, job class, was assigned R22 based on the traditional classification practice of assigning that same range to section chief positions responsible for statewide management and direction of service operations. It was noted that the two Chief, VR, positions do not have the delegated authority and decision-making reflective of the majority of deputy director positions in state government, which are assigned R23 and above. A deputy director typically has recognized line authority over all division functions; assists the division director with management; and has authority to set policy for the agency in complying with federal law and requirements. Though not part of the study but impacting the range assignments of lower level job classes, the Chief, VR, job class should continue be limited to R22 until such

time as a study is conducted of equivalent type managerial job classes, such as the Chief, Public Assistance Field Operations (R22).

Secondly, a good comparison can be made between the job classes of the Assistant Chief, VRS, the VR Managers, and the Public Assistance Field Services Manager II (R21) job class. The latter includes four regional managers of field services, each reporting directly to the Chief, PA Field Operations of the Division of Public Assistance. These four supervisory/managerial positions have duties, responsibilities and authority as full assistants to the Chief, PA Field Operations, and manage and supervise extensive and large regional operations known as the Central Region, Coastal Region, Northern Region, and Southeast Region. Each DPA region involves a larger number of professional, technical and support staff providing benefits and counseling to those in need; each region operates within strict federal mandates and regulations, including extensive training requirements. The Public Assistance Field Services Manager II positions perform a dual role that consists of programmatic and administrative management responsibilities and authority. The scope and complexity of the regional service operations are equivalent (R20) to and possibly exceed that true of the Vocational Rehabilitation Managers. Secondly, their assistant role (R21) to the Chief, PA Field Operations, is similar to the Assistant Chief, VR Services, regarding long-range planning, training, formulation of policy development, compliance with federal regulations and requirements, complaint resolution, budget development, etc..

It should be noted that positions allocated to the new expert VR Counselor IV (R20) job class will not be supervised by either the VR Manager or Assistant Chief, VR Services, therefore that argument cannot be used support range increases of the latter two job classes. This analyst believes that the latter two job classes need to be analyzed as part of a study in the future, of equivalent type supervisory/managerial job classes. This has been a recognized need for some time and would involve a number of job class series involving the majority of departments. These and previously stated reasons override the justification to increase the range assignment from R20 to R21 of the VR Manager job class, or two ranges above their subordinate "master" VR Counselor or Evaluator III positions.

In summary, the range assignments for the VR Manager and Assistant Chief, VR Services, job classes continue to be R20 and R21, respectively.

(Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant I/II/III)

No supporting reasons were identified to change the range assignments of the VR Assistant I (R10), VR Assistant II (R12), and VR Assistant III (R13). No substantive changes were made to the definition or job class concepts for the I and II job classes. The key change to the definition or job concept of the III job class involved the elimination of the rural application of work and secondly, the addition of the new responsibility for administrative support for a regional or equivalent catchment area operation. Both changes for this level acknowledge the current organizational structure such as the absence of rural office staff services and administrative support representation.

The VR Assistant job classes with the VR professional job classes make up one Job Family which does not include any other job classes that can be used for internal comparison purposes.

Technical or paraprofessional job classes exist throughout all Occupational Groups, and all require progressive training and experience to provide support to professional positions, regardless of the involved disciplines.

For example, the entry technical job class, VR Assistant I, is considered equivalent to complex, specialized clerical/technical work performed by Administrative Clerk III (R10), Medical Records Assistant (R10), Social Services Associate I (R10), or Public Health Nurse Aide (R10). A substantial portion of time is spent by VR Assistant I positions performing specialized clerical work, which supports the continuation of the range assignment, R10; the remaining time is spent learning the practices, procedures, and processes required to perform work at the journey VR Assistant II level.

The journey and benchmark VR Assistant II job class is a technician job class (traditionally known as paraprofessional) that exists to support professional job classes and requires progressive training and experience to perform duties effectively. Comparable job classes at the same range, R12, include Social Services Associate II, PFD Technician II, Pharmacy Technician, or Environmental Health Technician. The VR Assistant II job class is two ranges above the lower entry level (i.e. two-range interval practice) but one range below the ceiling of the advanced technician job class (R13).

One of the primary duties of the advanced technical job class, VR Assistant III, is found in the administrative support Administrative Assistant (R13) job class; the technician duties require specific training and experience in supporting professional work, and are considered equivalent to other technician job classes at R13. Examples include Eligibility Technician I, Licensed Practical Nurse, Laboratory Technician, and others, all considered paraprofessional job classes requiring preparation through progressive training and experience.

The duties and responsibilities, including decision-making, of the advanced technical VR Assistant III are not considered comparable to a number of R14 technician job classes found in different Occupational Groups. First, the Occupational Groups are unrelated, involving different programs, services, backgrounds, and other characteristics, such as the advanced Natural Resource Technician III job class. Secondly, the job concepts are predominantly supervisory such as the Loan Closer/Processor III job class, or advanced, lead or project leader job classes conducting research into the most complex fraud or benefit determinations, performing quality assurance reviews or audits, or being responsible for a tax function, such as the Motor Vehicle Customer Service Representative III, PFD Technician III, R&B Technician III or Tax Technician III.

Again, it must be remembered that the major change to the definition or job concept of the VR Assistant III involves the addition of administrative support duties and responsibilities, which is a close match to those described for the Administrative Assistant (R13) job class. The technician duties and responsibilities are at the advanced level, which was and continues to be true today, with no major changes.

In summary, the VR Assistant I, II, and III job classes continue to be assigned R10, 12, and 13, respectively.

Position Allocation:

See work sheet grid.

Conclusions:

The primary goals of the study were to a) eliminate any remnants of broadbanding; b) identify job class concepts, update, and collapse or expand the series; c) strengthen career ladder efforts; d) improve recruitment possibilities; and e) compare and align range assignments.

Based on the analysis of positions, documentation and interview information, the revised and/or new job classes are established as follows:

- *Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant I/II/III-Ranges 10/12/13 (No Range Change, and a revised job class definition only for the VRA III)
- *Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator I/II/III-Ranges 15/17/19 (Range Change from R16/18, and new/revised job class definitions)
- *Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I/II/III/IV-Ranges 15/17/19/20 (Range Change from R16/18/19, and new/revised job class definitions)
- *Vocational Rehabilitation Manager-Range 20 (No Range Change)
- *Assistant Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Services-Range 21 (No Range Change)

A revised job class definition/concept for the VR Assistant III job class has been made. New job class definitions/concepts for the Evaluator and Counselor job classes have been created or revised. The VR Counselor Associate I/II and VR Evaluator I/II job classes are being abolished.

The FLSA designations for all positions have been reviewed. Changes from N (overtime eligible) to Y (not overtime eligible) are being made for all journey and advanced professional positions at the Counselor II/III and Evaluator II/III levels; the exception is one substitute position, which will remain N since it involves hourly rather than salaried pay. These changes are only corrective actions, since the changes should have been made in the past when lower level professional positions were flexed/reallocated to the journey and above job class levels.

The current bargaining unit designations remain the same.

Attachments:

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Department of Labor & Workforce Development

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Management Services-General Group

Technical Services-General Group

Employee Services