

Private and Confidential

Eligibility Worker Classification Study Report

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Section I – Background

The Eligibility Worker (EW) classification series (EW I, II, III, and Supervisor) was scheduled for a Job Analysis/Classification Study in 2013; however, at the request of county welfare directors, the scheduled study was postponed due to the pending implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the unknown impact of Health Care Reform on the EW classification series.

CPS HR Consulting (CPS) has been working since 2014 to gather numerous data regarding the impact the ACA has had on the EW classifications within California; specifically, within the Interagency Agency Merit System (IMS) counties. Listed below and on the following pages are the data gathering methodologies utilized by CPS, and next steps.

Section II – Overview/Status of Study Tasks

1. September 17, 2014 – All IMS directors were notified of the initiation of the EW job analysis process. They were asked to provide staff to attend one of three focus groups to discuss changes in the EW job.
2. October 3, 2014 – A brief electronic survey was sent to IMS directors to collect preliminary information about the types of changes observed in the EW job due to the ACA. Results were used to structure the focus group agenda.
3. The focus groups listed below were facilitated by MSS staff:
 - October 14, 2014 – Merced County
 - Participants included Merced, Madera, Monterey, Tuolumne, Riverside, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties.
 - October 28, 2014 – El Dorado County
 - Participants included El Dorado, Imperial, Lake, Mariposa, Napa, Riverside, Sonoma, and Ventura counties.
 - October 31, 2014 – Tehama County
 - Participants included Tehama, Calaveras, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Modoc, Mendocino, Siskiyou, and Trinity counties.

4. March 2015 – CPS developed an automated job analysis questionnaire (JAQ). Participation was requested by all IMS counties, and 598 completed JAQs were received:
 - EW I- 135
 - EW II- 263
 - EW III-124
 - EW Supervisor- 76
5. June 29, 2015 – CPS conducted a subject-matter-expert (SME) panel with six counties (Glenn, Humboldt, Merced, Monterey, Tehama, and Tuolumne) to discuss the eligibility tasks and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) data collected from the automated JAQ. The panel was represented by:
 - Thirty – two participants (10 EW IIs, 7 EW IIIs, 13 EW Supervisors, and 2 Program Managers).
6. August 2015 – CPS conducted a follow-up supplemental survey to gather clarification on twenty-two tasks and KSA statements.
7. September 2015 – January 2016 – CPS finalized job analysis data and began working on new written testing items.
8. November and December 2015 – CPS staff conducted telephone meetings with staff identified by the counties. The meetings were with all counties that use the EW classifications (or comparable classification titles) with the exception of Alpine, Inyo, and Lassen counties, which use the Integrated Case Worker (ICW) classifications in lieu of the EW classification series. These three counties were not included in the meetings.
 - The purpose of the meetings was to discuss three preliminary classification options given the differences in several delivery structures and collect ideas regarding additional options.
 - Option 1 - Keep the classification structure (Levels I, II III, and Supervisor) as is and update the classification specifications consistent with the changes in the duties and responsibilities, as well as the KSAs.
 - Option 2 - Develop a new classification level (EW trainee or EW IV).
 - Option 3 - Create a parallel eligibility classification series for staff specifically assigned to Medi-Cal and ACA related cases.
9. February and March 2016 – CPS researched the classification structure, titles and minimum qualification patterns of Approved Local Merit System (ALMS) counties for comparison. IMS counties were contacted regarding the level of training needed for new EWs.

10. April 2016 – CPS prepared a draft classification summary report which included recommended changes to the classification series and crosswalks to compare old and revised classifications. The draft classification summary report was sent to IMS counties for review with a survey on titles and preferred structures.
11. May 2016 – CPS developed revised classification specifications for review by counties. The existing classification specifications were created in 1976 and last revised in 2003. The proposed revised classification specifications were sent to counties for review and comment. Work continued on test development.
12. June 2016 – MSS finalized classification report and class specs.

Section III – Classification Concepts Relevant to the Study

An accurate and up-to-date classification system provides an organization with the necessary tools to make administrative, fiscal control, and human resources decisions. Further, accurate, current, and ADA-compliant classification specifications provide the fundamental and essential building blocks for successfully administering recruitment, performance management, compensation, and succession planning programs. In addition to providing the basis for these types of human resources management and process decisions, position classification can also effectively support systems of administrative and fiscal control. Identifying positions based on a well-defined and orderly classification system supports organizational planning, budget analysis and preparation, and various other administrative functions.

The classification analysis as applied to the eligibility positions relies upon sound principles of job evaluation. Using these principles, CPS has developed a classification structure that is designed to reflect distinct differences in the levels and types of work being performed based on established classification factors and concepts.

This section of the report presents the conceptual framework for the methods used by CPS in developing a classification plan for eligibility related positions. To facilitate review, this section is organized as follows:

- General Guidelines and Definitions
- Nature of the Work
- Classification Job Family Levels

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND DEFINITIONS

While CPS did not conduct an individual analysis of each position encompassed in this study through the use of individual position description questionnaires or interviews; the data

gathering tasks described in the Background section of this report provided detailed information regarding the nature of the work associated with each classification and how it has changed, the tasks currently performed, the knowledge and abilities needed to perform those tasks, as well as other relevant classification information. There are some general classification guidelines, concepts, and definitions that are relevant to this project. Although not all classification guidelines and concepts have been used in this report, we present below those, which have, and how the guideline or concept is relevant to the project.

Standard Allocation Factors

In order to develop classification recommendations, positions in each classification are first analyzed based on the nature of work performed. Nature of work refers to the occupation, profession, or subject-matter field in which positions fall. Positions that perform work of a similar nature are considered to be in the same “job family”. Within each job family, the level of the position is then determined by evaluating it against the following factors:

- **Decision Making** - This consists of (i) the decision-making responsibility and degree of independence or latitude that is inherent in the position and (ii) the impact of the decisions.
- **Scope and Complexity** - This defines the breadth and difficulty of the assigned function or program responsibility inherent in the classification.
- **Contact with Others Required by the Job** - This measures (i) the types of contacts and (ii) the purpose of the contacts.
- **Supervision Received and Exercised** - This describes the level of supervision received from others and the nature of supervision provided to other workers. It relates to the independence of action inherent in a position.
- **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities** - This defines the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform assigned responsibilities. This general guideline facilitates the creation of a shared understanding of how common allocation factors have been used throughout the analysis to identify whether (i) there should be multiple levels within the classification series, (ii) sufficient differences exist in the levels of the classification series to justify the multiple levels, and (iii) actual position allocation (although position allocation was not a part of this study process).

Whole-Job Analysis

For purposes of this study, CPS used a whole-job analysis approach. This approach compares jobs with one another on the basis of an overall evaluation of difficulty or performance. The entire position, including the skills required, the decision-making authority, the scope, the magnitude of work, and the accountability for results, is compared as a whole to other

positions. Whole job methodology is a commonly used best practice when evaluating the composition of a classification structure to determine, based upon the data received, what types of work exist within the organization and what classifications would meet those current and future needs.

Point in Time Analysis

A classification study primarily captures the essential nature of positions at a single point in time. Therefore, recommendations cannot be based upon all possible future changes, particularly in a rapidly changing environment where organizational needs, technologies, and skill requirements are continuously evolving.

- Overall, the proposed classification structure, the levels of work, and the functional areas identified should provide a strong foundation for future classification needs in the functional areas covered by the study. CPS has, to the extent possible, recommended classification options based on operational necessities and service delivery model changes; other additions or deletions from the plan may take place in the future.

Preponderant Duties

Classification studies often find that positions are assigned a wide range of duties and that incumbents have various levels of responsibility at any one time; therefore, the positions must be analyzed based on their preponderant duties. Preponderance is a measure of importance, and the most preponderant duties of a position are those that support the primary purpose of the position. Sometimes the most time-consuming duties of a position are preponderant; however, consideration must sometimes be given to the responsibility and complexity of certain duties that do not occupy the majority of the incumbent's time. Overall, the determination of preponderance is a judgment call based on a consistent set of factors.

- This general guideline is relevant because the purpose of the focus group sessions was to identify key duties and responsibilities assigned to the Eligibility Worker series. By asking the same structured questions of counties representing the diverse range of services, the outcome of the focus group sessions provided some common duties and responsibilities which are preponderant to the classifications.

CPS is aware that incumbents in the Eligibility Worker classifications may perform different functions based on county needs and assignments. Not all workers perform every duty listed in this report. ACA has affected some positions more than others, depending on the programs assigned. However, the majority of EWs perform similar duties.

Level and Not Volume of Work

Position classification is a reflection of the level of work performed by an employee and is generally independent of volume. For example, if one employee processes double the work of another, yet the percentages of time spent on those tasks and other duties are comparable, a single classification should be appropriate for both positions. In fact, study questionnaires do not ask for, and the consultants do not consider, the relative productivity of employees when evaluating positions. Likewise, classifications are not distinguished by the amount of time spent by incumbents on tasks or the volume of work assigned to positions since problems of excessive workload are properly solved by redistributing work or adding employees, not by creating new classifications.

- This guideline is relevant because there is often confusion over work volume, which can be a performance related or staffing issue, and cannot be addressed in any classification process.

Classification of the Position, Not the Employee

Position classifications should be consistent regardless of who holds the position. As such, a classification study process classifies positions, not individual employees. Furthermore, classification does not consider the capabilities of individual employees or the efficiency and effectiveness of an incumbent. It is not a measure of how well an individual employee performs, but of the actual duties assigned to the employee. Thus, classification is not a tool to reward individual achievement, nor should classifications be created simply to reward length of service.

- Employees, supervisors, and managers often view job content through employee performance characteristics which are unrelated to the classification concept of evaluating the work which the organization has determined should be assigned to a specific position, irrespective of how well an employee performs that work.

Position Versus Classification

Position and classification are two words that are often thought of as interchangeable, but in fact, have very different meanings. In a position plan, a position is an assigned group of duties and responsibilities performed by one person. Sometimes the word “job” is appropriately used in the place of position.

In contrast, a classification may contain only one position, or may consist of a number of positions. When there are several positions assigned to one classification, it means that the same title is appropriate for each position because the scope, level, duties, and responsibilities of each position assigned to the classification are sufficiently similar (but not necessarily identical); the same core knowledge, skills, and other requirements are appropriate for all positions, and the same salary range is equitable for all positions.

Classification Versus Allocation

Classification is the process of identifying and describing the various kinds of work in an organization and grouping similar positions together based on job family, classification series, and classification distinctions. Allocation is more specifically tied to the placement and/or budgeting of positions within an organization. Thus, agencies may allocate a position within an organization based on the results of the classification analysis for that position.

- The purpose of this study was to identify changes in classifications, and not to allocate positions.

Classification Job Family Levels

Within each classification series, there may be a classification at every level or only at selected levels. The levels within a job family reflect the organization and should be tailored to that organization's needs and priorities. The categories recommended are described as follows:

Trainee level classifications are designed to provide an on-the-job training opportunity to an employee who has no directly related work experience or education. Positions at this level receive close supervision and work is checked frequently. This is an optional class – depending on the structure of each county.

Entry-level classifications are designed to provide an on-the-job training opportunity to an employee who has limited or no directly related work experience and is not yet performing the full range of work assigned to the journey-level class. In some cases positions which are limited in scope and/or performing more basic duties may be permanently allocated to the entry-level. The designation of "I" is used for this level, e.g. Eligibility Specialist I.

Journey-level classifications recognize positions that perform the full range of tasks typically assigned to positions in the job family. A journey-level position requires incumbents to be fully competent in performing assigned duties. The designation of "II" is used for this level, e.g. Eligibility Specialist II.

Advanced journey-level classifications describe positions with specialized and/or complex duties beyond the journey-level of the series. Incumbents may also serve as a lead. Leads are typically responsible for providing lead supervision to a group of at least three lower level staff while performing the day-to-day work themselves. The designation of "III" is used for this level, e.g. Eligibility Specialists III.

Supervisor-level classifications describe full, first-line supervisory positions that plan, assign, supervise, and formally review the work of subordinates; assist in program development and management; and assume responsibility for a variety of personnel actions in such areas as performance evaluation, training, selection, transfers, approval of leave, and recommending disciplinary measures. Supervisors may also assist in

budget development and administration. Most “working” supervisors also spend a substantial portion of their time performing the more difficult and complex work of the section or unit. The designation of “Supervisor” has been used for this level classification, e.g. Eligibility Supervisor.

Within most job families, other levels exist above the Supervisor; however, management positions were not included in the scope of this study.

Summary of Findings

County Structure Changes

CPS recognizes that all counties utilize the current classification structure differently. Of the 27 IMS counties, 24 counties use the EW series, and three use ICWs only. Some counties use the current structure, but use their own county classification titles; and the IMS counties vary in size from seven employees to more than 700 employees; therefore, each county is using a different organizational structure and service delivery model. There is also a great deal of diversity in EW assignments between counties:

- Some counties divide EW assignments into intake/continuing.
- Some EWs have specialized assignments.
- Some EWs are assigned to work on either single programs, multiple programs, or anything that comes their way.
- Three counties operate as either task based (where the EW is responsible for a specialized task performed across a large number of shared cases), eight counties are caseload based (where the EW is assigned a caseload and works all tasks for those cases), and 13 counties operate with a combination of tasks and caseloads.

Impact of ACA

The changes brought about by the ACA have affected most EWs, however, due to the current structure at some counties where staff is assigned to individual programs; some EWs are working on programs that have not been impacted.

The “No Wrong Door” approach to service delivery means that the majority of EWs must now know all programs, whereas in the past, less experienced/capable workers could work in less complex programs, and the more experienced/capable workers could specialize in the more complex programs.

The lines between intake and continuing work have blurred because of the multiple approval steps through state and federal systems, and the opportunity for customers to change their benefit choices (within Covered California). Intake becomes a longer, more convoluted process.

As a result, depending on the county, EWs must be able to perform both intake and continuing tasks. In fact, trends have shown that several counties are moving away from caseload assignments and more toward task or team based assignments.

Some of the IMS counties have call centers for Eligibility and/or call centers for Covered California. Therefore, the “one size fits most” MSS class structure is no longer working for all of the IMS counties.

The data gathering tasks, noted in the Background section of this report, have confirmed that the way in which eligibility determination is conducted has changed. Such change has impacted the classification and may have subsequent implications on the classification specifications and compensation.

Changes to the Eligibility Function

Provided below is a summary of the specific areas that have changed with supporting examples:

- **Scope of work and span-of-control** – In addition to the changing demographics of the customers, the way customers apply for public assistance has also changed. As noted, customers now represent various socio-economic backgrounds and can apply via telephone, online, by mail, and/or in person. Frequently, customers apply via multiple sources, and depending on the changes initiated or reported, this may require multiple responses by the EW. EW assignments may now require:
 - Assisting customers in determining the best health plan benefit to choose and increased review of cases given the ACA.
 - Complex troubleshooting. The requirement for EWs to troubleshoot is not new; however, the complexity of troubleshooting has increased. The troubleshooting has more to do with interfacing of the multiple programs. Tasks completed for one program can favorably or negatively impact the qualifications of another. As stated, a significant part of the increase in troubleshooting has to do with customers being able to apply on their own in multiple ways, often causing discrepancies that the worker needs to resolve.
 - Knowledge in systems, health care programs and tiers, tax filing status, and income has become a regular and recurring part of the job.
- **Decision making and judgement** – EWs at all levels, but more so, the journey through supervisor levels, work within established procedures using resources (regulations, guidelines, etc.) that are frequently changing, vague, and/or conflicting. In addition, multiple steps are required to bring most tasks to resolution. This appears to have magnified given the changes resulting from the ACA.

- **Consequence of error** – Although the IMS counties have several processes, procedures, and quality control initiatives in place to detect an error or mitigate the possibility of an error being made, the multiple steps, systems, etc., make it difficult to ensure an error will not negatively impact customers.

The additional EW duties required by the ACA include determining household composition based on tax filing status, enrolling customers in insurance programs offered through Covered California, determining advanced premium tax credits for private health insurance, explaining insurance plans and tax implications to customers, the implementation of a “No Wrong Door” policy, and added referrals from California Healthcare Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention System. Therefore, due to the addition of these duties, the complexity, knowledge, and consequence of error of the EW function has increased.

Recommendations

Titling

During the discussion with IMS counties, several counties suggested that the title of “Eligibility Worker” was outdated and no longer consistent with the purpose and nature of the job. Generally, counties felt the “Worker” portion of the title should be changed. CPS collected survey responses. 20 of 24 counties who use the EW classification responded to the survey. 13 counties preferred the new title of Eligibility Specialist for the series. Six counties wanted to keep the title of Eligibility Worker and one county wanted to use their existing county title of Family Services Representative.

CPS will adopt the new title of Eligibility Specialist, but counties can continue to use their existing titles as their working title, if they prefer.

Classification Structure Options

Recognizing that the existing classification structure may not meet the needs of all IMS counties, CPS recommends establishing an additional classification structure. Many counties expressed concerns about the changing duties and responsibilities, amount of time it takes for staff to become fully competent, the level of KSAs required, and the length of training. Therefore, CPS has developed the trainee level to allow employees additional time, training, and experience prior to appointment to the journey-level, which requires employees to function under general supervision performing the full scope of work. This new structure would provide counties with two classification structure options to choose from and create minimal implementation disruptions. The same classification specification will be used for both structures.

- Option 1 – Existing classification structure
 - Eligibility Specialist I
 - Eligibility Specialist II
 - Eligibility Specialist III
 - Eligibility Supervisor
- Option 2 – new classification structure
 - Eligibility Specialist Trainee
 - Eligibility Specialist I
 - Eligibility Specialist II
 - Eligibility Specialist III
 - Eligibility Supervisor

Here are the recommended levels:

Eligibility Specialist Trainee (optional level)

The Eligibility Specialist Trainee is considered the trainee-level classification in the Eligibility Specialist (ES) series. Incumbents work under close supervision and receive classroom instruction/training prior to being placed into a work unit. During the training program, new employees are taught multiple public assistance program concepts, rules, and regulations as well as how to operate the automated systems. While in training, all work is reviewed for quality and quantity. Once Specialists have completed the training, they are assigned cases or task based specialized assignments. Eligibility Specialist Trainees determine public assistance eligibility with the review of a lead specialist or supervisor prior to authorizing an eligibility determination. After one year of successful employment, Eligibility Specialist Trainee incumbents are expected to promote from the trainee classification to the entry-level Eligibility Specialist I.

Eligibility Specialist I

The Eligibility Specialist I is considered the entry-level classification in the Eligibility Specialist (ES) series. Incumbents work under close supervision. Eligibility Specialist I's determine public assistance eligibility. Incumbents may still need assistance from lead specialists or supervisors for more complex cases, but the majority of cases and/or tasks are performed independently. Lead specialists and supervisors monitor the error rate of the new Eligibility Specialists and continue to provide additional training and guidance regarding assigned programs. Much of the training received after the classroom is on the job training, unit training, and one-on-one training with a lead specialist and supervisor. After one year of successful employment,

Eligibility Specialist I incumbents are expected to promote from the entry classification to the full journey-level Eligibility Specialist II, unless positions are allocated at the entry level.

Eligibility Specialist II

The Eligibility Specialist II is considered the journey (full working) level classification in the Eligibility Specialist series. The main function of this level is to determine initial and/or continuing eligibility for multiple programs including CalFresh, CalWORKs, General Assistance, Medi-Cal, and Covered California. Incumbents interview clients and gather and evaluate information to determine eligibility for public assistance programs. Incumbents in this classification explain complex rules and regulations to clients and go over Rights and Responsibilities to help clients understand the legal obligations when participating in government funded programs. The class of Eligibility Specialist II is distinguished from the Eligibility Specialist I by the degree of supervision received and the higher degree of working knowledge required regarding program rules and regulations.

Eligibility Specialist III

The Eligibility Specialist III is considered the advanced journey-level classification and subject matter expert in the Eligibility Specialist series. Eligibility Specialist IIIs are responsible for providing lead technical support, training, and direct oversight to less experienced Eligibility Specialists (ES Trainee/I/II) and/or carrying specialized caseloads not typically assigned to journey-level specialists. ES IIIs provide comprehensive guidance and direction regarding eligibility determination and assist with troubleshooting difficult and complex cases and correcting conflicting system entries; review the work of ESs engaged in eligibility determination to ensure accurate eligibility determinations are made and provide coaching and mentoring to staff; conduct case reviews prior to Fair Hearings; conduct Quality Appraisal/Quality Control reviews; and are responsible for developing training materials, procedures, and guidelines related to program changes and/or updates, case processing, case management, and interviewing techniques. ES IIIs may act for the Eligibility Supervisor during periods of absence.

Other less time intensive duties performed by the ES IIIs may include acting as a liaison to other units, departments, or agencies when needed to gather additional information in making eligibility determinations; facilitating General Assistance Orientations; backing up other ESs in times of absence or vacancy; and helping to de-escalate upset or volatile client situations.

Eligibility Supervisor

The Eligibility Supervisor is the first line supervisor over the Eligibility Specialist class series. The main function of this level is to provide supervisory, administrative, and technical support to an eligibility work unit engaged in determining initial and continuing eligibility for multiple public assistance programs. Incumbents are responsible for planning and scheduling work assignments and ensuring adequate coverage and equitable caseloads among staff members,

identifying staff training needs, and conducting performance evaluations. Incumbents analyze cases to ensure accuracy of decisions and timeliness of processing. Eligibility Supervisors assist with difficult program cases and make final processing decisions in relation to such cases.

In addition to supporting the experienced specialists with ongoing training and guidance in the more technical and complex aspects of eligibility, a great deal of time and effort is spent on developing new eligibility specialists to become proficient in determining eligibility for multiple public assistance programs and developing good caseload and time management skills.

The supervisors are responsible for communicating and supporting the implementation of new programs and business processes to the work team, and therefore, must stay abreast of all federal, state, and county level changes involving Eligibility programs.

Increase to Minimum Qualifications patterns

The changes in the minimum qualifications (MQs) reflect the changes in the job based on the data gathered during this process. The scope and complexity of the job duties have increased the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to successfully perform all the functions of the position. Approximately one additional year of experience is needed. We believe these changes will help to provide counties with the most qualified candidates for the job. The Eligibility Specialist Trainee has the same MQ pattern as the former EW I.

Compensation Recommendations

Although CPS does not have any purview over compensation, we certainly anticipate that the changes to the EW classifications and increased minimum qualifications warrant a compensation adjustment. CPS recommends that counties work with their County Human Resources Departments to review compensation for these classifications, given the revised duties, KSAs, and minimum qualifications.

Next Steps

CPS will start working with each county to implement the revised or new classification structure. We understand that implementing the new classification specifications may be a meet and confer issue that will delay counties in adopting these new classifications. We understand that any change to compensation has budget implications. While we are sensitive to county budget issues, the changes in the minimum qualifications reflect the changes in the job based on the data gathered during this process. The scope and complexity of the job duties have increased the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to successfully perform all the functions of the position. We believe these changes will help to provide you with the most qualified candidates for the job.

You will continue to use the current Eligibility Worker classification while your county is going through the process to adopt the new classification and title. Since each county process is different, the duration for implementation will vary. Your assigned consultant will be in contact with you periodically to see where you are in the process.

Additionally, we will be reaching out to counties to review the new Eligibility Specialist exam during the pilot test phase.

If you have, any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your assigned consultant or Karen Rodriguez, Senior Consultant, via email at krodriguez@cps hr.us or by phone at (916) 471-3348.

Appendix A: Classification Specifications

The following classification specifications have been revised and are ready to be adopted by your county.

- Eligibility Specialist Trainee (optional)
- Eligibility Specialist I
- Eligibility Specialist II
- Eligibility Specialist III
- Eligibility Supervisor