

Summary of Discussions with Focus Groups from the Custodial Occupational Group

Overview of Findings

In the custodial occupational group the complexity levels of the work assignments are different depending on the agency's usage of the class series and its organizational structure. Complexity is generally measured by the level of cleaning required, the type of facility or cleaning area, and the tasks performed (i.e. general cleaning; repairs; security; usage of chemicals and cleansers; grounds maintenance, and instructions to clients, inmates, students, and office workers).

An example of the complexity differences within the custodial class series can be seen by the knowledge needed by employees in different state facilities. In historical or museum sites or facilities, employees regularly use knowledge of preservation and handling techniques on and around valuable objects; in correctional facilities, they use leadership skills to maintain order and supervise the conduct of inmates or residents that are assigned to them in performing cleaning and custodial duties; in university facilities, they use knowledge of housing management methods, practices, and operating techniques related to housing, temporary quarters, and other accommodations to instruction students and guests in use of household appliances, house policy; and in these and other sites and facilities, they use construction trade skills in the maintenance of building and grounds requiring semiskilled work in painting, plastering, and plumbing. In addition, complexity of the work can be seen by industry specific guidelines and safety regulations an employee must follow. Some positions must follow OSHA and EPA guidelines to include blood-born pathogens and other related guidelines while other positions do not need to follow this higher level of standards.

Therefore, due to these above variables one agency an employee may be classified at the lowest level in a class series, while an employee in same class series in another agency who has the same level of complexity in their work will be classified in a higher level of the series or in any job class series. Inadvertently, then, it appears the custodial class series doesn't totally reflect the work that is being performed or don't reflect the training and experience that employees are required to possess.

Responsibility

The custodial workers' responsibility level range from workers who receive specific instructions for each new task, and are usually not required to use judgment, since their work is scheduled for them and is checked upon completion to workers who receive only general supervision, and get only general instructions on what is to be done, and must know the proper uses of a variety of special cleaning and sanitizing solutions.

The custodial supervisor' and managers' responsibility level range from supervisory duties that are not performed as a regular and recurring part of the job and on substantially full-time and continuing basis to supervisory duties where the employee has administrative accountability for matters such as attendance, leave, vacation schedules, grievances, and discipline, and has responsibility for the quantity and quality of the work.

Minimum Qualifications

The majority of the participants agreed that the current minimum qualifications were sufficient.

Type of Supervision Received

The level of supervision is based on the organizational structure. In the majority of the agencies workers generally receive limited supervision and the work usually does not require the use of independent judgment or discretion. While supervision is limited, employees generally do not have authority to make independent decisions outside of standard operating procedures or guidelines. As one becomes experienced, employees are given more independent judgment to act on their own discretion. Supervision exists to provide general direction, review judgments made by employees, and clarify standards, policies and procedures that are normally seen as the day-to-day work activities of a supervisor. Additional, specific instructions are given for new, difficult, or unusual assignments. In a few agencies the workers receive direct supervision and work in teams. Employees are not given independent judgment to act on their own discretion. Work is checked daily for completeness.

What Criteria Should Compensation be Based? There seemed to be a consensus from the custodial workers that the scope of work and the job performance should be one of, if not the primary criteria for the basis of compensation for custodial worker positions. This was pointed out by the custodial crew leaders who believe because they oversee their staffs' work they should be compensated at a higher rate than a custodial specialist who does not have these responsibilities. Longevity is also seen as being important to reward for continuous service.

The consensus from custodial supervisors and managers was longevity should be primary criteria for custodial workers. There was plenty of interest from some managers in having the flexibility in providing some compensation to individuals who perform specialized work or their work performance is above other workers. While performance and other personal characteristics were thought to be important criteria on which pay should be based, the participants expressed concern with the ability to fairly administer a system that bases pay on those qualities. The primary concern was favoritism.