

Summary of Discussions with Focus Groups Laundry, Cooks and Food Service

Overview of Findings

This focus group was comprised of two different areas of work – laundry and food service. Within food service, some agencies have opted not to utilize the food service worker classification due to the low pay and instead utilize the cook classification for that work. Some agencies use both the Cook and the Cook Senior whereas others only utilize one of the classes (which becomes a mute point as of 6/15/08 since the Cook class is being abolished and those employees are being transferred to the Cook Senior).

The use of the Food Service Supervisor, in at least some cases, is that of a working supervisor, and there is not always a clear distinguish in the type of work done between the Food Service Supervisor and Food Service Supervisor Senior. The 6 levels of food service related classifications (including the Food Service Manager) do more to create a career ladder for employees than to actually distinguish between different types of work. In many cases, the State could accommodate these differences with lead worker or supervisory differentials.

The work in the Food Service Worker, Cook, Laundry Worker and in some cases Food Service Supervisor classifications is very task oriented. There is little to no latitude to make decisions and a short learning curve would be expected. It is not uncommon for an employee in the Cook/Cook Senior or Laundry Worker classification to be responsible to direct the work of inmates or student workers. This includes training and may include doing evaluations on their work. Participants expressed concern about having one classification of cooks. The difference in the work between the Food Service Worker and Cook Senior is very broad.

One interesting aspect that came from the discussion is, typically, the cooks are considered essential personnel in cases of inclement weather. Which, when you think about it, it makes sense; the folks in the hospitals and schools still need to eat regardless of the weather.

Distinguishing the Food Service Supervisor and the Food Service Manager.

Based on the examples from the focus group, Food Service Managers are responsible for hiring and employee relations issues. They may fill in “on the floor” occasionally, but the purpose of the job is not the production, but the oversight or smooth running of the facility/facilities.

Food Service Supervisors and Supervisor Seniors are responsible for day-to-day production operations and regularly fill in “on the floor”. This includes creating the production sheets, maintaining time sheets and evaluating employees. The term

“working supervisor” is consistent with many of the aspects of the Food Service Supervisors and even Supervisor Seniors.

Minimum Qualifications

The majority of the participants agree with the current minimum qualifications for the Laundry Worker, Food Service Worker and Cook. However, additional experience is necessary for the Cook Sr. Food Service Supervisor, Food Service Supervisor Senior and Food Service Manager. The Food Service Supervisor Senior and Food Service Manager should also have some leadership/supervisory experience. According to the group, four years experience and 1 year / 2 years leadership/supervisory experience are better current minimum qualifications for the Food Service Supervisor Senior and Food Service Manager, respectively.

The minimum qualifications indicate commercial cooking experience, but commercial cooking experience does not always provide an adequate background and experience level for a person to come into an institutional setting.

SUPERVISION

Type of Supervision Received & Type of Work Done

Regular oversight rather than strict supervision is typical of the Cooks and Food Service Workers. Supervisors regularly work along side the employees.

Food Service Supervisors have some latitude in decisions, but need to validate many of the decisions made. Often times Food Service Supervisors are not involved in the hiring process. Food Service Supervisor Seniors and Food Service Managers tend to have a more informative, collaborative relationship with their supervisors.

Because of the routine nature of the Laundry Worker, long-term employees need little to no direct supervision.

COMPENSATION

What Criteria Should Compensation be Based?

Even though the nature of the cooks' work is routine, there still are knowledge, skills and abilities essential to performing the duties. To excel in the field, behavioral aspects of the individual come into play. The employee who goes above and beyond, should be rewarded. This includes the willingness to work overtime, volunteering to help in other areas and flexibility.

Bonuses are one possible way to reward employees in the Cook, Laundry and Food Service Worker classes. Bonuses do not need to be large but small (\$5, \$10, \$20) discretionary bonuses that a manager could distribute on the spot for above and beyond actions or behaviors. However, caution should be taken, because it is easy for an expectation to arise that a particular action or behavior will be rewarded with a discretionary bonus the next time it occurs. There are mixed opinions in the group about this idea. Many feel the bonus would be more beneficial than a few extra dollars

in the pay check, but a couple prefer hourly increases instead. The bonus concept could apply in a larger scale for taking on a large project or initiative in the organization.

The consensus of the group is that the longevity bonus does not improve performance, but we should recognize longevity for loyalty's sake. Even though longevity bonuses do not improve performance, pay based on longevity is a good thing for no growth positions.

The State pays shift differentials for working 2nd and 3rd shift. Since food service is essential, typically employees in these classifications work variable schedules to include holiday and weekends. In addition, the employees are required to be present during inclement weather. A differential for such positions would be appreciated.

To help eliminate some of the favoritism that could exist from discretionary bonus and employee based compensation, the group proposed that employees could help set the bonus criteria or nominate fellow employees for a bonus. Raises should not necessarily be something that happens automatically, an individual that does not work should not get a raise.

The concern about raises being based on supervisory evaluations in this group is a little different than in other classes. There is some concern of favoritism, but also concern about a supervisor's ability to actually do the evaluation. Because of individual skill sets, not all supervisors can adequately express that an employee is performing exceptional.