**VHA Standardized Position Description**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Office of Research and Development (ORD)**

1. **Who developed this new standardized Office of Research and Development (ORD) position description (PD)?**

# The following national standardized position description was developed by ORD and their team of subject matter experts in consultation with the Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) HR Operations Office (HROO) Classification with concurrence from HR Center of Expertise (HRCoE) Classification.

# PD# 99718-S, GS-0601-11, Health Science Specialist

# What was the purpose of establishing this new standardized position description?

# Broadly, the establishment of VA-wide PDs helps to ensure the consistent assignment of tasks and organizational structures at VHA facilities. Specifically, this PD is in alignment with the ORD Modernization efforts. The duties described in the PD reflect updates to the positions’ responsibilities, assist in streamlining the hiring process, and establish consistency within the ORD operations performed at the facility level, in consideration of the positions’ responsibilities within the future state.

# Under what specific delegation of classification authority has WMC HRCoE classified this position?

# In June 2017, VA’s Office of Chief Human Capital Officer delegated authority for nationally standardized classified position descriptions, including those affecting 20 or more substantially similar positions to the Chief Officer, Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC). The Chief Officer, WMC, further delegated this authority in September 6, 2019 to WMC HR Center of Expertise (HRCoE) to provide VHA administration-level classification policy, guidance, oversight, and training (in partnership with WMC Human Resource Development). WMC HRCoE will also have final technical authority to classify, approve, and implement the standardized position descriptions/functional statements in their entirety, including those affecting 20 or more substantially similar positions in the VHA. Additionally, HRCoE has delegated authority to perform all classification and position management actions, to include but not limited to all categories of determinations listed on the OF-8, for VHA positions in instances of requests for reconsideration of classification and position management actions regarding complex classification concerns.

1. **How was the Health Science Specialist PD developed?**

WMC HRCoE Classification team concurred with the evaluation of the position using Office of Personnel Management (OPM) classification standards, the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), and VA Handbook 5005, as appropriate. Human Resources staff with specific questions on the grade-level determination are encouraged to contact HRCoE Classification at [VHA106AWMCClassification@va.gov](mailto:VHA106AWMCClassification@va.gov).

# Is it mandatory for a facility to implement the national standardized PD?

# Yes. This standardized VHA PD was created with the intention that it will apply to all VHA facilities with this particular program. As with the implementation of any standardized PD, proper position management principles must be considered. This position description should be implemented within the corresponding VHA field facilities.

1. **May a local Consolidated Classification Unit (CCU) target or create Statements of Difference (SODs) for standardized full performance PDs?**

No. All SODs for standardized PDs must be completed by WMC HRCoE Classification. Any SOD completed will be loaded onto the SharePoint site (link below) which contains all information related to Office of Research and Development modernization (e.g., position descriptions, FAQs, guidance documents, presentations):

<https://www.research.va.gov/resources/policies/human_resources.cfm>

# Is a local OF-8/coversheet needed?

No. The PD includes an OF-8 signed by senior program office management and certified in block 21 by HRCoE staff. The local supervisor at each facility will sign off on the approved OF-8 in the supervisory block.

1. **What actions are taken next?**

# The local supervisor signs Block 20(a) of the Optional Form (OF-8) certifying that the PD is an accurate description of the work to be assigned and performed by the position. The supervisor forwards the standardized PD, signed OF-8 (or signed coversheet), and any required supporting documentation to the VISN HR Consolidated Classification Unit (CCU) utilizing established VISN HR processes. Once the standardized PD is officially established the supervisor works closely with VISN HR for recruitment guidance, options, and criteria.

# Who is the point of contact for questions on recruitment?

Management officials are encouraged to contact their VISN Chief HR Officer.

# 10) Who is the point of contact for questions on classification?

# Management officials are encouraged to contact their VISN HR. Should VISN HR need assistance, they are encouraged to contact WMC HR CoE Classification team at [VHA106AWMCClassification@va.gov](mailto:VHA106AWMCClassification@va.gov)

**11) Who determines how this position is filled?**

The supervisor, Medical Center leadership, and VISN HR comply with VA Handbook 5005 and bargaining unit agreements to fill this position. The direct supervisor will determine, in concert with VISN HR, the area of consideration, recruitment methods, and hiring process.

**12)** **Do the standardized position description need to be re-numbered by the VISN CCU? Do the VISN CCUs need to create a new OF-08 prior to implementation?**

No, there is no action needed by the VISN CCU prior to utilization of the nationally standardized PD. The standardized PD must be used “as is.” The VISN CCUs are encouraged to add this PD to their local library.

**13) Can the facility change the reporting structure of the Health Science Specialist to have the position report to a lower-level office?**

No. The standardized PD is part of a Classification Modernization project. All reporting structures noted within the position description must be followed when implementing the PD.