



Co-Editors: Hannah Rothenberg
Rachel Dillon

hannah.rothenberg@albanycounty.com
rachel.dillon@albanycounty.com

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE:

Tips for Completing a New Position Description Form – Review of Job Specifications – Job Duties Statements – New Forms – Payroll Certification for Schools – Appropriate Job Interview Questions – Training – Director’s Message

JOB DUTIES STATEMENTS

--What are we looking for?--



A job duties statement is a brief description of the tasks and responsibilities required of the position. Feel free to use whatever format you choose and please submit the statement on agency letterhead.



In mid-August, you should have received an email from David Walker, the Deputy Personnel Officer, requesting review of the job specifications for the positions used in your agency. We **encourage** you to make changes to these specifications as many are old, use outdated language and do not accurately reflect the current position. If you have not yet completed this review, please contact David Walker to discuss arrangements for an extension.



N·E·W F·O·R·M·S

On 8/5/10, you should have received an email from David Walker outlining two new forms: the Review of Vacancy Form and the New Position Description Form. The **Review of Vacancy Form (ACS-29)** is to be used by you each time you seek to fill a vacant position. Its purpose, for Civil Service, is to review the circumstances of the original Civil Service position classification and to determine if changes have occurred which would prompt us to reclassify the position. This form was instituted as a result of a recent New York State Audit.

The second new form is the **New Position Description Form (ACS-30)**, which is merely replacing our former CC-1. This is to be used whenever you wish to propose the creation of a new position. Please see the hot topic for tips on how to complete the New Position Description Form.

Hot!

Tips for Completing a New Position Description Form

Setting the framework for a new position can be quite a challenge. Here are some tips to help you complete the more difficult sections of the form.



Section 9: Typical Work Activities: Activities should be listed in order of importance. The action word of each activity should be in the present tense, for example, "Directs..., Oversees..., Maintains..., etc." The list is not intended to include all activities, but those that are characteristic of the position and are related to successful job performance. There should be no repetition of anything written in the Distinguishing Features of the Class and vice versa.

See the chart below for an outline that may be helpful in completing this section, which includes an example of a typical work activity for a Personnel Technician.

What does worker do? (Action verb)	To what or for whom? (Object of verb)	How? (Procedures, tools, etc.)	Why? (Product or expected outcome)
Example:			
Reviews	Applicants' qualifications	Against the minimum qualifications as outlined on the job specification	To verify that they meet the requirements for examination or appointment



Section 8: Distinguishing Features of the Class:

This should be a paragraph that describes the essential nature and function of the position. You may want to summarize the main responsibility of the position into one or two sentences. You should mention whether the position is entry-level, clerical, technical, administrative, etc. The paragraph should also include supervision received and given (if applicable) and whether that supervision is general, direct or indirect. You may also want to mention how the position differs from another position in the same line, for example, how Account Clerk differs from Senior Account Clerk. The last sentence of the paragraph must read: "Does related work as required."

Section 10: Full Performance Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Personal Characteristics:

These must be written as follows: "Comprehensive/thorough/good/working knowledge of..., skill in..., ability to..." They may not necessarily be expected of a new employee until after a completed probationary period and/or training period. The knowledge, skills and abilities must be directly linked to the Distinguishing Features of the Class and Typical Work Activities. New York State looks at the full performance knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics (as well as other parts of the job specification) when creating an examination. Take caution when choosing the level of knowledge required of the position. Comprehensive knowledge is expert level, while working knowledge is limited and general.

Section 11: Minimum Qualifications:

Applicant must meet the minimum qualifications at the time of appointment or examination (whichever comes first). If degree and experience is required, the minimum qualifications should be worded as follows: "Possession of _____ degree and ___ years of experience in _____." You can require a degree in a specific field or fields and can choose to accept related fields. We do not recognize "preferred" experience or degrees.

Appropriate Questions to Ask During a Job Interview

Recently, questions have arisen regarding what you can and cannot ask a prospective employee in a job interview. It is unlawful to ask questions that *directly or indirectly* seek to provide information about certain factors, such as a candidate's age, race, creed, color, national origin, sex, disability, genetic predisposition or carrier status, marital status or arrest record, unless based upon a *bona fide* occupational qualification.

For example, did you know that it is **not permissible**:

- To ask the maiden name of a married woman or whether a woman prefers the title of Miss, Ms. or Mrs.
- To ask a candidate how he or she would feel working for or with men or women.
- To ask about a candidate's mobility or ability to travel unless it is essential to successful job performance.

We can provide a copy of the New York State manual titled "**How to Conduct a Job Interview**" at your request.

FINALLY!

Candidates' social security numbers will no longer appear on certified lists.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to cancel our last scheduled **Civil Service 101 training**. Our next session will be held Wednesday, October 13th at 10:00am in room 660 of the Albany County Office Building at 112 State Street. If you were scheduled to attend the last session, you are now signed up for the upcoming session. If you cannot attend, please let us know. There are still spots available. If you wish to attend, contact your assigned Personnel Technician. If it is difficult to attend a scheduled training, we will arrange for an on-site session.





ATTENTION SCHOOLS



In October, the Director of Civil Service will be sending a letter to the schools requesting a copy of the payroll for certification. A roster of all non-teaching substitutes will be requested along with the payroll. For questions regarding the appropriate format of the substitute roster, please get in touch with your Personnel Technician.

A Message from Our Director:



In recent months you have probably heard from me more than you would wish. Like many of you, we are coping with lost resources. It is more important now than ever to get the job done right so that in these difficult times we can ensure the integrity of the merit and fitness principle with accordance to law and rule. Please spend some time reviewing and updating the language for the job specifications recently sent to you. Some may not have been modified in over a decade and use outdated language and others describe a job which, over time, has morphed into something else. This is not an idle task. A poorly written job specification can lead to poorly constructed exams, unqualified candidates and give rise to unnecessary and costly legal disputes. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

If you have been copying Civil Service forms for years, you probably are not using a newer version which has a better format, cleaner language and eliminates duplicate information. All the newer forms are designated at the bottom with "ACS" and a number. We now have ACS-1 through ACS-30. For a complete set of these forms, please contact us.

I have emphasized repeatedly that your assistance has made our many tasks easier. We are always looking to return the favor, so please feel free to offer constructive criticism of our work. A partnership based on such mutual cooperation and understanding can only improve. If there are any questions on matters great or small, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All the best,
Michael J Cummings