**DEVELOPMENT OF**

**JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

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**CURRENT JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Development of job descriptions based on the current job assignments is a key element to good management practices in any organization. They provide a systematic identification and description of the different kinds of work performed in an organization. Accurate position descriptions serve as a tool for:

* Efficient description of work performed by employees
* Planning and budgeting purposes
* Recruitment and selection of employees
* Development of an equitable salary structure
* Implementation of personnel management procedures, such as employee evaluations

It is worth the time to develop current and accurate job descriptions for purposes beyond integrating ADA into the organizational culture. If job descriptions are kept current and accurate, then accommodation with ADA requirement will be easily accomplished.

The job descriptions need to be constantly studied and updated to reflect changes in an organization’s:

* Services and functions
* Work methods
* Organizational structure
* Changes in job assignments
* General growth
* Changes in technology

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**DEVELOPMENT OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

**INFORMATION GATHERING**

Information gathering for the development of job descriptions is a dynamic, interactive process that should involve all levels within an organization including incumbents, supervisors, and management. Documentation of information is critical. It is important to maintain careful records of the data that provided information about job assignments and requirements. Both written information and interviews provide a good basis for development of accurate descriptions. Interview records should be maintained regarding dates, times, and people with whom interviews were conducted.

Steps in the Information Gathering Process:

* Gather all background information about the organization, which is available, including organization charts, mission statements, program descriptions, budget summaries, etc.
* Develop and distribute a position description questionnaire (PDQ) to be completed by subject matter experts. Subject matter experts may consist of incumbents or employees who have previously held the position and know the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the duties. The PDQ should then be reviewed by the supervisor to ensure accuracy. If reviewers want to modify information provided by incumbents have them do so through submission of supplemental data. Do not have them change incumbent’s documents. The person developing final descriptions should be aware of, and have the responsibility for resolving information conflicts.
* Study and analyze position description questionnaires and background information before starting interviews. This will provide an informed basis for asking questions and developing any additional information that may be necessary.
* Try to keep the interviews somewhat informal and “relaxed”. Make sure that incumbents know that this process is not a performance evaluation or job efficiency study. It is an attempt to identify the essential duties and requirements of positions.
* Review all written and interview data, do a preliminary analysis, and determine if additional information or interviews are necessary.
* If time permits, distribute “rough draft” descriptions for review and comments by incumbents, supervisors and management.

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**DEVELOPMENT OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

**POSITION DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE**

The key element in the development of position descriptions is the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ). It will provide the most comprehensive written documentation of job duties and physical requirements. Also, it provides a key reference for decisions on the contents of the finished position descriptions.

Elements of a Position Description Questionnaire (An Example is in Appendix A):

* Job background information is vital to pinpoint the location of the job, placement in the agency’s organizational structure, familiarity of the incumbent with the job assignments, working hours, and the main reason why the job exists.

(Page 1 – Appendix A)

* A reasonably specific description of the job duties and responsibilities, the relative importance of those responsibilities, and the amount of time spent performing work assignments needs to be developed. Without this information it is impossible to separate essential duties from those that are less important and critical. Two key points should be made to individuals faced with the difficult task of preparing this section:

1. Keep in mind that the responsibilities being described cover an extended time period: at least one year. There is a natural tendency to describe work currently being performed and overlook assignments which may be unique to specific times of the year and business cycle;

2. An incumbent should be allowed a few days to complete the questionnaire so that the incumbent may complete it and make changes as necessary while completing the tasks required of the position.

(Page 2 – Appendix A)

* Information about Special Certifications legally required to perform the job should be developed on the questionnaire. In addition, information should be gathered about machines, equipment, and vehicles operated by the incumbent, as well as office skills.

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* The final element of a comprehensive questionnaire should be designed to develop data on work interactions with others and any other critical information.

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**DEVELOPMENT OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

* The supervisory responsibilities of the position should be identified, if they exist.

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* It is necessary for the questionnaire to identify knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job. When developing this information, the focus should be that which is required to successfully perform the functions of the position on the first day, rather than extra or unique skills possessed by a particular incumbent.

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* In order to develop information about critical areas impacting successful job performance such as essential physical skills and the working environment, a more comprehensive, detailed documentation process must be included in the data gathering process. The suggested methodology is a “check-off” system covering a variety of physical requirements and working environment areas such as climbing, stooping, walking, vision, finger dexterity, hearing, etc., and exposure to dust, pesticides, electrical energy, humidity, etc. The “check-off” system is relatively easy to complete by employees and lends itself most readily to data organization. Much of the data gathered, via this form, provides a well-documented basis for discussion of “reasonable accommodation” issues with persons having physical disabilities.

(Pages 11-15 – Appendix A)

* Identification and certification of employees completing and reviewing the document. These are the primary persons in the development of the job documentation and should definitely be included in the interview process. The incumbents selected to complete the PDQ are subject matter experts and have an intimate knowledge of the knowledge, skills, and abilities regardless of whether they currently hold the classification.

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**DEVELOPMENT OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

**JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

The final product of the information gathering process is development of current, general job descriptions for a variety of uses within an organization, including integration of ADA into the organizational culture.

The following areas are suggested elements of a job description:

Definition: Summarize the reason for the job’s existence in the organization and the primary functions within a reasonably short paragraph.

Examples of Duties: A summary of the most critical and important job assignments of the position, or positions, being described. These examples specifically illustrate the definition of the job. They should include a complete outline of the scope of assignments. Of course, they are critical for recruitment and explaining the job to potential candidates and discussing “reasonable accommodation” with persons having physical or mental disabilities. The term “Examples of Duties” is used because the list of duties is not exhaustive or totally comprehensive.

Typical Physical Activities: A description of the physical activities regularly exercised by job incumbents and the working environment in which activities are performed (although many agencies include typical physical activities on the class specification, individual positions should be examined when determining if a reasonable accommodation can be made. For instance an Office Assistant in one department may be required to spend a great deal of time filing which results in bending; whereas an Office Assistant in another department may not be required to file at all).

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Employment Standards: These should be knowledge, abilities, and working background required for job entry not those possessed by an experienced job incumbent. They should be developed with promotional patterns in mind. Also, a general phrase such as “Any combination of education and experience which would likely provide the necessary knowledge and abilities, and working background outlined in the description” are not the only means of acquiring the requisite experience to perform the job.

Special Requirements: This is used when the law requires a special license, certificate, registration, or credential to perform the job.

Additional sections that may be included in the class description are:

* Distinguishing characteristics
* Typical physical activities
* Supervision received and exercised
* Introductory period

**TYPES OF SUPERVISION**

Depending on the level within the organization, there are various types of supervision that a classification may receive.

**Under administrative (or policy) direction:** This is used for department heads and above. Policy direction is provided by an elected or appointed Board, Council or Commission or the top administrative officer of the agency.

**Under general direction:** This is used for management level classes, generally at a division level or program management or where supervision is provided to staff through subordinate levels of supervision.

**Under direction:** This is used for supervisory level classes.

**Under general supervision:** This is used for experienced, journey, lead, specialist, technician, and similar level classes. Most classes will probably use this descriptor.

**Under immediate (close) supervision:** This is used for entry level and trainee level classes.

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