

GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTING NEW CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS

Agencies should apply new or updated Office of Personnel Management (OPM) position classification standards and/or classification guides to covered positions within 12 months of the date of issuance.

OFFICIAL RELEASE DATE

- The official release date of new classification standards is the date (i.e., the month and year) the standard appears on the OPM Web site.

AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION POLICY

- Establish a policy for implementing new classification standards. Incorporate in the policy beginning and ending dates that include no more than a 12 month period for application of new classification standards or guides. For example, *“Begin implementation within 1-3 months from the official release date and complete it within 12 months from the official release date. Decide the exact start-up month based on agency circumstances.”* This general policy approach will apply in those instances in which the responsible official determines that there will be no substantial agencywide impact (e.g., few grade and/or pay category changes) caused by implementation of the new standard.
- When the responsible official determines that extenuating circumstances exist (e.g., a bureau or base closure, reduction-in-force, or ongoing A-76 reviews), immediately adapt the general policy approach to accommodate the circumstances and ensure implementation is completed within the required 12 month period. Such a determination may be based on:
 - specific information about the results of agency review and test application of a draft standard; and
 - explanation of changes OPM made to the previous standard and any draft standard that was reviewed and test applied in producing the final version (e.g., as explained in PART III - Explanatory Material, of the standard).

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Consider the following approaches when developing a strategy for implementing a new classification standard:
 - Apply first to new positions and positions under classification appeal.
 - Apply to vacant positions prior to initiating recruitment.
 - Apply to positions where grade change is likely (or predicted).

- Apply to standard position description (SPD) libraries (document such application on the official SPD library files).
- Update automated classification systems to reflect the new standard application.
- Use pen-and-ink changes for minor revisions with no grade impact.
- Process mass changes, as appropriate, rather than individual personnel actions.
- When developing an implementation strategy consider the following:
 - **Classification Appeal.** If an employee who encumbers a covered position files a position classification appeal with either the agency or OPM prior to the agency's implementation of the new OPM standard, the agency must immediately apply the new standard in order to properly adjudicate (or forward case file information pertaining to) the appeal. At that time, the agency should develop a plan, in accordance with the agency's implementation policy, and begin implementing the new standard as soon as possible.
 - **Inaccurate Position Descriptions.** To the maximum extent possible, maintain accurate position descriptions. If the official responsible for classification policy or the program manager determines that position descriptions covered by the new standard are inaccurate, they should immediately develop a plan for redescribing the work and applying the new standard to the covered position descriptions.
 - **Position Description Formats.** It is generally advisable to describe positions using the same format as the classification standards that cover them. Redescribing existing descriptions of properly classified positions solely for the purpose of changing the format to match a new standard is unnecessary. *In the event of a classification appeal (see above), the implementation of a new standard should include ensuring that position descriptions are in the same format as the standard used to evaluate the work.*
 - **New or Revised Work or Mission.** In instances where an organization's mission changes to the extent that position descriptions no longer accurately describe the organization's work, the responsible official should immediately develop a plan of action to create new position descriptions or redescribe existing positions to accurately reflect the organization's new or revised work or mission.