

MERIT SYSTEM OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018
11:30 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M.

Committee Purpose: Minn. Stat. § 256.012, subd. 3 provides that "The Commissioner shall ensure that participating counties are consulted regularly and offered the opportunity to provide input on the management of the Merit System to ensure effective use of resources and to monitor system performance."

Present: Nancy Walker (Southwest Health and Human Services), Rhonda Antrim (Traverse County), Tom Henderson (Brown County), John Dahlstrom (Wabasha County), Tanya Leskey (Wadena County), Gina McGuire (Steele County/Minnesota Prairie County Alliance), Ken Yutrzenka (Pennington County), Joel Churness (Lac Qui Parle County), Brent Boyd (DHS), Stacey Phillips (DHS), Pam Hughes (DHS), and Betty Carlson (DHS).

Nancy Walker called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

1. **Approval of January minutes.** The minutes from the January 25, 2018 meeting were approved as recorded.
2. **Online testing update.** Stacey informed the group that the conversion of the Accounting Technician exam to an online test was complete. A smaller group of candidates has been added to the new list since not many individuals had applied--and this is typical for the Accounting Technician job class when there are no specific vacancies posted. However, she said that Polk County had a vacancy, so it is anticipated that there will be more applicants/test-takers as a result of the posting. Most who had attempted the test were attaining passing scores. Betty said that she looked at the credentials of many applicants and that a fair number of them had two or four year degrees in accounting or business, which would explain the relatively high scores on the test.

Support Enforcement Aide and Collections Officer are the only two written tests left to be converted. Staff are considering use of a supplemental questionnaire (rather than a written multiple choice exam) for Collections Officer.

3. **MnCHOICES assessors/care coordinators.** This was discussed at the last meeting. Betty indicated that she talked to staff responsible for hiring/supervising Care Coordinators in the three agencies using the Care Coordinator job class (Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Todd County Social Services, and Goodhue County

Public Health and Human Services). The advantage of using this classification is that an applicant with either a nursing or social work degree could qualify—and there is one eligible list. As a result, use of the job class does provide for a more streamlined application and referral process. At the present time, the majority of counties/entities with positions that function as MnCHOICES assessors and/or care coordinators fill them as either nurses or social workers (i.e., they must obtain PHN, RN and Social Worker lists from the Merit System) because they do not have a Care Coordinator job class salary range negotiated with the unions.

The current qualifications for Care Coordinator are a bachelor's degree in social work, psychology, nursing, human services, or closely related area. Recently, one of the counties using the Care Coordinator job class indicated that it wanted to consider registered nurses with two year degrees. The MnCHOICE assessor qualifications as outlined in DHS rules would allow that. However, not all Care Coordinator jobs would necessarily involve MnCHOICE assessments, and a hiring authority may have a preference for hiring a four year degreed nurse. Betty said that preference could be accommodated in the posting.

After some discussion, the consensus of the group was that allowing a Registered Nurse with a two year degree to qualify for a Care Coordinator job that involved MnCHOICE assessments was most likely justified, since the DHS rule permitted all licensed RNs to become MnCHOICE assessors. However, many expressed concern about the ability of such an individual to transfer to an equivalent job with responsibility for another caseload (e.g., a social worker job involving child or adult protection investigations). Betty said that such an employee could not be placed on a transfer list for County Agency Social Worker/Social Worker (CPS). The employee must be working in the same job class in order to be on a transfer list. In other words, one must already be in one of the social worker job classes in order to be on the transfer list for another job in one of the social worker series of job classes. And, furthermore, in order to be eligible for moving to a job classified as a County Agency Social Worker or Social Worker (CPS), an employee in the Care Coordinator class must meet the minimum qualifications for County Agency Social Worker/Social Worker (CPS). A Care Coordinator who possessed an RN license and who had a two year nursing degree would not meet the minimum qualifications for County Agency Social Worker/Social Worker (CPS).

- 4. LADC job class.** Rhonda Antrim requested that this topic be added to the agenda. She asked that the Merit System consider establishment of a special job class for Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, compensated at a somewhat higher level than

County Agency Social Worker. The Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor would potentially be supervising the work of other social workers, depending on the role assigned the job in the agency. Tanya added that there were still many unknowns about the requirements and that there will likely be three tiers of services/functions performed by employees who are licensed (i.e., supervision, comprehensive assessment and treatment coordination). It is unclear at this time which of the functions would or could be handled by a county entity. The consensus of the committee was that there will be a need down the road for more employees who have specialized training or qualifications in this area, so they would like to revisit the issue in the future.

At the present time, an applicant for County Agency Social Worker is awarded 4 additional bonus points if he or she is a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor in the State of Minnesota. Also, if a county is filling a job that requires this credential, it may ask the Merit System for a "selective certification" of those who are Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors.

5. **Employee database.** Betty informed the committee that work was being done to convert the employee database used by Merit System staff (currently an ACCESS program) to an SQL environment. Related to this project is another one currently underway which would result in the information on employee personnel forms being downloaded automatically into the employee database. However, in the future, there may be a way that certain county staff who work with the Merit System could access information directly from the employee database. Gina and Nancy (who have human resources staff employed by the health/human services agency or human resources staff who work directly with the Merit System staff) indicated an interest in exploring this as an option.
6. **Recruiting update and changes to online application page.** In January, Pam and Stacey attended the diversity job fair at Minnesota State University, St. Cloud. A staff member (County Agency Social Worker) from Morrison County attended with them for part of the day. They talked to at least 75 students. In March, Pam and Betty attended the two MSSA student luncheons to recruit new graduates. Over the two days that the luncheons were held, approximately 100 students attended.

On April 11, Stacey and Pam also attended a conference sponsored by IPMA-Minnesota. The sessions covered the labor force shortage and the public sectors response, how to capitalize on generational differences in the workplace,

workforce planning, leadership development, and recruitment, retention and affirmative action.

Related to recruitment and attracting more applicants, the Merit System job application center has undergone a redesign and is now compatible with smartphone technology.

- 7. AA/EEO Guidelines.** The new guidelines (2018-2020) have been issued. Betty apologized for the delay. Florence Canada has moved to another job at DHS, but she has continued to work on finishing these and Betty said that she appreciated Florence's efforts to complete the bulletin.

Under the guidelines, counties/multi-county agencies have the option of: 1) adopting the Merit System guidelines as outlined in the bulletin or 2) adopting an affirmative action plan that is certified by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (and if so, submitting a copy of the certificate of compliance to DHS). Betty said that several counties had inquired about the deadline for responding to the bulletin. She said that if DHS could receive replies by the end of June, it would be appreciated. Some agencies do take this to their boards to pass resolutions. She wasn't sure if all did that. She will send out an e-mail to agencies to clarify the timeline for responding.

- 8. Next meeting date.** The committee discussed changing the date of the next meeting from July 26 to August 23. The majority of committee members indicated a desire to keep the next meeting date as July 26. The room will need to be reserved by an MCIT member.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.