



Pierce County  
Human Resources

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Response to:

The Pierce County Mental Health  
Service

Salary Survey Report

Dated 5/11/2006

Submitted July 18, 2006

# Introduction

On May 11, 2006 JM Management Consulting and Performance Audits submitted their “Final Salary Survey Report” to the Performance Audit Committee. That Report indicated that there were significant pay disparities between several Pierce County classifications and other employers. The report indicated that the Pierce County classifications were paid more than comparable classifications by as much as 35% (Table 5. p. 12 of the JM Report).

Labor Relations Manager, Joe Carrillo, testified that the information presented was “interesting” but that there were many factors that were not considered in the study. Mr. Carrillo identified at least four areas of concern:

1. Use of base pay – identified need to include shift differential, weekend differential, specialty pay and certification pay.
2. Consideration of environmental issues – 24 hour facility vs 8 hour facility, jail vs non-jail, autonomy of duties.
3. Ensuring the identification of comparable classifications – based on duties, education, training.
4. Internal Equity – that the role of internal equity is acknowledged and applied.

Mr. Carrillo requested that Human Resources (hereafter HR) be allowed to work with Performance Audits and the Consultant to refine the data and ensure that the County had valid, meaningful data to use in its considerations.

# The Process

Five classifications were identified as being at issue. They were Behavioral Health Specialist 3, Crisis Outreach Mental Health Professional, Direct Services Supervisor, Mental Health Evaluation Specialist, and Mental Health Therapist.

Mr. Carrillo requested and Mr. Temmel agreed on three separate occasions to provide requested salary, classification and study information. On two of those occasions the information was not provided as agreed. Instead, notification was sent to other HR staff (not Mr. Carrillo) and the opinion expressed that either HR did not “need” the information or argued that the information could not be released because Performance Audits had assured outside jurisdictions that the information would be kept “confidential”. Ultimately, after much discussion and negotiations, the salary information was provided to HR by Mr. Temmel approximately three weeks after it was initially requested. This data should have been made readily available.

All information was reviewed by Human Resources Staff. County staff familiar with the work of the classifications were consulted, contact was made with outside jurisdictions to verify information and comparisons of job duties were made. Because of how unique the studied positions were, HR was careful to consider a broad range of factors when attempting to match like positions. The results of our matching were significantly different than that of Performance Audits and the Consultant.

On June 22, 2006 Human Resources staff met with Mr. Temmel and Paul Bocchi from the Council’s Office to review and discuss HR’s findings. The Consultant was also present by conference call. HR’s findings were discussed and debated and Mr. Carrillo expressed his desire to meet again and determine those areas in which the parties agreed and identify those in which we continued to disagree. Since HR had factored in shift differential, Mr. Temmel requested data to show that Human Services actually had employees working those shifts that would qualify for evening, night or weekend differential. That information was provided to Mr. Temmel on June 26.

On July 13, 2006, Mr. Carrillo and Mr. Temmel met to discuss where the parties agreed and disagreed on the information that had been shared. HR’s understanding of our respective positions is provided below.

# The Findings

Our review of the information and the process used, leads us to the conclusion that the study was flawed from its inception.

In order to select positions to “benchmark”, traditional longstanding “best practices” dictate that one should identify positions that: are readily matched (nurse, Librarian, HVAC mechanic, etc.); reflect large number of employees (usually the “journey” level) and that are clearly defined. “Best practices” require that at least 5 matches exist in order for the data to be meaningful. Positions were included in the study that did not meet the traditional criteria used for benchmarking of positions. Most of the positions studied were highly specialized positions that are difficult to match because of their unique functions and/or role in the County (Crisis Outreach Mental Health Professional, Behavioral Health Specialist 3, Direct Services Supervisor and Mental Health Evaluation Specialist). It is particularly significant that those classifications that were studied that do lend themselves to traditional benchmarking (nursing classifications) were determined to be properly compensated (without accounting for shift differential).

For some reason, not known to this writer, the study attempted to benchmark highly specialized, highly compensated positions and several environmental and routinely accepted classification elements were not considered for purposes of comparing County positions to outside positions. Early in the study, HR questioned why the BHS 3 was being benchmarked when it should more appropriately be the BHS 2. It is our understanding that the Consultant also suggested using the BHS 2 as a benchmark and was directed to benchmark the BHS 3 position.

In addition, it should be noted that HR discussed the specifics and nuances of each classification with other internal and external HR staff, management and other employees in order to accurately match positions.

# Crisis Outreach Mental Health Professional (COMHP)

- The audit originally found that there were five (5) matches. HR found three (3) matches. This classification has the unique authority and responsibility to do involuntary commitment of individuals. Mr. Temmel now agrees that two of the positions formerly identified by the audit as matches, do not match. Mr. Temmel agrees there are only three (3) matches. Based on HR's identified matches, there is not enough data to draw conclusions regarding the salary. The average salary of the matches has been calculated as shown in the summary below.

<u>Matches</u>	<u>Maximum Rate</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b>Pierce County</b>	<b>\$33.76</b>	
Match 1	\$26.29	added \$1.00 for shift differential
Match 2	\$25.81	added \$1.00 for shift differential
Match 3	\$35.91	Close to match, but less
Average Rate:	\$30.44	Pierce County is 10.9% over the average

# Behavioral Health Specialist 3 (BHS 3)

- The audit originally found that there were eight (8) matches. HR found two (2) matches. Ironically, it is HR's position that the remaining positions identified are more properly matched with the BHS 2 classification which we believe would have been the appropriate position to benchmark. Mr. Temmel now agrees that the classification of Social Worker from King County formerly identified as a match, does not match. However, he continues to believe that the others are matches. Based on HR's identified matches, there is not enough data to draw conclusions regarding the salary. The average salary of the matches has been calculated as shown in the summary below.

<u>Matches</u>	<u>Maximum Rate</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b>Pierce County</b>	<b>\$25.32</b>	
Match 1	\$21.40	Close to match, but less
Match 2	\$20.04	Added \$1.00 avg for shift differential
Average Rate:	\$22.25	Pierce County is 13.8% over the average

# Direct Services Supervisor (DSS)

- The audit originally found that there were eight (8) matches. HR found two (2). The review by HR determined that the salary for the classification was established primarily using "internal equity". The position supervises RN's, Mental Health Therapists and other classifications and carries a caseload. The salary for the DSS was set slightly above the positions it supervises. Mr. Temmel argues that supervision of RN's is not mentioned in the job description and he stands by the original eight (8) matches. Again, based on HR's identified matches, there is not enough data to draw conclusions regarding the salary. The average salary of the matches has been calculated as shown in the summary below.

<u>Matches</u>	<u>Maximum Rate</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b>Pierce County</b>	<b>\$35.92</b>	
Match 1	\$34.12	Close to a match, but less
Match 2	No maximum	Our position also responsible for discharge planning
Average Rate:	\$35.02	Pierce County is 2.56% over the average

# Mental Health Therapist

- The audit originally found that there were twelve (12) matches. HR found three (3) matches. Mr. Temmel now agrees that the position from West Seattle Psychiatric Hospital, formerly identified by the audit as a match, is not a match. Again, based on HR's identified matches, there is not enough data to draw conclusions regarding the salary. The average salary of the matches has been calculated as shown in the summary below.

<u>Matches</u>	<u>Maximum Rate</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b>Pierce County</b>	<b>\$31.67</b>	
Match 1	\$31.25	Close to match, but less added \$1.00 for shift differential
Match 2	\$27.29	added \$1.00 for shift differential
Match 3	\$26.87	added \$1.00 for shift differential
Average Rate:	\$29.27	Pierce County is 6.38% over the average

# Mental Health Evaluation Specialist

- The audit originally found that there were eight (8) matches. HR found two (2) positions that somewhat match. The County position works strictly in the Jail and accordingly must meet strict background and security clearance requirements (as do the two (2) positions that match). Those two issues alone create a position where it is difficult to recruit and retain employees. In addition, because of the jail setting this classification works with a different type of client, in a locked facility, and makes several hundred court appearances per year. Mr. Temmel stands by the original eight (8) matches. The average salary of the matches has been calculated as shown in the summary below.

<u>Matches</u>	<u>Maximum Rate</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b>Pierce County</b>	<b>33.76</b>	
Match 1	25.81	Close to match, but less
Match 2	35.91	Close to match, but less
Average Rate	31.82	PC is 6.1% above the average

# Other Performance Audit Report Inaccuracies

HR found other examples of inaccuracies in the audit report. Those inaccuracies included:

- comparing 2006 County salary to 2005 salary for other organizations
- identifying one outside classification as matching two different County classifications
- identifying as a match a classification that requires an AA degree where the County requires a Master's degree
- identified outside positions as a match when there were not even job descriptions to compare to
- identified as a match classifications without a Master's Degree when the State requires a Master's to perform that level of duties

# Shift Differential

- Throughout this study there has been a question of whether or not to include some form of adjustment to the data in consideration of the shift differential paid by other employers and considered by the County in establishing employee's base salary. HR made the determination that when other employers involved in the study paid shift differential, we would include a \$1.00 dollar per hour adjustment to their wages to reflect the actual wages earned. That conservative adjustment is found in our calculations.
- At Mr. Temmel's request, HR provided Mr. Temmel data that shows that the five (5) classifications identified in this study worked 388 evening, night or weekend shifts over a four week period. Mr. Temmel has advised that he will not adjust the data to reflect shift differential.

# Conclusions

The HR staff who collaborated to complete the review of the audit data have over one hundred years of combined experience in HR and classification and compensation. Every effort has been made to present the information as accurately as possible regardless of whether it showed positions were overpaid or underpaid. Our involvement in this study was motivated by our interest in ensuring accurate, meaningful data was gathered if it was to be used by any decision making body.

Our conclusion is that the study had fundamental problems from its inception. Performance Audits has acknowledged that at least some mistakes were made. HR believes that for reasons unknown to us, errors were made in identifying benchmarked positions, gathering data and matching classifications and positions. We believe those errors were of a degree and to such an extent to render the study invalid. We will probably never agree as to the extent and degree of those mistakes. However, since some mistakes have been acknowledged, it begs the question “What other mistakes were made?”

We recommend that the report submitted on behalf of Performance Audits be given very little weight by any decision-making body. The information gathered on the nursing classifications (which lend themselves to benchmarking) is consistent with data gathered by HR and should be given some weight.