

# State of New Hampshire



## PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD

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### *APPEAL OF SUSAN SEARAH*

*Docket #96\*-C-1*

*New Hampshire Hospital*

June 11, 1997

The New Hampshire Personnel Appeals Board (Bennett, Johnson and Rule) met on Wednesday, February 26, 1997, under the authority of RSA 21-I:57, to hear the classification appeal of Susan Searah, an employee of New Hampshire Hospital. Ms. Searah was represented at the hearing by SEA Field Representative Jean Chellis. Michael McAulay, Director of Personnel, appeared on behalf of the Division of Personnel.

Ms. Searah was appealing an April 13, 1993<sup>1</sup>, decision of the Director refusing to reclassify Ms. Searah's position of Medical Records Stenographer II to Medical Records Supervisor. The appeal was made on offers of proof by the representatives of the parties. The record in this matter consists of **the** audio tape recording of the hearing and documents submitted by the parties prior to the hearing.

Ms. Chellis argued that while the Medical Stenographer II job specification is generally descriptive of **the** appellant's job duties, it does not accurately describe the higher level of responsibility incumbent in her position as the senior medical records position assigned to the Psychiatric Nursing

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<sup>1</sup> The instant appeal was filed in Fiscal Year 1994. However, upon receipt, it was misfiled with a previous appeal which had already been heard and decided by the Board, and the current appeal was not docketed or scheduled for hearing with other appeals received by the Board during that time frame.

Chellis argued that Ms. Searah's responsibilities for management of the medical records unit at the Psychiatric Nursing Home at New Hampshire Hospital requires her to perform highly responsible administrative and supervisory duties including establishing and writing policies and procedures and maintaining committee memberships including the seat she holds as the Psychiatric Nursing Home's only voting representative on New Hampshire Hospital's Medical Records Committee.

Ms. Chellis argued that Ms. Searah also is responsible for originating and writing policies, consistent with the classification of Medical Records Supervisor. She said that contrary to the Division's findings, Ms. Searah is responsible for coding records for archiving, and that she should not be denied reclassification to Medical Records Supervisor simply because her unit does not have sufficient space for to actually store the records when they are archived. Ms. Chellis said that although Ms. Searah is responsible for controlling fewer records than those individuals at Glencliff Home for the Elderly or the New Hampshire Veterans Home who are classified as Medical Records Supervisors, her classification should be decided on the basis of the level and scope of her responsibilities, not the number of records she manages or the number of individuals she supervises.

Mr. McAulay argued that there was no question that Ms. Searah was a valued employee whose performance had probably been the primary impetus for reclassification of her position. Still, he argued that the organizational structure at New Hampshire Hospital already provides for a Medical Records Supervisor and Medical Records Administrator who are responsible for overall management of medical records throughout the institution. He also noted that Patricia Roy, the former Medical Records Administrator, did not believe that the appellant's duties warranted reclassification.<sup>2</sup>

Having reviewed the documents submitted by the parties, the Board concurred with the Director that Ms. Searah's overall responsibilities do not support reclassification of Ms. Searah's position at this time. Former Commissioner Byrd's January 7, 1993, reallocation request, signed on his behalf by former Assistant Commissioner Poirier, stated, in pertinent part:

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<sup>2</sup> Ms. Chellis asked the Board to note that there had been numerous conflicts between Ms. Searah and Ms. Roy during the course of their working relationship, which probably had colored Ms. Roy's opinion.

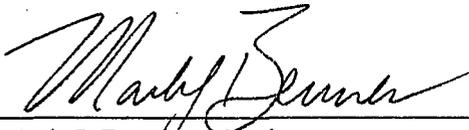
Having reviewed the documents submitted by the parties, the Board concurred with the Director that Ms. Searah's overall responsibilities do not support reclassification of Ms. Searah's position at this time. Former Commissioner Byrd's January 7, 1993, reallocation request, signed on his behalf by former Assistant Commissioner Poirier, stated, in pertinent part:

"New Hampshire Hospital maintains separate components directed at acute and Nursing Home care. In addition to the different treatment issues, these components also must address different state and federal regulatory requirements... The area of medical records is one where not only must overall Hospital policy be adhered to but also specific policies on Nursing Home care. As a result of these additional requirements, this position is performing many of the functions of a Medical Records Supervisor." (Emphasis added.)

While the Board agrees that Ms. Searah shares some of the responsibilities of those classified as Medical Records Supervisors, there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that the majority of her assignments are administrative and supervisory in nature, that she has primary responsibility for management of a medical records unit as described by the class specification, or that the extent of her assignments are sufficiently similar to the Medical Records Supervisor positions at either Glenclyff or the Veterans Home to warrant reclassification. The Board also agrees with the Director that the current Medical Records Supervisor position at New Hampshire Hospital is responsible for supervising seven other positions including a Medical Coding Clerk, a Medical Records Technician, an Executive Secretary, two Medical Records Typist II, a Clerk III and a Secretary Typist II, whereas Ms. Searah supervises a significantly smaller unit, including only a Medical Stenographer II and a Medical Typist/Stenographer. Again, while the number of positions supervised is not necessarily indicative of the appropriate level of classification, the Board considers the difference sufficiently significant in this instance to support the Director's conclusion that Ms. Searah's current classification of Medical Records Stenographer II adequately addresses those responsibilities.

On the evidence, the Board voted to deny Ms. Searah's appeal. I-However, the Board agrees with the appellant to the extent that the organizational structure could, in fact, support more than one Medical Records Supervisor position, if the size of the program unit and the number and type of staff supervised required the appellant to devote more of her work time to administration of hospital and Nursing Home policy than to the physical management of the records themselves.

THE PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD



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Mark J. Bennett, Chairman



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Robert J. Johnson, Commissioner



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Lisa A. Rule, Commissioner

cc: Virginia A. Lamberton, Director of Personnel  
Jean Chellis, SEA Field Representative  
Marie Lang, Human Resources Administrator, New Hampshire Hospital