

15. QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

- a. **Education:** Two years of college or the equivalent of an Associate's degree is required.
- b. **Prior Work Experience:** Three to five years of experience in work involving application of complex regulations as well as of extensive public contact. Preferable if experience was acquired in the performance of federal benefits claims duties, claims department of an insurance company or in a legal industry. Two years of supervisory experience is required.
- c. **Post Entry Training:** Incumbent must receive on-the-job training and courses offered by the FSI, DOL, OPM, SSA, VA & RRB. Must receive on-the-job training to learn U.S. Government federal benefits laws, regulations and procedures on benefits which includes familiarity with the relevant sections of the Foreign Affairs Manual.
- d. **Language Proficiency:** Level IV (Fluent) Speaking/Reading/Writing English is required. Level IV (Fluent) Speaking/Reading/Writing Spanish is required.
- e. **Job Knowledge:** Incumbent must have expert knowledge of applicable U.S. Government federal benefits laws, regulations, and procedures, 7 FAM and local laws pertaining to the Panamanian banking industry, marriage, divorce, adoption, etc. Must know the cultural and socio-economic situation of the host country, in order to provide proper guidance to the FSN and FSO staff. Must be computer literate and know how to use MS Word applications.
- f. **Skills and Abilities:** Must be able to deal courteously and efficiently with an often demanding public. Must be tactful when providing information on Federal Benefits. Must be able to explain in simple and plain words benefits that the beneficiaries are entitled to. Must be able to use good judgment when dealing with sensitive personal issues. Strong customer service skills required. Ability to work under pressure and to detect fraudulent documents and impostors.

g. 16. POSITION ELEMENTS

- a. **Supervision Received:** Supervised by the Federal Benefits Unit American Officer, Section chief.
- b. **Supervision Exercised:** Supervises four FSN employees
- c. **Available Guidelines:** 7 FAM, Social Security Handbook and Publications on Benefits, OPM Retirement Handbook, CSRS-FERS Handbook, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program Handbook, Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Handbook, Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents Handbook, Injury Compensation for Federal Employees, Department of Labor regulations and manuals on FECA program, and various Department of State telegrams related to federal benefits programs.
- d. **Exercise of Judgment:** Incumbent has wide discretion in exercising judgment in developing and processing to conclusion the most complex and technically difficult cases, as well as those that are potentially fraudulent. Has the autonomy to determine whether to personally resolve a problem case or to refer it to the Consular Officer.
- e. **Authority to Make Commitments:** Limited authority to make commitments on behalf of the Federal agencies served.
- f. **Nature, Level, and Purpose of Contacts:** Senior contacts at local financial institutions, Automated Clearing House, the Panamanian postal system, pharmacies, physicians, attorneys, Foreign Relations Ministry, Family Judges, Ministry of Social Development, the Panamanian Civil Registry, OPM, SSA, VA, DOL/OWCP, OFEGLI, Department of Treasury, Federal Reserve Bank as well as State's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Contacts at other FBUs around the world and with the Regional Federal Benefits Office.

g. **Time Expected to Reach Full Performance Level:** Two years.

14. MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Continuation)

45% OF TIME

Federal Benefits Services: Incumbent plans, supervises and participates in the processing of nearly 2,000 checks totaling over USD 1.37 million per month. Incumbent accepts, reviews, evaluates and certifies claim forms received for benefits from a Federal Agency and applies her expertise in resolving difficult cases. Incumbent is responsible for processing and verifying direct deposit inputs in the International Treasury System for beneficiaries from the Social Security Administration and the Office of Personnel Management for over 13,000 federal retirees and beneficiaries disbursing over U.S. \$14 million per month. To comply with the Antifraud Enforcement Program, assists beneficiaries in the completion of the different agencies' Foreign Enforcement Questionnaires. Incumbent needs to be mindful of potential fraud and report accordingly to the fraud investigator.

Incumbent engages in a range of research work, at request of a federal agency or on own initiative. Performs a wide range of services for Federal agencies to include: conducting in-depth interviews and developing to completion claims on behalf of retirees, spouses, former spouses, widow(er), minor children (legitimate, adopted and out-of-wedlock), disabled adult, and other family members who are or could be entitled to receive federal benefits. Incumbent must be conversant with different types of documentation required to support claims to advise each applicant of documentation needed to establish entitlement, must use judgment on the bona fides of the supporting documents presented and must be able to advise applicant as to the specific benefits for which they are eligible. Identifies and processes controversial representative payee cases. Incumbent identifies for further investigation any claim that may involve fraud.

Incumbent acts as intermediary between the beneficiaries and the benefits-paying federal agencies, financial institutions, hospital/clinics, physicians, laboratories, pharmacies, medical suppliers, Panamanian Civil Registry, Panamanian post offices, Supreme Court, Family Judges, Ministry of Foreign Relations, the local Ministry of Social Development, attorneys and social workers.

Incumbent also counsels victims of monetary abuse and directs them to the appropriate Panamanian authority.

Incumbent schedules medical examinations in accordance with 7 FAM for beneficiaries when requested from a federal agency. Processes requests for assistance from the different federal agencies by contacting beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries and returning the requested information in the timeframe established by regulations by each federal agency.

Incumbent receives the International Direct Deposit forms from the different financial institutions to be distributed within the employees supervised in the Section. Incumbent also serves as the main point of contact for the various Financial Institutions in Panama on Direct Deposit issues.

20% OF TIME

Office Management: Incumbent manages various filing systems on computer database, which are vital to the proper functioning of the Unit. Makes sure that inquiries from customers are answered in a timely and accurate manner. Additionally, incumbent prepares and translates letters, diplomatic notes and memoranda concerning agency matters for the Unit Chief's signature or for direct transmission to the federal agency.

The incumbent is responsible for compiling and entering information into a database for the various federal agencies. These figures are very important for the preparation of the Annual Consular Package.

Makes sure that all checks are handled and stored in accordance with 7 FAM. Responsible for prompt processing and delivery of checks since this is a matter of the highest concern to the Mission and a major public relations issue in Panama.

5% OF TIME

Other related duties as assigned. Incumbent will proactively identify additional ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the FBU.