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IGO Releases Report on City's Reclassification Process

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (IGO) has published a review of the City's position title reclassification process¹ administered by the Department of Human Resources (DHR).

The IGO review identifies deficiencies in the Reclassification Rules that inhibit the City's reclassification system's effectiveness, transparency and accountability. The City's reclassification system is meant to ensure that employment positions are allocated to class titles that adequately describe the duties and responsibilities that are actually performed, and that pay and benefits are commensurate with that work. When functioning properly, the reclassification system acts as a safeguard against abuses and excesses that develop within the City's employment and compensation systems.

A significant deficiency the IGO review identifies is that the Reclassification Rules do not indicate whether departments are obligated to follow, or even respond to, DHR's reclassification recommendations. Additionally, Reclassification Rules are silent as to who is responsible for enforcing reclassification recommendations. Against the backdrop of those operational deficiencies, the review identified a pattern in which City Departments, without explanation or consequence, tend to disregard or ignore the recommendations of DHR developed on the basis of neutral, objective criteria and analysis that positions be downgraded and pay commensurately reduced.

The review made several recommendations for DHR to improve the system, including:

- 1) Requiring department heads to provide a documented explanation of reason(s) for requesting a position audit, including the circumstances surrounding the modifications to a position's duties and responsibilities.
- 2) Requiring department heads to report to DHR within a specified period their final action on reclassification recommendations and provide a written justification for deviating from the recommendation.
- 3) Working with the City's Office of Budget & Management (OBM) to determine a method of holding department heads accountable for their responses to reclassification recommendations and enforcing those decisions.

¹ This process is detailed in the City of Chicago Personnel Rules 1 and 26 (Reclassification Rules).

- 4) Developing a tracking system for departmental responses to reclassification recommendations as well as information regarding recommendation appeals.
- 5) Consolidating the Personnel Rules and Sections regarding the (re)classification of positions into a single Personnel Rule.

“As it exists today, the system is an obstacle to our ability to assess and ensure compliance with the Reclassification Rules, the City’s General Hiring Plan, and the *Shakman Accord*,” said Inspector General Joe Ferguson. “The system needs to be modified to provide for accountability and enforcement.”

In response to the IGO’s report, DHR Commissioner Soo Choi agreed with the IGO’s recommendations and noted that DHR has started a review of current procedures used in the reclassification process. The Commissioner noted that while formal revision to the Personnel Rules may take some time, she has “no doubt that we can quickly begin to implement either your specific recommendations or equivalent changes that fully achieve the spirit of your recommendations in the interim.”

The full Report, and the DHR response, can be found online at the IGO website: www.chicagoinpectorgeneral.org. Follow the IGO on Twitter [@ChicagoIGO](https://twitter.com/ChicagoIGO) for the latest information on how the IGO continues to fight waste, fraud, abuse, and inefficiency in Chicago government.

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