

# **Salary Review Report Human Rights Specialist Series**

**September 24, 2007**

**Local 154  
AFSCME  
DC 37**

<b>Human Rights Specialist</b>	<b>Code 55016, 55018</b>
<b>Associate Human Rights Specialist</b>	<b>Code 55038</b>
<b>Supervisor Human Rights Specialist</b>	<b>Code 55037</b>
<b>Principal Human Rights Specialist</b>	<b>Code 55077</b>

# New York City Amalgamated Professional Employees



Affiliated with DISTRICT COUNCIL 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, 125 Barclay Street, New York, N.Y. 10007-2179 (212) 815-1040

September 24, 2007

Salary Review Panel

Dear Members of the Panel:

On behalf of the members of Local 154, I have the pleasure of presenting for your consideration the Salary Review Report for the title series of Human Rights Specialist. This report shows that the titles in this series meet several of the Salary Review criteria described in the Memorandum of Economic Understanding between District Council 37 and the City of New York, subscribed in August 2006.

Local 154 is proud to present a report with a balanced and objective analysis of its members' salary and wage conditions. We hope that the Salary Review Panel will provide a positive response to the career and salary recommendations that we include in this report. By providing such a response, you will fulfill our members' aspirations of working for the City with dignity and in a safer economic environment.

I will be glad to answer any questions or to provide additional information or documentation at the panel's request.

Sincerely,

Juan Fernandez  
President Local 154

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## Human Rights Specialist Title Series

### Introduction

There are forty-two workers in the Human Rights Specialist series serving New York City. All of them – with one exception – perform their work at the New York City Commission on Human Rights. At this time, 21 workers serve as Human Rights Specialist and 21 as Associate Human Rights Specialists<sup>1</sup>.

Workers in the Human Rights Specialist (HRS) series are assigned to perform work in the Law Enforcement or the Community Relations Bureau of the Human Rights Commission. These functions are considered interchangeable since an HRS could be moved between bureaus.

In the Law Enforcement Bureau, the HRS handles complaints alleging discrimination in employment, housing and/or public accommodations based on factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and disability among several others. The HRS worker interviews the complainant, writes up the complaint and investigates it by interviewing all parties and witnesses. The HRS performs the investigation from the Commission's main offices and in the field.

In the Community Relations Bureau, Human Rights Specialist workers perform community outreach, human rights Law training, technical assistance, sensitivity and mediation training, fair housing and community reinvestment analysis. They investigate and mediate cases of discrimination and inter-group conflict. Workers train middle school and high school students in conflict resolution techniques. They give presentations and trainings on inter-group relations and sexual harassment law. They provide mortgage foreclosure counseling, they participate in the collection of data and write reports. Associate Human Rights Specialist workers serve as Field Offices Directors or Deputy Directors supervising Human Rights Specialists.

Original job descriptions did not anticipate the current complexities of the Human Rights work. The continuous expansion of the City's Human Rights Law has demanded new approaches in the interaction with the public and new understanding of the law. Today, Human Rights workers become proficient in a number of fields ranging from Human Rights Law to mortgage counseling, from case investigation to conflict resolution training. They are proficient in a high school environment as well as highly skilled mediators in a community conflict. A history of the Human Rights Commission would show that Human Rights Specialist workers played an important role as mediators during conflicts at Crown Heights and Washington Heights, and as community organizers during the efforts to revitalize communities in the South Bronx and Brooklyn.

Despite the importance of the community and legal work HRS workers perform, the number of workers has dramatically decreased in the last twenty years. Investigators deal with dozens of more cases and the community relations bureau workers have been stretched thin in their community outreach work. The Commission on Human Rights has lost half its staff since the early 1990's.

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<sup>1</sup> These include the non-competitive titles Human Rights Specialist and Principal Human Rights Specialist, which are counterpart and perform the same functions as the competitive titles of Human Rights Specialist and Associate Human Rights Specialist II respectively.

In 2002, there were slightly over 120 workers at the Commission. Since then the Commission has lost over 40 staff members, including 17 Human Rights Specialists of which only five positions have been filled. Today only 80 plus staff works at the Human Rights Commission.

Today, HRS workers are overburden and underpaid<sup>2</sup>. Promotional lines have been reduced to a minimum.

## Summary

- The Human Rights Specialist title series, which includes Human Rights Specialist, Associate Human Rights Specialist I, Supervisor Human Rights Specialist, Associate Human Rights Specialist II and Principal Human Rights Specialist, meets three of the salary review criteria listed in the Appendix A of the 2005 Memorandum of Economic Agreement. The title has evolved to require substantial additional skills and/or responsibilities; their salaries and compensation benefits do not compare favorably to employees in New York State public sector jurisdiction and HRS workers perform revenue-producing activities.
- The Human Rights Specialist title series is the backbone of the enforcement of the City's Human Rights Law. Their work with many communities and their interaction with the victims of discriminatory practices and bias harassment make them the first line of help for those who need the Law's protections.
- The successive expansion of the New York City Human Rights Law, with new protected classes and new emphasis in the areas of jurisdiction, has put continuous demands on the Human Rights Workers' skills and knowledge.
- Workers in the Human Rights Specialist series title earn consistently less than their counterparts' wages and benefits in The State of New York. A City Human Rights Specialist earns at least \$11,000 less than a New York State Human Rights Specialist after 7 ½ years on the job. An Associate Human Rights Specialist I earns \$13,000 less its counterpart with New York State after 7 ½ years.
- Workers have reduced job opportunities as the number of title positions has seen dramatic reductions in the last 10 years. In mid 1990's there were 250 staff workers at the Human Rights Commission. By 2002 there were 120 staff workers. In 2007 there are slightly over 80 staff workers at the Commission on Human Rights. At the same time, the City Human Rights Law has expanded to include new protected categories, bringing new demands to the dwindling workforce.
- Local 154 recommends the creation of career development and worker's recognition that will include:
  1. A salary step plan;
  2. Increased amounts of existing Longevity differentials.
  3. Increased number of the Human Rights Specialist lines;
  4. Increased number of the Associate Human Rights Specialist lines;

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<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that the NYC Department of Education posted a notice for an Equal Opportunity Training Specialist, with similar duties to a Human Rights Specialist, starting at \$51,000, a higher salary than an HRS is paid.

5. Maturation of the Human Rights Specialist Title into the Associate Human Rights Specialist I;
6. Maturation of the Associate Human Rights Specialist I into the Associate Human Rights Specialist II;
7. Assignment differential for Human Rights Specialists performing translation or interpretation;
8. Salary differential for education credits and/or training.

## Comparison of Salaries and Compensation Benefits

### 1. Human Rights Specialist Salary

Table I shows the salary ranges for workers in the Human Rights Specialist series as of July 1, 2007. Fringe benefits account for an additional value of approximately 33% of the listed salary. Additions to the salary in the form of Longevity Payments account for 2% to 8% above the base salary (see Table II).

Since most of the Human Rights Specialists are paid the incumbent rate, the current base salary for most of them is \$44,260 and for the Associate Human Rights Specialist II \$62,400, before longevity increases. Taking Longevity into consideration, an HRS's salary would be \$47,350 and \$65,490 respectively after 7 ½ years on the job. In addition, workers are entitled to \$800 longevity increase after 15 years of City Service.

<b>Table I Human Rights Specialist Series Base Salary</b>		
<b>Human Rights Specialist Series (Salary Effective 2/1/07)</b>	<b>Hiring Rate</b>	<b>Incumbent Rate</b>
Human Rights Specialist	38,487	44,260
Associate Human Rights Specialist I & Supervisor Human Rights Specialist	45,563	52,398
Associate Human Rights Specialist II & Principal Human Rights Specialist	54,261	62,400

## 2. Salary Survey

The information used for this section was obtained from the New York State Department of Civil Service. The City's Human Rights Specialist series title is compared to New York State Human Rights Specialist title. There is no job description in the private sector with the functions and complexity of the City's Human Rights Specialist title. The New York State Department of Civil Service website includes descriptions of the title Human Rights Specialist 1 and Human Rights Specialist 2, which are counterparts to the Human Rights Specialist and Associate Human Rights Specialist I title respectively. The Associate Human Rights II position includes complex assignments and responsibilities such as directing the day-to-day operations of a field office, which New York State does not assign to Human Rights Specialist 2.

### i. State and City Comparison

Table III shows the Title and Salary comparison among the NYS Department of Civil Service Human Rights Specialist I, II, and the NYC DCAS Human Rights Specialist series title (Job Descriptions and Grades in Appendix A.) It shows that the New York State titles have base salaries consistently higher than the base salary of their New York City counterparts in the Human Rights Specialist series title. In addition, the New York State titles have a seven-year step plan that leads to approximately an \$11,000 increase to the worker's salary at the end of seven years. In comparison, workers in the NYC Human Rights Specialist series are most likely to see only a \$3,090 longevity increase after 7 ½ years on the job. In addition, State workers receive a location differential in the amount of \$1,302. After seven years on the job, a State worker in the title of Human Rights Specialist 1 could expect to receive a total salary of \$58,849 or \$60,151, if a location differential is added. On other hand, a NYC Human Rights Specialist would most likely earn \$47,350 after 7 ½ years on the job. A New York State Human Rights Specialist 2 starts at \$55,472 and reaches \$68,267 after seven years on the job. After the same period of time, an Associate Human Rights Specialist I would earn \$55,488.

<b>Table IV</b> <b>New York State Titles</b> <b>Step Plan (seven year plan)</b> <b>Yearly Amount</b> <b>(Effective 4/1/07)</b>		
	Yearly Step	Total Salary After Seven Years
Human Rights Specialist 1	\$1,613	58,849
Human Rights Specialist 2	\$1,828	68,267

In term of benefits, the most obvious difference between the State and City workers is the health insurance coverage. City workers do not pay for their basic health coverage. On the other hand, State workers pay for a portion of their health insurance. Currently, the cost for a State worker is approximately \$1,000 a year for a single individual and \$4,600 for a family. These amounts do not have a major impact in

diminishing the difference of nearly \$11,000 for a Human Rights Specialist with seven years on the job.

## Revenue Producing Activities

The Human Rights Specialist workers have played an important role in the development of some revenues that have allowed expanding or running new programs at the Commission on Human Rights. For example, Human Rights Workers have been instrumental in obtaining and administering awards in the amount of \$56,000 per year to run a peer-to-peer mediation program for the years 2004-2007, and another award in the amount of \$70,000 for an Immigrant Employment Rights Program for 2004 and 2005. These two grant amounted to nearly 5% of the City funds for the Commission in 2005. In addition, Human Rights workers play a key role in the investigation of complaints that led to settlements of approximately one million dollars in FY 2006<sup>3</sup>.

## Evolution of the Title to Include Additional Skills and/or Responsibilities

The successive expansion of the New York City Human Rights Law, with new protected classes and new emphasis in the areas of jurisdiction, put continuous demands on Human Rights Workers' skills and knowledge. The Human Rights Specialist workers are the backbone of the enforcement of the City's Human Rights Law. Their work with many communities and their interaction with the victims of discriminatory practices and bias harassment make them the first line of help for those who need the Law's protections. The workers are called on to provide training and workshops on the matters of New York City Human Rights Law. Their job involves trainings on the content and impact of

Table III Title and Salary Comparison (As of 4/1/2007)					
NYS Department of Civil Service Titles	Base Salary	Grade	Title Examiner Series Equivalency	Human Rights Specialist Base Salary	
				Hiring Rate	Incumbent Rate
Human Rights Specialist 1	\$47,556	19	Human Rights Specialist	38,487	44,260
Human Rights Specialist 2	\$55,472	22	Associate Human Rights Specialist I	45,563	52,398
			Associate Human Rights Specialist II	54,261	62,400

the law, and on conflict resolution and mediation to high school students and the community. They provide advice on issues of housing and access for people with disabilities, and mortgage foreclosure counseling and redlining, among many other functions. The HRS worker's understanding of complex technical issues such as sub-

<sup>3</sup> The Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2006. p.151

prime lending, mortgage discrimination or redlining and their impact on minorities, women and the elderly is crucial to assure proper assistance to the many communities in New York City.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Human Rights workers are fundamental in the enforcement of the New York City's Human Rights Law. They establish links to many diverse communities. They provide training and counseling, investigate discrimination complaints, give workshops on the Human Rights Law, explain existing anti-discrimination protection, teach conflict resolution in the classrooms to high school students and act as mediators when the communities have entered into conflicts created by hatred and racism. Their work is multifaceted with no comparable job in the private industry. It requires a set of diverse professional skills that workers usually develop through years of work in the community. It also requires dedication and commitment because of the diverse demand and requirements imposed on them. Human Rights workers have been a part of New York City history by playing a mediating role in crucial moments such as the Crown Heights and the Washington Heights incidents of the mid 1990's. The experience and commitment of the Human Rights workers are undisputed factors in establishing the opening for dialog and positive exchange among different players. However, these workers receive little recognition, their salaries lag enormously behind their counterpart in the New York State and their career opportunities have been constantly reduced due to decimation of the Commission staff.

Local 154 strongly recommends upgrading the salaries of all workers in the Human Rights Specialist Title series in recognition of the complexity of the jobs they perform. This Local recommends the creation of a salary step plan and the upgrade of the Human Rights Specialist title series through title maturation. Human Rights Specialist would be promoted to the Associate Human Rights Specialist I level after passing a probationary period or after one year of experience in the title. The Associate Human Rights Specialist Title I would mature into the Associate Human Rights Specialist I. Also, the Longevity Differential amount should be increased to reflect experience and seniority. Since the Human Rights Specialist's work encompasses the need for translation and interpretation, a payment differential should be given to those workers performing those functions. At last, we recommend the expansion of the number of lines in the title series. The dramatic reduction in the number of staff at the Commission on Human Rights since the mid 1990's endangers effectiveness of the Human Rights Commission and its policy in the City, put the agency in brink of disappearance and the Human Rights worker became an endangered specie. Field experience and understanding of the diverse communities must be important enough for any Civil Rights agency. Survival of the Agency and the Human Rights workers titles are crucial to properly carry the mandate of the City's Human Rights Law.