

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND  
CLASS SPECIFICATION**

**Class Code: 000126  
Grade: 26  
FLSA: E**

**LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST III\***

**DEFINITION OF SERIES:**

This is the full-performance, advanced level classification for professional staff working in labor and employee relations. Work involves standard as well as non-standard, complex, or difficult assignments requiring full proficiency in labor and employee relations.

**DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:**

The Labor Relations Specialist III is distinguished from the Labor Relations Specialist II in that the Labor Relations Specialist III is assigned more complex, non-standard issues, requiring a higher degree of independent judgement. They are often involved in leading department-level negotiations for single bargaining units and support term collective bargaining, whereas the Labor Relations Specialist II handles less complex grievance responses and negotiates limited settlement agreements. The Labor Relations Specialist III operates with greater autonomy and less oversight than the Labor Relations II.

**MAJOR DUTIES:**

The Labor Relations Specialist III handles complex, non-standard labor relations cases that require a high level of independent judgment and in-depth knowledge of labor laws and collective bargaining agreements. This role involves leading negotiations for single bargaining units or participating as a key member in larger, more significant negotiations. The Labor Relations Specialist III manages escalated grievances and disputes, interpreting contract provisions and advising management on the best course of action to resolve complex labor issues. They may represent the organization in arbitration and mediation settings, prepare legal briefs, and collaborate with senior management on labor relations strategies. While they work independently on complex issues that may require deviation from routine practices, they report to higher-level labor relations staff on particularly sensitive or organization-wide matters.

The Labor Relations Specialist III performs difficult, non-standard labor relations work that involves handling challenging and complex cases. This classification is responsible for analyzing and resolving labor disputes, participating in negotiations, and interpreting collective bargaining agreements. The incumbent must have deep knowledge of the Collective Bargaining Agreements, personnel regulations, collective bargaining and employment law. Incumbents generally follow established precedents and escalating the most sensitive issues that have organization-wide impact to Labor Relations management.

**EXAMPLES OF DUTIES: (Illustrative Only)**

- Communicates and partners directly with department/agency heads, bargaining unit representatives, and employees to resolve short and long-term problems presenting substantial economic impacts throughout the county.
- Participates in the development and implementation of collective bargaining strategy in the negotiation of labor agreements.
- Participates in, and/or conducts the meet and confer process.

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- Administers the County's grievance processes, ensuring that County and bargaining unit procedural requirements are met; conducts technical reviews of County and Union complaints to determine if they are grievable and timely, and ensures appropriate grievance procedures are used.
- Conducts grievance hearings and conferences as the Chief Administrative Officer's designee; conducts fact-finding, analyzes facts, and prepares initial findings-of-fact for employee and department review; prepares final grievance decision for Chief Administrative Officer's review and signature.
- Reviews adverse actions proposed by departments for conformance with applicable Union contracts, regulations, and procedures; provides guidance to departments regarding the interpretation of regulations.
- Provides guidance and assistance to County employees, supervisors, and managers on the full range of labor/employee relations issues.
- Conducts meetings with employees, department representatives, and union representatives to negotiate both formal and informal resolution of complaints and grievances.
- May assist with or conduct investigations related to grievances, allegations of employee misconduct, complaints, and other related issues.
- Conducts special studies and assignments, such as contract monitoring, development of policies and procedures related to a variety of labor/employee relations areas, participating on labor/management committees, policy committees, and study groups, and related assignments.
- Proposes changes to policies and procedures under review.
- Reviews and recommends supervisory and employee training content in the area of employee/labor relations; may organize and/or conduct supervisory and employee training, as assigned.
- Participates as a lead negotiator in mid-level or non-standard collective bargaining negotiations with unions, adapting negotiation strategies to unique circumstances.
- Investigates and resolves escalated grievances and labor disputes that require interpretation of complex contractual provisions or labor laws.
- Advises departmental leadership on the application of collective bargaining agreements, ensuring compliance with labor laws and policies.
- Prepares legal and policy analyses related to labor relations issues for use in negotiations, arbitrations, or grievance proceedings.
- Provides input on the development and modification of labor relations policies to ensure they align with collective bargaining agreements and organizational needs.
- Consults with and collaborates with the County Attorney to interpret applicable laws and provisions to help inform labor relations positions and strategies that have department-level and cross-cutting impact.
- Consults (as needed) with the County Executive as a subject matter expert for nuanced issues at the request of the Chief Labor Relations Officer. Serves (as needed) as support staff for the County Executive for various Union meetings, such as town halls hosted by MCGEO to discuss particular department-level issues.
- Liaises with union representatives to address concerns and collaboratively resolves labor disputes before they escalate to formal proceedings.
- Assists senior management in preparing for arbitration hearings, including gathering evidence and drafting briefs for presentation.
- Trains and mentors lower-level Labor Relations Specialists staff in handling difficult labor relations cases.
- Performs related duties as required.

**SUPERVISORY CONTROLS:**

This position typically reports to the Manager or Deputy Chief Labor Relations Officer in the Office of Labor Relations. Incumbents may report to other supervisory or management staff, as assigned.

The Labor Relations Specialist III works with considerable independence, handling non-standard and complex labor relations cases with limited supervision. While the position is expected to apply seasoned judgment and initiative in handling difficult matters, it operates within established organizational policies and legal frameworks. Supervisory oversight is typically limited to reviewing the more sensitive or high profile cases or providing guidance on cases that deviate significantly from precedent. The work is reviewed based on quality of work in resolving challenging issues, effective participation in negotiations, and adherence to legal and procedural guidelines.

**SUPERVISION EXERCISED:** Employees in this classification do not supervise other positions.

**GUIDELINES:**

The Labor Relations Specialist III uses a wide variety of guidelines, including labor laws, collective bargaining agreements, and organizational procedures. While these guidelines provide a solid foundation, many of the issues encountered are non-standard, requiring the specialist to interpret and adapt guidelines to fit unique or challenging circumstances. Labor Relations Specialist III may also contribute to refining or clarifying guidelines when ambiguities arise or when precedents are lacking. This classification requires strong judgment in applying established laws and policies while often operating in gray areas where guidelines provide limited direction. Senior staff or legal counsel may be consulted for particularly complex or unprecedented issues.

**COMPLEXITY:**

The work of the Labor Relations Specialist III is also complex but generally focuses on resolving difficult, non-standard labor relations issues that deviate from routine cases. These challenges may involve interpreting nuanced sections of collective bargaining agreements, handling escalated grievances, or participating in multi-party negotiations. The complexity of the work is marked by duties that involve analyzing data, situations or conditions, counseling, advising, interviewing, investigating, and developing interpretations, courses of action, and solutions to problems or issues, characterized by unclear, incomplete, inaccurate, or conflicting data/information and requirements sometimes under the constraint of prior precedents. Incumbents exercise broad discretion and professional judgement often involving high stress, time constraints, and confrontational challenges. Issues presented are unique in nature and involve creative and innovative analysis and reasoning to reach appropriate conclusions with extensive research and analysis required.

**SCOPE AND EFFECT:**

The Labor Relations Specialist III handles complex labor relations work that affects multiple departments or bargaining units within the organization through the proper application of County personnel laws, policies and procedures, County statutes, collective bargaining agreements, and/or Memoranda of Agreement/Understanding. Depending on assignment, work product may affect the overall operations of the County. The scope of work often involves difficult cases or negotiations that may directly affect the ability of the County to provide essential services and to avoid liability. Errors made at this level can lead to grievances, disruptions in labor agreements, or increased tension between labor and management. Mistakes may result in operational inefficiencies, financial liabilities, or delayed resolution of labor disputes, potentially escalating problems that require higher-level intervention. Actions set precedence

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and negotiations affect employees, which is a large percentage of the operating budget in Montgomery County. Work has a substantial impact on actions taken by County officials, and the character of the department/agency programs, policies, and procedures.

### **CONTACTS:**

Personal contacts include other staff members to exchange information, coordinate assignments, and resolve problems. Contacts are also made with upper management, supervisors, and employees in other County departments to obtain information, inform departments about policies and procedures, provide assistance, resolve problems, and make recommendations. Other contacts occur with agencies or organizations outside County government to conduct research, obtain guidance, or provide information. The Labor Relations Specialist III regularly interacts with mid- to senior-level management, union representatives, and departmental heads. Contacts at this level include participation in negotiations, resolving grievances, and interpreting collective bargaining agreements with union leaders. The Labor Relations Specialist III also communicates with HR staff, attorneys, and external consultants or mediators involved in labor relations cases. These contacts are focused on addressing complex, non-standard labor issues, providing advisory support to management, and engaging in collaborative problem-solving with labor unions. Personal interactions are often detailed and require strong communication and persuasion skills, particularly in contentious or difficult situations.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE/ASSISTANCE:**

Provides limited direct service or assistance to the public.

### **HAZARDS:**

Incumbent has limited exposure to hazardous conditions and generally is not required to use special equipment and/or adhere to special precautions.

### **WORK ENVIRONMENT:**

Work is typically performed in an office environment.

### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS:**

Incumbents' work assignments are primarily sedentary. The work of this class requires employees to spend a significant portion of their normal workday using standard office equipment such as computers, printers, copiers, and telephone.

### **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**

**Education:** Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree in human resources, labor relations, public administration, law, or a related field. A master's degree is preferred.

**Experience:** Five (5) years of progressively responsible experience in labor relations handling complex, non-standard cases, including experience with collective bargaining negotiations, grievance resolution, and contract administration.

**Substitution:** None.

**Equivalency:** An equivalent combination of education and experience may be substituted.

### **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:**

#### ***Advanced Knowledge of:***

- Labor laws and regulations (e.g., National Labor Relations Act, Fair Labor Standards Act Americans with Disabilities Act, Equal Employment Opportunity ) and their application to labor relations matters.

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- Collective bargaining processes and strategies, including the preparation and negotiation of contract proposals and counterproposals.
- Interpretation of collective bargaining agreements, including clauses related to wages, benefits, working conditions, and employee rights.
- Grievance and arbitration procedures, including methods for investigating and resolving complex grievances.
- Organizational policies and Human Resources procedures related to labor relations, including discipline, performance management, and employee rights.
- Principles of conflict resolution and mediation in the labor relations context, including handling escalated disputes between management and labor.
- Techniques for effective communication and negotiation with union representatives and management at a senior level.
- Data analysis and reporting techniques for tracking labor relations trends, grievances, and contract compliance.

### ***Skill in:***

- Conducting difficult, non-standard labor negotiations and interpreting labor contracts to address complex issues.
- Handling escalated grievances and disputes that require detailed understanding of labor law and contract provisions.
- Providing sound labor relations advice and guidance to department heads and mid- to senior-level management.
- Communicating effectively with union representatives, management, and external stakeholders to resolve labor disputes and negotiate agreements.
- Researching, analyzing, and interpreting labor laws, collective bargaining agreements, and labor policies.
- Preparing for and participating in arbitration and mediation sessions, ensuring thorough case preparation and effective presentation.

### ***Ability to:***

- Independently manage complex labor relations issues, making informed decisions with limited supervision.
- Collaborate effectively with union leaders, management, and legal counsel to resolve disputes and negotiate agreements.
- Provide detailed and accurate interpretations of collective bargaining agreements and labor laws.
- Develop innovative solutions for labor relations challenges, balancing organizational needs with employee rights.
- Communicate persuasively in high-pressure environments, influencing outcomes in negotiations and dispute resolutions.

**Licenses, Registrations, Certifications, or Special Requirements:** None.

### **PROBATIONARY PERIOD:**

Individuals appointed or promoted to this class will be required to serve a probationary period of twelve (12) months, and, if promoted to a position in this class, will be required to serve a probationary period of six (6) months, during which time performance will be carefully evaluated. Continuation in this class will be contingent upon successful completion of the probationary period.

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**BARGAINING STATUS:** Positions in this class are normally unrepresented.

**MEDICAL PROTOCOL:** Medical History Review

**PROMOTION POTENTIAL:**

**CLASS SPECIFICATION HISTORY:**

**Class Established: April 2020**

**Revised: December 2024**

**Classification Study: June 2025**