

# Champion of COVID Response

Center for Human Resources (CHR) Operations  
(Staffing) Team



## Social Security Administration

### Summary:

Despite numerous challenges, including virtual training and mentoring during the COVID pandemic, the CHR Operations staffing team was able to provide virtual support to over 8,500 employees in the Denver and Chicago Region, and hire over 700 hires. This extraordinary effort is a profound achievement worthy of recognition.

**Description:** The Center for Human Resources (CHR) Operations (Staffing) team is responsible for all staffing actions related to hiring (internal/external), including the processing of all personnel actions for over 8500 employees in both the Chicago and Denver Regions, including the Office of Hearing Operations (OHO), Office of General Counsel (OGC), and the Office of Quality Review (OQR).

The team consists of a GS-13 team leader, 3 GS-13 technical experts, 9 GS-9/12 staffing specialists and 1 GS-8 human resources assistant. Due to high attrition over the last several years, the Operations team lost a significant amount of job knowledge. The most senior specialists on this team have less than 5 years of experience. Our challenge has been to meet the hiring demands while simultaneously focusing on ensuring our trainees receive high quality training and mentoring while instilling the importance of customer service.

The challenge has been closing the knowledge gap for the team while meeting our timeliness hiring goals as well as meeting customer service expectations. Of the nine Human Resources (HR) Specialists, six have 1-3 years of experience and the remaining three have less than 5 years of experience. Only the three HR specialists with less than 5 years are certified to process Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) actions. Being DEU certified allows the specialists to post and process external vacancies and other external actions. Six of the total nine HR specialists, are considered trainees and under some form of review.

In March 2020, COVID hit and the entire staff was mandated to work from home. The team was tasked with navigating through this new terrain while successfully balancing the spinning plates and meeting the needs of our customers.

The team leader and technical experts all assumed additional areas of responsibilities to support the team and to makeup the shortage. In addition to their own area of responsibilities and the newly acquired area, all technical experts were assigned the responsibility of mentoring our trainees. The team leader and technical experts were also responsible for classifications and data reports.

There was an immediate need to address the way we do business as well as modify how we provide training and mentoring in this new virtual environment. We met with the team to invite and encourage innovative work processing ideas. The team rallied and brainstormed new workflow processes, which included how to automate paper workloads. Week after week, the team shared ideas on automation with one another on best practices and gave mini-training sessions.

Trainees began to volunteer for those internal actions they could efficiently process such as submitting fingerprints and reviewing background investigations. Everyone was determined to meet our hiring responsibilities and willing to do whatever it took to reach the goal.

The Operations staff has done an amazing job with the shortage of journeyman specialists. Operations successfully process over 700+ hires for the Chicago and Denver regions. The team was challenged to achieve excellence. Collectively they found creative solutions while constantly delivering quality products and timely service.

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Michelle Horner  
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Iwona Gorzkowicz  
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Rodney Watson  
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