

THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY IN THE TEAM

A DEFINITION:

A Secretary in External Affairs is a public servant, an assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority. She is a professional with the necessary skills to get tasks done, and produce the product.

Because of the manner in which secretaries are hired by External Affairs and the speed of promotions, secretaries are often highly experienced at SCY I and II levels. Therefore, it is in the interests even at the Department to find ways to utilize fully each secretary's skills.

A SECRETARY'S SKILLS INCLUDE:

- Technical Skills: typing, grammar, spelling, shorthand, word processing, etc., specific training related to her job;
- Management Skills: planning, organizing, leading, controlling, decision-making, etc., (setting priorities);
- Interpersonal Skills: managing relationships at all levels (officer/secretary; secretary/secretary), communicating well with superiors, subordinates and peers, negotiating to gain cooperation, and to work well within a team, etc. (It also means being able to work effectively with people of different cultures, backgrounds, and work styles.);
- Administrative Skills: managing the office, dealing with paperwork, time management, quality control, etc.;
- Organizational Skills: working well within the organization; including knowledge of the organization itself, its objectives, policies, procedures, guidelines and rules as well as a clear understanding of roles and relationships and how the system works. (It is important to be able to apply this knowledge to the organization to be effective.)

Traditionally, secretaries were expected more to respond to the officer's needs rather than acting as an assistant. Such skills as shorthand and typing were often emphasized more than the secretary's potential for true administrative and management support. Now more than ever, all members of a team can benefit from utilizing the secretary more effectively and drawing on this potential. In order that the secretary have time for these added responsibilities however, the manager must find ways to reduce routine typing and other tasks.