

internships and four positions. Her positions included provisional Health Data Specialist 3, Program Assistant with the New York City Department of Health, Cook-Rutledge Fellow with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, and Administrative Assistant with the Public Health Association of New York City. She was credited with 1 year, 10 months of experience in the first three positions, and found to be lacking 2 months of experience by the November 2014 closing date. In addition, she was credited with nine of the required credits, and found to be lacking three specific credits.

On appeal, Ms. Chopra argues that she possesses a Master's degree in Public Health, and has at least 12 semester hour credits including courses such as Introduction to Statistics, Principles of Biostatistics, Introduction to Economics, Research Methods Public Health/Public Education, Public Health Planning, Implementation and Evaluation, and Public Health Epidemiology. She provides course descriptions for some of these courses. In addition, she provides additional information regarding her positions, and an internship with the Caribbean Women's Health Association.

N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.3(b) provides that applicants shall meet all requirements specified in the open competitive examination announcement by the closing date. *N.J.A.C.* 4A:1-1.2(c) states that the Civil Service Commission (Commission) may relax a rule for good cause in order to effectuate the purposes of Title 11A, New Jersey Statutes.

CONCLUSION

In the current matter, DSS correctly determined that the appellant lacked two months of applicable experience. Her experience as an Administrative Assistant did not have the announced experience requirement as the primary focus. In addition, generally, experience as an intern, gained during the period of time that she has been attending college, cannot be considered. Any internship performed as part of a college curriculum is considered education or training, and not work experience. See *In the Matter of Luisa Mena* (MSB, decided February 14, 2001). In this case, the job specification allowed for substitution of a Master's degree for one year of experience. The job specification indicated that the degree should be "in one of the disciplines indicated above." It is assumed that the disciplines refer to Economics, Statistics, Quantitative Analysis, Operations Research, and/or Market Research. However, it cannot be ignored that the job specification for Health Data Specialist 3 indicates that the requirements included experience in comprehensive technical research and analysis in economics, statistical analysis, public health administration, or related field which involves the use, operation, and/or management of database systems. Additionally, an incumbent in this title conducts surveys and assists in organizing health research activities of a complicated and technical nature.

Ms. Chopra possesses a Master's degree in Public Health, and her 4 month internship with the Caribbean Women's Health Association included duties of writing an entrepreneurial and career development program plan for underserved HIV infected Caribbean women. This included designing a needs assessment and evaluation tools for the program; preparing linkage agreements with agencies and universities for client referrals; surveying and researching HIV diagnosed women in all of the zip codes in Brooklyn by qualitative and quantitative methods; and surveying the community for statistical analysis. Although the appellant's Master's degree was not accepted, this internship experience, required for the degree, matches the experience requirement.

As to specific credits, the appellant possesses six credits in statistics (Introduction to Statistics, Principles of Biostatistics), three credits in economics (Introduction to Economics), and three credits in operations research (Research Methods Public Health/Public Education). As such, the appellant possesses the required specific 12 credits. Her course in Public Health Planning, Implementation and Evaluation is related, but not applicable. It is unclear why a course in Public Health Epidemiology would not be specifically mentioned in the job specification for Health Data Specialist 3. Epidemiology is the science which studies patterns, causes and effects of health and disease conditions in defined populations. Epidemiologists study design, collection, and statistical analysis of data, and interpret and disseminate results, as well as develop methodologies for clinical research, public health studies, and perform basic research in biological sciences.

Although Ms. Chopra lacks two months of required experience, the Commission finds that the totality of her college education, her internships, her provisional experience in the subject title, and her other experience are acceptable to meet the requirements for the subject examination. *See In the Matter of Meg-Anne McCarthy* (MSB, decided August 11, 2004) (Totality of experience, Bachelor's degree in Food and Nutrition, and Master's degree in Health Administration acceptable for required Master's degree in a nutrition specialty). Additionally, since incumbents in the title of Health Data Specialist 3 conduct surveys and assist in organizing health research activities of a complicated and technical nature, the Division of Agency Services should review the requirements for the subject title to determine if possession of college credits in Epidemiology are appropriate, and if possession of a Master's degree in Public Health would be an acceptable substitute for experience. Finally, given that the Commission has referred the matter of the job requirements for review, it is appropriate to add the appellant's name to the subject list for current appointment consideration.

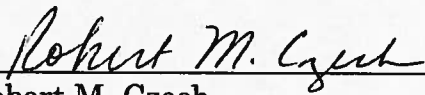
It is noted that this remedy is limited to the particular circumstances of this matter and does not set a precedent in any other matter.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be granted, and the appellant's application be processed for current employment opportunities.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

**DECISION RENDERED BY THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
THE 1st DAY OF APRIL, 2015**



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