



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matters of Emiliano Castro, <i>et</i>	:	FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
<i>al.</i> , Assistant Training Supervisor	:	OF THE
County Welfare Agency (PC5519D),	:	CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
Passaic County Board of Social	:	
Services	:	
	:	
CSC Docket Nos. 2024-1613, <i>et al.</i>	:	Examination Appeals
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ISSUED: July 3, 2024

Emiliano Castro, Johanna Cordova, Regana Bracey, and Chris Horton appeal the determinations of the Division of Agency Services (Agency Services), which found that they did not meet the experience requirement for the promotional examination for Assistant Training Supervisor County Welfare Agency (PC5519D), Passaic County Board of Social Services. These appeals have been consolidated herein.

The subject examination was announced with a closing date of November 21, 2022 and was open to employees who possessed a Bachelor’s degree and four years of experience in determining training needs, developing training plans and materials, and conducting training programs, or four years of supervisory experience of an income maintenance program or social service program in a welfare agency. A Master’s degree in Social Work could be substituted for two years of experience. The examination was administered as a written test on September 7, 2023. The resulting eligible list of three names promulgated on October 12, 2023 and expires on October 11, 2026. A certification consisting of all three names issued on October 16, 2023 (PL231990), and it has not yet been disposed of.

It is noted that the appellants had initially been deemed eligible for the subject examination. Cordova, Bracey, and Horton took and passed the test on September 7, 2023, and their names appeared on the resulting eligible list at the time it promulgated in October 2023. Castro took a make-up test on September 27, 2023, and his name was added to the list on or about January 11, 2024. In response to an inquiry, Agency Services re-reviewed the appellants’ applications and determined

that they did not meet the experience requirement for the reasons that will be described below. As a result, their names were removed from the list in February 2024, leaving three names on the list as noted above. *See N.J.A.C. 4A:4-3.8(a)* (agency staff may correct an error at any time during the life of an eligible list).

Castro's Application

On his application, Castro indicated possession of a Bachelor's degree. He listed his experience as a "Human Services Specialist 2" with the Passaic County Board of Social Services (PCBSS) from September 2013 to November 2022¹ and Youth Development Specialist with the Community Charter School of Paterson from October 2014 to June 2017. Castro did not indicate that he supervised any staff as a "Human Services Specialist 2" and described his duties as follows:

Review information on forms, applications, and other financial assistance documents for completeness and accuracy during eligibility process; train any new incoming staff member into the unit on the regulations and procedures; attend state training sessions to relay any new information with my unit; perform field and office work involved in determining the economic needs of clients and their eligibility for various financial and other public assistance programs; develop case management skills in order to keep records updated with various types of recording and information systems; provide interpretation and communicate policies for clients who are only able to speak Spanish; handle with discretion all sensitive information for both clients and other departments; advise and provide information to individuals and families who require information to achieve self-sufficiency; investigating, enforcing, and monitoring support obligations for various agencies; convey information to the general public on available public assistance and other related programs; utilization of various types of electronic and manual recording information systems used by the agency; performing paraprofessional work involving the clarification of agency policies relating to the particular needs of the client, and assisting clients obtain available services; prepping client information and casework for processing Medicaid benefits; initiates correspondence relative to setting up various types of appointments; prepares factual reports, complete forms as required, maintains essential records and files; train any new support staff to agency standards on procedures; ability to understand routine casework procedures and techniques; understand and make effective use of regulations and procedures

¹ Castro in fact lumped the following three positions together: Social Service Aide from September 2013 to April 2018; Human Services Specialist 1 from May 2018 to October 2021; and Human Services Specialist 2 from November 2021 to November 2022.

pertaining to the provisions; and assist Spanish speaking clients in the application, eligibility, and recertification process.

He described his Youth Development Specialist duties as follows:

Presenting subject matter to students through the use of group learning and group discussions; assisting in classroom management while implementing specialized activities in areas such as academic enrichment, positive youth development, and health and fitness; increasing students' career and college readiness by offering quality remediation activities in core areas including reading, mathematics, arts and culture, science and technology; infusing social, emotional, and character development into the program as a means to positively impact student behavior; organize and supervise in class games and gatherings, as well as assist in field trips planning and preparation; and in addition, assisting with schoolwide recreational activities to promote physical, mental, and social progress.

Agency Services credited Castro for possession of a Bachelor's degree. However, none of the listed experience was credited. Specifically, it was determined that the "Human Services Specialist 2" experience was not supervisory experience in an income maintenance program or social service program and that the Youth Development Specialist experience was in the area of education assistance, not training. Therefore, Agency Services deemed Castro ineligible since he lacked four years of experience and thus did not meet the experience requirement set forth in the announcement.

Cordova's Application

On her application, Cordova indicated possession of a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in Child Advocacy and Policy. She listed her experience as a Human Services Specialist 3 from April 2022 to November 2022; Human Services Specialist 2 from June 2015 to April 2022; and Human Services Specialist 1 from March 2012 to June 2015, all with the PCBSS. She also listed her experience as a Case Manager with the New Hope Behavioral Health Center from September 2010 to February 2012; Assistant Manager with Lakeview Bakery from September 2003 to May 2011; and Case Manager with First Occupation Center of New Jersey from July 2008 to March 2009. Cordova described her experience in each of these positions as follows:

- Human Services Specialist 3, PCBSS (supervisory): "Supervisor of the call center. Reviewing case referrals, processing cases thru Phoenix, training workers in program regulations and system procedures."

- Human Services Specialist 2, PCBSS (nonsupervisory): “Case manager for im department processing food stamps, Medicaid and cash assistance.”
- Human Services Specialist 1, PCBSS (nonsupervisory): “Worked as a [General Assistance] case manager and also an im case manager.”
- Case Manager, New Hope Behavioral Health Center (supervisory): “In charge of case load of clients. Managed their treatment plans and did one on one counseling. Ran therapeutic session for groups of 20-30. Supervised interns as part of my duties. Interns shadowed sessions and helped assist sessions.”
- Assistant Manager, Lakeview Bakery (supervisory): “Trained new employees with regard to how to do cake orders, trained [in] store regulations, set schedules and completed payroll. Processed wholesale orders for tri-state area.”
- Case Manager, First Occupation Center of New Jersey (nonsupervisory): “Ran group mental health sessions. Maintained caseload of clients, completing treatment plans and observing behavior.”

Agency Services credited Cordova for possession of a Bachelor’s degree and accepted her Master’s degree in substitution of two years of experience. Agency Services also credited Cordova with eight months of applicable experience based on her Human Services Specialist 3 position. However, none of the remaining listed experience was credited. Specifically, it was determined that Cordova was not working with training in her Human Services Specialist 2 and Human Services Specialist 1 positions, and her experience with the New Hope Behavioral Health Center was not earned in a welfare agency. As for her experience as an Assistant Manager with Lakeview Bakery and Case Manager with the First Occupation Center of New Jersey, these positions did not have the required experience as the primary focus. Therefore, Agency Services deemed Cordova ineligible since she lacked one year and four months of experience and thus did not meet the experience requirement set forth in the announcement.

Bracey’s Application

On her application, Bracey indicated possession of a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree in “Business Management.”² She listed her experience as a Human Services Specialist 2 with the PCBSS from September 2013 to November 2022; Special Education Specialist with SanMar Consulting LLC from June 2006 to November 2022; Executive Director with Mr. G’s Kids from September 2007 to October 2022; and Executive Administrative Assistant/Shelter Advocate with Several Sources Shelters (1996-2005). Agency Services credited Bracey for possession of a

² Bracey’s appeal reflects that the Master’s degree was specifically in Fashion Merchandising and Retail Management.

Bachelor's degree but did not accept her Master's degree. Further, none of the listed experience was credited. Therefore, Agency Services deemed Bracey ineligible since she lacked four years of experience and thus did not meet the experience requirement set forth in the announcement.

Horton's Application

On his application, Horton indicated possession of a Bachelor's degree. He listed his experience as a Property Manager Supervisor with YES Property Management from November 2008 to July 2016, which he described as follows:

Supervisor 5 On-site property managers; Reviewed all action and call logs. Reviewed all requested bid specs and bids received. Supervised all projects/construction preformed on site. Supervised accounts payable and receivable departments. Reviewed and approved all board meeting packets before being released to board members and residents. Trained all employees and new software implemented at all new sites and accounting and community announcement software. Attended all board meeting to meet with the community and reviewed and approved all meeting minutes.

Agency Services credited Horton for possession of a Bachelor's degree. However, his property management experience was not credited. Therefore, Agency Services deemed Horton ineligible since he lacked four years of experience and thus did not meet the experience requirement set forth in the announcement.

Appeals

On appeal to the Civil Service Commission, Castro maintains that his experience as a Youth Development Specialist should be credited. He also maintains that his experience as a Social Service Aide, Human Services Specialist 1, and Human Services Specialist 2 should be credited because in those positions, he determined training needs, developed training plans, and trained staff. Additionally, Castro notes that in February 2023, he received a provisional appointment to the title of Human Services Specialist 4. Castro also complains that this agency did not request more information at the application stage and requests a list of all those involved in the decision-making for this examination. In support, Castro submits, among other things, his resume.³

³ Castro also complains that a provisional employee has remained in the subject title and that it took too long for his name to be added to the eligible list after his make-up examination. However, these claims are no longer viable at this juncture. Specifically, agency records indicate that there is no one serving provisionally in the subject title with the PCBSS. Additionally, as will be detailed below, the Civil Service Commission is upholding Agency Services' determination that Castro was not eligible in the first place.

Cordova maintains that she meets the experience requirement as all positions on her application are applicable. She highlights her role as a Case Manager in the “partial care setting” with the New Hope Behavioral Health Center. She maintains that she was called on to perform training duties in her Human Services Specialist 2 and Human Services Specialist 1 positions. With respect to her experience at Lakeview Bakery, Cordova states that she was charged with completing wholesale distribution orders, writing up invoices for restaurants, and helping train new employees. Cordova acknowledges that this was a “minor component,” but she was still tasked with training new hires on how to appropriately assist customers, prepare orders, assemble boxes, and maintain the cleanliness of the business. She also discusses a Group Leader position she held with the Community Charter School of Paterson from October 2014 through May 2018 and her appointment to Human Services Specialist 4 in May 2023.

Bracey presents copies of her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees.

Horton maintains that his Property Manager Supervisor position should be credited as he was responsible for training initiatives in that role. He also discusses his experience as a Student Teacher at the Matthew Jago School in Woodbridge and as a Loan Officer with High Quality Mortgage.

CONCLUSION

N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.6(a)2 provides that applicants shall meet all requirements specified in the promotional examination announcement by the closing date.

In order for experience to be considered applicable, it must have as its primary focus full-time responsibilities in the areas required in the announcement. *See In the Matter of Bashkim Vlashi* (MSB, decided June 9, 2004). The amount of time, and the importance of the duty, determines if it is the primary focus. An experience requirement that lists a number of duties that define the primary experience, requires that the applicants demonstrate that they primarily performed all of those duties for the required length of time. Performance of only one or some of the duties listed is not indicative of comprehensive experience. *See In the Matter of Jeffrey Davis* (MSB, decided March 14, 2007). A review of the appellants’ applications and appeals reveals that they did not possess the required experience as detailed below.

Castro maintains that his experience as a Youth Development Specialist, Social Service Aide, Human Services Specialist 1, and Human Services Specialist 2 should be credited. However, the Youth Development Specialist position focused on assisting in the education of students within a school setting, not training, which teaches employees the application of principles in a real-life situation. Castro’s duties as a Youth Development Specialist are not in the context of the experience

requirement. And while Castro may have performed some training duties in his Social Service Aide, Human Services Specialist 1, and Human Services Specialist 2 positions, the required training experience in its full scope was clearly not the primary focus of any of those positions. While Castro, on appeal, provides information regarding his Human Services Specialist 4 position, this position cannot be considered because it did not even commence until after the closing date in February 2023. In any event, *N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.1(f)* provides that an application may only be amended prior to the announced closing date. That is, any documentation indicating work in any setting that was not previously listed on an application or resume cannot be considered after the closing date. See *In the Matter of Joann Burch, et al.* (MSB, decided August 21, 2003). Therefore, since this position was not listed on the application, the information provided on appeal related to this position would be considered an amendment.

Castro's complaint that this agency did not request more information at the application stage is unavailing. *Applicants* are required to clearly demonstrate on the application that their experience matches that required in the announcement. See *In the Matter of Marcella Longo* (MSB, decided November 4, 2004) and *In the Matter of Rui Reguinho* (MSB, decided October 6, 2004). Also, his request for a list of all those involved in the decision-making for this examination is not an argument as to his eligibility. Rather, it is essentially a records request better pursued through Open Public Records Act procedures.

Cordova maintains that all positions noted on her application should be credited. However, while Cordova may have performed some training duties in her Human Services Specialist 2 and Human Services Specialist 1 positions, the required training experience in its full scope was clearly not the primary focus of those positions. Cordova's experience as a Case Manager with the New Hope Behavioral Health Center was not earned in a welfare agency and did not primarily focus on the required training experience in its full scope. The focus, rather, was managing treatment plans, counseling, and therapy for a caseload of clients. As for the Assistant Manager, Lakeview Bakery, and Case Manager, First Occupation Center of New Jersey, positions, neither position primarily focused on the required training experience in its full scope. Cordova even acknowledges on appeal that training was a "minor component" of her duties at the bakery. On appeal, Cordova provides information regarding her Group Leader and Human Services Specialist 4 positions. The Human Services Specialist 4 position cannot be considered because it did not even commence until after the closing date in May 2023. In any event, both the Group Leader and Human Services Specialist 4 positions were not listed on her application, so these positions cannot be considered now. See *N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.1(f)* and *Burch, supra*.

Bracey presents no arguments on appeal regarding her experience and only provides copies of her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Her Bachelor's degree was

accepted in fulfillment of the education requirement. Her Master's degree, which is in Fashion Merchandising and Retail Management, cannot be accepted as it is not in, or even arguably similar to, Social Work.

Horton maintains that his Property Manager Supervisor position should be credited. While he may have undertaken training initiatives in that role, property management was clearly the primary focus of the position. Horton's Student Teacher and Loan Officer positions were not listed on his application, so these positions cannot be considered now. *See N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.1(f) and Burch, supra.*

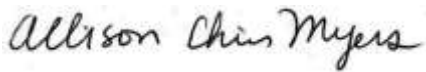
Accordingly, the record reflects that the appellants did not meet the requirements for the title under test.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that these appeals be denied.

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

DECISION RENDERED BY THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ON
THE 3RD DAY OF JULY, 2024



Allison Chris Myers
Chairperson
Civil Service Commission

Inquiries
and
Correspondence

Nicholas F. Angiulo
Director
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
Civil Service Commission
Written Record Appeals Unit
P.O. Box 312
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0312

c: Emiliano Castro (2024-1613)
Johanna Cordova (2024-1805)
Regana Bracey (2024-1806)
Chris Horton (2024-1807)
Talisa Coleman
Division of Agency Services

Records Center