



## STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Priyanka Mathur,  
Department of Children and Families

**FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

CSC DKT. NO. 2024-2292  
OAL DKT. NO. CSV 07606-24

**ISSUED: JULY 23, 2025**

The appeal of Priyanka Mathur, Manager 1, Human Resources, Department of Children and Families, return to previously held permanent title at the end of the working test period, effective April 15, 2024, was heard by Administrative Law Judge Michael R. Stanzione (ALJ), who rendered his initial decision on June 9, 2025. No exceptions were filed.

Having considered the record and the ALJ's initial decision, and having made an independent evaluation of the record, the Civil Service Commission (Commission), at its meeting of July 23, 2025, accepted the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of the ALJ as well as his recommendation to uphold the return to the previously held permanent title at the end of the working test period,

The Commission makes the following comment. The burden of proof in an appeal of a release at the end of the working test period is on the appellant. See *N.J.A.C. 4A:2-1.4(c)*. In this regard, to be successful in such a challenge, the appellant would need to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the appointing authority effectuated the working test period in bad faith. See *N.J.A.C. 4A:2-4.3(b)*. In this matter, as found by the ALJ, the appellant has clearly not satisfied that burden.

**ORDER**

The Civil Service Commission finds that the action of the appointing authority in returning the appellant to her previously held permanent title at the end of the working test period was justified. The Commission therefore upholds that action and dismisses the appeal of Priyanka Mathur.

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 ON  
THE 23<sup>RD</sup> DAY OF JULY, 2025

*Dolores Gorczyca*

---

Dolores Gorczyca  
Member  
Civil Service Commission

Inquiries  
and  
Correspondence

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

Attachment



**State of New Jersey**  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

**INITIAL DECISION**

OAL DKT. NO. CSV 07606-24

AGENCY DKT. NO. 2024-2292

**IN THE MATTER OF PRIYANKA MATHUR,  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

---

**Priyanka Mathur**, appellant, pro se

**Douglas Banks**, Director, Office of Employee Relations, for respondent  
Department of Children and Families, under N.J.A.C. 1:1-5.4(a)(2)

Record Closed: March 11, 2025

Decided: June 9, 2025

BEFORE **MICHAEL R. STANZIONE**, ALJ:

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

Appellant Priyanka Mathur completed a working test period of six months as a manager 1, after which she was terminated and demoted to the position of administrative assistant 4. Did the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) determine that she could not satisfactorily discharge her duties during her working test period in bad faith? No. The purpose of a working test period is to judge whether an employee can satisfactorily discharge the duties of a title. N.J.S.A. 11A:4-15.

### **PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

The DCF issued a Notice of Termination to the appellant effective April 15, 2024. R-1. On May 3, 2024, the appellant filed an appeal with the New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC). The matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), where it was filed on May 31, 2024, for hearing as a contested case. N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 to -15; N.J.S.A. 52:14F-1 to -13. The case was originally assigned to a different administrative law judge, who held a settlement conference on August 14, 2024. The case was unable to be settled, and it was reassigned to me. A pre-hearing telephone conference was scheduled for September 24, 2024, and the DCF failed to appear. The teleconference was rescheduled for October 3, 2024, and a follow-up was scheduled for October 24, 2024. On October 24, 2024, the prehearing conference was held, and an in-person hearing was scheduled for February 25, 2025, at the OAL. A prehearing teleconference was held on February 11, 2025, to ensure that there were no issues that needed to be dealt with prior to the hearing. The case was heard on February 25, 2025. The record remained open for the receipt of written summations by the parties. Both summations were received by March 11, 2025, and the record closed that day.

### **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF FACT**

The following is undisputed, and I therefore **FIND** the following as **FACT**:

1. Appellant began a working test period in September 2023 in the position of manager 1 in the DCF's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Unit, Office of Human Resources.
2. Appellant was afforded an initial four-month working test period and was then given an additional two months through March 2024 because of a leave of absence, for a total of six months.
3. During the working test period appellant reported to Amanda DeCillis, manager 3, Human Resources.

4. Appellant received an unsatisfactory rating for her first probationary report. She received the same rating for the second probationary report.
5. Her rating for the third probationary report was unsatisfactory, and subsequently she received the same rating for the fourth probationary report.
6. The DCF issued a Notice of Termination to appellant effective April 15, 2024.
7. Appellant was disciplined during the working test period for disclosing confidential employee information via email and regular mail to the wrong employees, providing inaccurate ADA inquiries, and improperly delegating cases to trainees.
8. After the termination notice, appellant was demoted to her last permanent title of administrative assistant 4. R-5.

### **Testimony**

#### **For respondent**

**Andrea Maxwell** is the deputy director for the DCF's Office of Human Resources (OHR). Ms. Maxwell has worked for the DCF for twenty-eight years. She explained that her duties include, but are not limited to, supervision of managers in the OHR. She explained how the working test period is administered pursuant to N.J.A.C. 4A:4-5.1.

Ms. Maxwell testified that she was familiar with the appellant and her working test period. She confirmed the appellant was rated unsatisfactory after the first two months of the working test period. The DCF asked the CSC to extend her working test period by two months in accordance with N.J.A.C. 4A:4-5.2. Her performance continued to be unsatisfactory after the fifth month, and she received the Notice of Termination at the end of the sixth month. As a result, a decision was made to demote the appellant to the title of administrative assistant 4.

The appellant had issues with letter writing and decision making and was disciplined during the working test period for wrongfully disclosing employees' personal information. R-4; R-9.

Ms. Maxwell testified that she was familiar with the appellant's supervisor, Amanda DeCillis. She did not have any concerns about Ms. DeCillis's evaluation of appellant's performance as a manager 1, Human Resources, during the working test period. It was Ms. Maxwell's assertion that the appellant was given a fair opportunity to show proficiency in the position of manager 1.

**Amanda DeCillis** worked for DCF for three and half years starting in 2020. She resigned in good standing effective June 14, 2024. Ms. DeCillis was a manager 3 in the Office of Human Resources.

Ms. DeCillis's responsibilities included supervision of managers; oversight of multiple units under the OHR scope; special projects; liaising with other offices within the DCF; and providing advice/guidance to higher level managers regarding the application of the law.

Ms. DeCillis was familiar with the appellant, who began to report to her in September 2023. Appellant's job responsibilities as a manager 1 were to demonstrate the ability to make independent decisions relative to the ADA process, help subordinate staff make sound decisions relative to the ADA interactive process, ensure proper communication to DCF employees through email/letters, and master application of laws/OHR policies. R-6; R-7; R-8; R-9.

Appellant was afforded a six-month working test period to demonstrate that she could satisfactorily perform the duties of a manager 1. Ms. DeCillis explained, however, that appellant was deficient in the areas of decision making, accurate and effective communication with employees during the ADA interactive process, proper delegation of tasks to subordinate staff, and protecting the confidentiality of employees' personal information. R-1; R-2; R-4; R-5.

The DCF issued the Notice of Termination to the appellant because she did not demonstrate mastery of knowledge of the ADA and her responsibilities as manager 1 at the end of the working test period. She relayed that appellant was unable to apply lessons learned from previous cases and lacked the overall ability to apply her training to perform her duties. During the working test period she documented the appellant's work performance in her performance assessment reviews, rating her performance unsatisfactory. R-6; R-7.

The DCF provided appellant with training and other resources, such as one-on-one meetings, web-based learning, and mentorship, to assist with her development. On one occasion Ms. DeCillis had to get involved with ADA matters handled by the appellant to ensure that there were no legal liabilities for the DCF. R-1; R-2; R-4; R-6; R-7; R-8 R-12.

In response to a question about the appellant's claim that she was overly critical, Ms. DeCillis explained that she implemented objective standards, denied that she was overly critical of the appellant, and asserted that she provided guidance to ensure compliance with established laws. Ms. DeCillis said she communicated with appellant using a variety of methods. She applied the Socratic method as a strategy to support and guide.

In response to appellant's assertion that she did not provide mentorship, Ms. DeCillis testified that they engaged in one-on-one meetings, that she redirected the appellant to available resources contained in the training folder, and that she offered the employee the opportunity to shadow. She refuted appellant's claim that her management style was to micromanage. In sum, Ms. DeCillis said that she gave the appellant the benefit of the doubt in the evaluation of her performance during the working test period.

**For appellant**

**Priyanka Mathur** contends that the termination was unfair, and that the organization did not uphold its commitment to equitable treatment and employee development.

DeCillis recruited appellant for the manager 1 position in the ADA Unit. When appellant told DeCillis that she had no experience with the ADA, DeCillis assured her that she would receive comprehensive training and guidance. Appellant was hired after she was interviewed and passed a writing test.

Appellant thought that the training was lacking with respect to the ADA. The training that was provided to her was ineffective, and her requests for assistance and clarification were dismissed. She was given access to fourteen documents that were intended for training, but they were insufficient. From January 2024, through April 2024, she was required to submit daily work plans. DeCillis did not respond to the plans, and did not provide feedback on areas that needed improvement.

Appellant opined that the working test period evaluation was subjective and that she was terminated from the manager 1 position because the evaluator deemed that she could not perform essential job functions. Appellant did not believe that the training that was provided was robust enough. The relief she is seeking is to perform as a manager 1, Human Resources, by participating in a working test period for a position within her current unit.

**Additional Findings**

As the fact finder, I was able to observe the demeanor, tone, and physical actions of the appointing authority's witnesses. They testified clearly and convincingly about their observations of the appellant and her behavior. The testimony of each was consistent with that of the other and bolstered by the submitted evidence. They also testified professionally and without equivocation concerning the working test period and what it required. I find their testimony to be credible.



I was also able to observe the demeanor, tone, and physical actions of the appellant during her testimony and throughout the proceeding. The appellant comported herself in a manner that suggested that she was not credible. She did not offer documentary or other evidence to support her assertion that she was not given a fair evaluation during her working test period. Given the absence of evidence supporting the appellant's assertions, her testimony is afforded less weight than that of respondent's witnesses.

Having considered the testimony and documentary evidence and the credibility of the witnesses, I **FIND** the following additional **FACTS**:

1. Appellant was deficient in the areas of decision making, accurate and effective communication with employees during the ADA interactive process, proper delegation of tasks to subordinate staff, and protecting the confidentiality of employees' personal information.
2. The DCF provided appellant with training opportunities and other resources, such as one-on-one meetings, to assist with her development as a manager 1.

#### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The Civil Service Act, N.J.S.A. 11A:1-1 to 12-6 (Act), and its implementing regulations, N.J.A.C. 4A:1-1.1 to 10-3.2, are designed in part "to encourage and reward meritorious performance by employees in the public service and to retain and separate employees on the basis of the adequacy of their performance." N.J.S.A. 11A:1-2(c).

The purpose of a working test period is to judge whether an employee can satisfactorily discharge the duties of a title. N.J.S.A. 11A:4-15; N.J.A.C. 4A:4-5.1(a). It is a part of the examination process. N.J.S.A. 11A:4-15. A basic condition of permanent or absolute appointment to any civil service position is successful completion of a probationary or working test period. Cipriano v. Dep't of Civil Serv., 151 N.J. Super. 86, 90 (App. Div. 1977). The commission shall provide for a working test period following

regular appointment of four months, which may be extended to six months at the discretion of the commission. N.J.S.A. 11A:4-15(a). Progress reports are to be made by the appointing authority and provided to the employee at such times during the working test period as provided by rules of the commission and a final progress report at the end of the entire working test period shall be provided to the employee and the commission. N.J.S.A. 11A:4-15(b). The commission shall provide for the retention of permanent status in the lower title by a promoted employee during the working test period in the higher title and the right to return to such permanent title if the employee does not satisfactorily complete the working test period. N.J.S.A. 11A:4-15(d).

The issue to be addressed here is whether the employee has shown by a preponderance of the credible evidence that the decision to terminate her from the position of manager 1 and demote her at the end of a working test period was made in bad faith.

Bad faith has been defined as: "Generally implying . . . a design to mislead or deceive another . . . not prompted by an honest mistake as to one's rights or duties, but by some interested or sinister motive. Bad faith is not simply bad judgement or negligence, but implies the conscious doing of a wrong because of a dishonest purpose . . . ." Brown v. State Dep't of Educ., 97 N.J.A.R.2d (CSV) 537, 541 (quoting Memmott v. Dep't of Health, Twp. of Freehold, 95 N.J.A.R.2d (CSV) 118). "Moreover, it is a well-established principle of Merit System law that the working test is not a period during which a probationer is to be given further training to qualify him/her for a position, but rather, is part of the testing process, given in addition to the examination conducted by the Department of Personnel. During that period the employee must demonstrate that he/she is competent to discharge the duties of the position. Briggs v. New Jersey Department of Civil Service, 64 N.J. Super. 351, 355 (App. Div. 1960)." Ibid.

The decision to demote an employee after a working test period must center on whether the individual can successfully perform the duties of the position. DeBartola v. Borough of Lodi, CSV 3327-03, Initial Decision (January 2, 2004), adopted in part and modified in part, Merit System Board (March 3, 2004), <http://lawlibrary.rutgers.edu/oal/search.html> (finding that after being discharged in bad

faith for disciplinary reasons, the employee was entitled to permanent status rather than reinstatement for a shortened working test period).

Here, upon examination of the facts and evidence presented, the appellant failed after a period of six months to show improvement in performing her duties or to apply her training. The appellant consistently failed to demonstrate an ability to perform the essential job functions and expectations of the manager 1, Human Resources, position as they were outlined during her working test period.

I **CONCLUDE** that appellant has failed to show that the determination to terminate her from the probationary title and demote her at the end of the working test period was made in bad faith.

### **ORDER**

I hereby **ORDER** that the appeal of Priyanka Mathur of her termination and subsequent demotion at the end of her working test period is **DENIED**, and the decision of the DCF to demote the appellant at the end of her working test period is **AFFIRMED**.

I hereby **FILE** my initial decision with the **CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION** for consideration.

This recommended decision may be adopted, modified, or rejected by the **CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**, which by law is authorized to make a final decision in this matter. If the Civil Service Commission does not adopt, modify, or reject this decision within forty-five days, and unless such time limit is otherwise extended, this recommended decision shall become a final decision in accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:14B 10.

Within thirteen days from the date on which this recommended decision was mailed to the parties, any party may file written exceptions with the **DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF APPEALS AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS, UNIT H, CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**, 44 South Clinton Avenue, PO Box 312, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0312, marked

"Attention: Exceptions." A copy of any exceptions must be sent to the judge and the other parties.

June 9, 2025

DATE

  
MICHAEL R. STANZIONE, ALJ

Date Received at Agency:

June 9, 2025

Date Mailed to Parties:

\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX**

**Witnesses**

**For appellant**

Priyanka Mathur

**For respondent**

Amanda DeCillis

Andrea Maxwell

**Exhibits**

**For appellant**

- A-1 Appeal of the decision of termination post probation period as Manager 1, HR
- A-2 Emails outlining discussions held with Amanda DeCillis dated July 9, 2023
- A-3 EAS client contact form about the working test period
- A-4 Email discussing the example of a response timeline from Amanda DeCillis dated February 9, 2024
- A-5 Interim ePAR rebuttal dated March 26, 2024
- A-6 Second Interim ePAR rebuttal dated March 26, 2024
- A-7 Emails back and forth with Andrea Maxwell regarding a meeting to discuss the PAR meeting
- A-8 A screen shot of the meeting to review evaluations on a calendar scheduling request
- A-9 Appellant's response to her final rating
- A-10 Emails between appellant and Amanda DeCillis re letters for clients
- A-11 Emails between appellant and Amanda DeCillis to discuss obtaining a mentor for the position
- A-12 Response to working test period report #2 from appellant dated January 31, 2024

- A-13 Response to working test period report #1 from appellant
- A-14 Summation Brief submitted in the form of an email dated March 11, 2025

For respondent

- R-1 Report on Progress of Probationer #1 dated October 17, 2023
- R-2 Report on Progress of Probationer #2 dated December 13, 2023
- R-3 Request for Extension of Working Test Period dated January 29, 2024
- R-4 Report on Progress of Probationer #3 dated February 7, 2024
- R-5 Report on Progress of Probationer # 4 dated March 15, 2024
- R-6 PAR Committee Model Civil Service Commission Manager Form rating period of September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2023
- R-7 PAR Committee Model Civil Service Commission Manager Form rating period of September 1, 2023, through August 31, 2024
- R-8 Job Specifications of Manager 1, Human Resources
- R-9 Preliminary Notice of Disciplinary Action dated March 19, 2024
- R-10 State of New Jersey DCF Disciplinary Action Appeal–Settlement Agreement dated April 17, 2024
- R-11 New Jersey DCF Policy Manual
- R-12 Completed Learning report of Priyanka Mathur dated September 27, 2022, through September 27, 2023
- R-13 Summation Brief dated March 11, 2025, submitted by Douglas Banks, Sr., Director of New Jersey Department of Children and Families