



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matters of Jenna Forster
and Milagros Santiago Carey,
Quality Assurance Specialist,
Health Services (PS9404K),
Department of Human Services

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

Examination Appeals

CSC Docket Nos. 2023-2556
and 2023-2600

ISSUED: February 28, 2024 (JET)

Jenna Forster and Milagros Carey Santiago appeal the determinations of the Division of Agency Services (Agency Services) that they did not meet the experience requirements for the promotional examination for Quality Assurance Specialist, Health Services (PS9404K), Department of Human Services. Since these matters concern similar issues, they have been consolidated herein.

The examination at issue was announced with specific requirements which had to be met as of the August 22, 2022 closing date. Specifically, applicants were required to possess a license as a registered nurse, and four years of experience as a registered nurse, one year of which is specialized experience including the monitoring and/or evaluation of clinical or human services records and programs in a mental health, geriatric, health care setting or human services agency. It was noted that a Bachelor's degree, and three years of specialized experience in the field of quality assurance in a mental health, geriatric, health care setting, or human services agency which includes monitoring and/or evaluation of clinical or human services records and programs which may include allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or incidents of client abuse or safety and well-being, could have been substituted for the above license and experience requirements. It was also noted that a Master's degree in Public Health or a health care related field could have been substituted for one year of the above noted specialized experience. The resulting eligible list promulgated on November 16, 2023 and expires on November 15, 2026, containing

the names of 19 eligibles. Eight certifications have been issued and 13 appointments were made.

FORSTER

A review of the Forster's application and resume reveals that she possesses a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. She also indicated on her application that she served as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator from May 2022 to the August 2022 closing date; as a Family Service Specialist 2 from June 2016 to May 2022; as a Wellness Counselor from February 2016 to June 2016; and as a Case Manager from January 2015 to February 2016. She described her duties, in pertinent part, as: serving as a caseload advocate in meetings; ensuring that individuals are aware of benefit programs; maintaining effective communications; assessing needs of individuals; reviewing case histories; preparing reports; maintaining records; participating in unit meetings; conducting neglect and abuse investigations; interviewing parties; assessing safety risks; seeking court intervention; removing children from unsafe environments; identifying family needs; developing case plans; utilizing community resources; gathering evidence; obtaining medical reports; providing testimony; providing treatment services; maintaining clinical documentation; providing individual and group counseling; developing discharge plans; assisting homeless with obtaining housing; scheduling meetings; assisting homeless with transition to shelter; and assisting with obtaining funding. Agency Services credited Forster for her Bachelor's degree. However, Agency Services did not find any of Forster's experience applicable. Accordingly, Agency Services determined that Foster was ineligible for the subject examination.

On appeal, Forster provides further details about her work experience. Specifically, she states, in relevant part, that she possesses a Master's degree in Counseling. Forster adds that the work she performed as a Family Service Specialist 2 and as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator included work that was very similar to work performed by a Quality Assurance Specialist. In support, she provides a letter from her supervisor, indicating that she has the necessary skills to perform the work of the subject title.

CAREY SANTIAGO

A review of Carey Santiago's application and resume reveal that she possesses a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. She also indicated on the application that she served as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator from September 2021 to the August 2022 closing date; as an Assistant Family Service Worker 2 from October 2016 to September 2021; as a Family Service Specialist 2 from May 2015 to October 2016, and from February 2012 to May 2014; as a Family Service Specialist Trainee from May 2014 to May 2015; and as a Teacher Assistant from December 2001 to February 2012. She described her duties, in pertinent part, as: generating incident reports; ensuring that incidents are timely reported; conducting data searches; reviewing

service plans; completing notices; referring matters for protective services; ensuring safety of children; promoting knowledge of parenting practices; providing transportation; documenting case notes; participating in case conferences; investigating child abuse and neglect allegations; assessing risk to children; determining permanency needs; maintaining quality; appearing in court; collaborating with teacher in implementing plans; assisting with attendance and student records; providing instruction to students with mental, emotional and physical disabilities; implementing crisis intervention; collaborating with parents; assisting with self-help and recreational activities; assisting with job searches; participating in treatment meetings; assisting with residential center housing; and problem solving computer issues. Agency Services credited Carey Santiago for her Bachelor's degree, and with one year of applicable specialized experience for her service as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator. However, it did not credit her with any other applicable experience. Accordingly, Agency Services determined that Carey was ineligible for the subject examination, as she lacked two years of applicable specialized experience.

On appeal, Carey Santiago provides further details about her work experience. Specifically, she states that she possesses 20 years of experience in the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency, and her duties included monitoring; evaluating; quality assurance review of case records; responding to child abuse allegations; maintaining a history of incidents; assessing risks to families; and making referrals. She adds that she possesses a certificate in Child Protection and Permanency Services; a certificate of achievement in Children Protection Services – Career Ladders Program; and that her prior eligibility appeal with respect to her application for Habilitation Plan Coordinator (PS8397K), was granted. Moreover, Carey Santiago argues that her service as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator, Assistant Family Service Worker 2, and as a Family Services Specialist 2 prepared her to perform the duties of the subject title. In support, she provides a letter from her supervisor, indicating that she has the necessary skills to perform the work of the subject title.

CONCLUSION

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

Agency Services correctly determined that the appellants were ineligible for the subject examination. In this regard, other than her Bachelor's degree, Agency Services correctly found that none of the Forster's experience was applicable, and it correctly credited Santiago Carey for her Bachelor's degree and her experience as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator. Regarding the appellants' arguments that their duties were consistent with the monitoring and/or evaluation of clinical or human services records and programs in a mental health, geriatric, health care setting or

human service agency, they have not established their contentions on appeal. In this regard, the primary focus of Forster's duties as a Habilitation Plan Coordinator, Family Service Specialist 2, and as a Wellness Plan Coordinator, and Santiago Carey's experience as an Assistant Family Service Worker 2, Family Service Worker 2, and as a Teacher Assistant, did not include applicable experience in the monitoring and/or evaluation of clinical or human services records and programs in a mental health, geriatric, health care setting or human service agency. 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). Rather, the primary duties performed by the appellants, as indicated on their application and on appeal, included among other things, investigating child abuse allegations and casework; assessing safety risks; providing instruction to students; participating in meetings; and documenting case notes. As such, the appellants' experience is not applicable to satisfy the duties required to establish eligibility for the title under test. Moreover, Forster's Master's degree in Counseling could not be accepted pursuant to the above listed substitution clause, as it was not in the required field. Regardless, even if it were acceptable, she would still fall short of meeting the experience requirements.

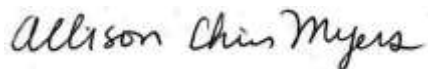
A thorough review of all material presented indicates that Agency Services' determination that the appellants did not meet the eligibility requirements by the closing date is amply supported by the record. Thus, the appellants have failed to support their burden of proof in this matter.

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 28TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2024



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