



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Michele Browne, *et al.*, Program Specialist 2 (PS8669K),
Department of Children and Families

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

CSC Docket Nos. 2025-2383, *et al.*

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: July 2, 2025 (SLK)

Michele Browne, Fafinee Dempster, and Tayana Smith appeal the determinations of the Division of Agency Services (Agency Services) that they did not meet the experience requirements for the Program Specialist 2 (PS8669K), Department of Children and Families (DCF) promotional examination. These appeals have been consolidating due to common issues presented.

The closing date of the examination was October 25, 2024. The applicable requirements were a Bachelor's degree and two years of professional experience in planning, monitoring, coordinating, implementing, modifying, and/or evaluating agency programs and services. A total of four candidates applied and one candidate was determined eligible. The appellants, who are serving provisionally in the subject title, were determined ineligible. No certifications have been issued. The subject eligible list expires on April 23, 2027.

On Browne's application, she indicated that she possessed a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, Browne listed that she was provisionally serving in the subject title from June 2024 to the closing date, a Program Specialist 1 Social/Human Services from October 2023 to June 2024, and a Program Specialist Trainee from May 2023 to October 2023. Further, Browne presented that for Samira Pediatrics, she was a part-time Office Manager from June 2022 to the closing date, an Office Manager for Better Living Construction from October 2019 to June 2022, an Assistant General Manager for Gap Inc. from October 2017 to September 2019, and a Manager for Funtime

America from July 2007 to September 2017. Agency Services credited Browne for her Bachelor's degree but determined that she lacked two years of experience.

On Dempster's application, she indicated that she possessed a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, Dempster listed that she was provisionally serving in the subject title from October 2023 to the closing date, a Program Specialist 1 from June 2023 to October 2024, a Program Specialist Trainee from February 2023 to June 2023, a Program Specialist 1 for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) from January 2019 to February 2023, and a Direct Care Counselor for Elhab Human Services from September 2016 to July 2019. Personnel records indicate that Dempster was provisionally serving in the subject title from October 2023 to the closing date, a Program Specialist 1 Social/Human Services from June 2023 to October 2023, a Program Specialist Trainee from February 2023 to June 2023, and an unclassified Program Specialist 1 for DEP from September 2019 to February 2023. Agency Services credited Dempster for her Bachelor's degree but determined that she lacked two years of experience.

On Smith's application, she indicated that she possessed a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, Smith listed that she was provisionally serving in the subject title from August 2023 to the closing date, a Program Specialist 1 from March 2018 to August 2023, a Head Clerk from April 2015 to March 2018, and a Principal Clerk Typist from June 2003 to March 2015. Personnel records indicate that Smith was provisionally serving in the subject title from August 2023 to the closing date, a Program Specialist 1 Social/Human Services from March 2019 to August 2023, a Program Specialist Trainee from March 2018 to March 2019, a Head Clerk from April 2015 to March 2018, a Principal Clerk Typist from September 2004 to April 2015, a Senior Clerk Typist from October 2003 to September 2004, and a Principal Clerk Typist from February 2000 to October 2003. Agency Services credited Smith for her Bachelor's degree but determined that she lacked two years of experience.

On appeal, Browne provides that as an Office Manager for Better Living Construction, she planned and oversaw daily business operations, ensuring efficient workflow for 18 employees across construction, order fulfillment, and administrative functions. She states that she developed and implemented operational plans, tracked site progress, and coordinated with vendors and contractors to ensure project milestones were achieved in alignment with budget and schedule objectives, which required evaluation and modification of workflows to address site specific delays, weather impacts, and resource constraints. Further, Browne presents that she led the coordination and oversight of all active construction projects from initiation to completion, which included working with inspectors, monitoring permit status, and maintaining compliance with State and Department of Transportation regulations. She lists her responsibilities as costs analysis, negotiations, and supplier management, which demonstrate key elements of program and budget oversight. Moreover, Browne indicates that she managed the company's 12 vehicles,

implemented preventive maintenance schedules, tracked performance, and ensured regulatory compliance, which demonstrated skills that directly parallel her current duties with DCF. Finally, Browne highlights her provisional service in the subject title since June 2024, which builds upon and reinforces the planning, coordination, and policy-focused experience previously developed in the private sector, and she believes that her public and private sector experience demonstrates a consistent record of strategic oversight and operational management that aligns with the subject title.

Dempster clarifies her duties while provisionally serving in the subject title as overseeing 490 State vehicles across DCF locations, which includes supervising nine Dispatcher Repairers and serving as a key liaison between the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) and the Bureau of Risk Management. Specifically, she describes her duties in this position as: investigating complaints of vehicle misuse and conducting fleet audits; overseeing vehicle maintenance, insurance, registration, E-Z Pass transponders, and fleet fuel card activity; reviewing accident/incident reports and ensuring compliance with safety policies; generating and submitting comprehensive mileage, parking and maintenance reports for over 50 office locations; and approving eCATs and ePAR reports, hiring staff, conducting site visits, and ensuring all field fleet operations comply with DCF and Treasury policy. She asserts that this role demonstrates strong leadership, logistical coordination, policy analysis, and high-level interdepartmental communication.

Dempster states that her Program Specialist 1 Social/Human Services experience included managing 300 vehicles, which included detailed audits and serving as the primary contact for Statewide local offices regarding transportation operations. She describes that her core duties included supervising four Dispatcher Repairers; coordinating all activities involving credit card and E-Z Pass tracking, vehicle documentation, and policy enforcement; approving employee time and attendance records; developing fleet communication memos and analyzing internal vehicle-related policies for improvement; and procuring operational supplies such as car seats, first aid kits, and emergency equipment. She states that this position further developed her ability to lead teams and manage systems across a large and complex operational infrastructure.

Dempster further indicates that her Program Specialist Trainee experience included: managing 215 State vehicles, as well as supporting preventive maintenance scheduling and audits; tracking credentials such as registration, insurance, and fuel card use; assisting with processing accident reports and identifying procedural gaps; and learning to evaluate compliance with policy and regulation under guidance. She highlights that this position built the foundation for her supervisory and policy-focused work.

Dempster also states that she previously served as a Program Specialist 1 for DEP where she implemented HUD-compliant tenant relocation programs. She lists her duties in this position as: interpreting and applying complex federal, State, and local housing regulations, conducting tenant eligibility determinations and housing inspections; performing needs assessments, income verifications, and facilitating relocation services; and coordinating with landlords, rental agencies, and community partners. She explains that this position refined her understanding of government service delivery, compliance, and case documentation, which are skills that are critical to her current work.

Smith clarifies that she served as a Program Specialist Trainee from March 2018 to March 2019 and was a Program Specialist 1 Social/Human Services from March 2019 to August 2023. She argues that her Program Specialist Trainee and provisional service in the subject title provide her with more than the two years of qualifying service needed. Smith highlights that she began her provisional service in the subject title in August 2023 and continues to serve in that position.

CONCLUSION

N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.6(a) requires applicants to possess all the requirements specified in an announcement for a promotional examination by the closing date. *N.J.A.C.* 4A:4-6.3(b) provides that the appellant has the burden of proof in examination appeals.

In these matters, with their Bachelor's degrees, the appellants needed two years of agency programs or services experience. The record indicates that Browne's and Dempster's provisional service in the subject title as well as their other DCF service primarily involved fleet management¹; while Smith's provisional service in the subject title and other experience in Program Specialist titles for DCF was primarily in records management.² Accordingly, that experience was properly not accepted by Agency Services. Further, nothing presented by the appellants on appeal establishes that they meet the subject requirements. Further, as the appellants do not appear to be currently performing duties consistent with a Program Specialist 2 classification, the matter is referred to Agency Services for classification reviews of their provisional positions. Upon determinations as to the appellants' appropriate titles, corresponding announcements for examinations for those titles shall be issued.

¹ Browne's private sector experience primarily involved general management duties. Dempster's Program Specialist 1 duties with DEP where she worked on a tenant relocation project on an "as-needed basis" may have been applicable and would need further clarification. Regardless, even if Dempster could clarify that she met the eligibility requirement based on this experience, the record indicates that she is not currently performing the required duties while provisionally serving in the subject title.


² Smith's other DCF experience was in inapplicable clerical titles.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that these appeals be denied. It is further ordered that the matter of the proper classifications of the appellants' positions be referred to Agency Services for classification reviews. Upon determinations as to the appellants' appropriate titles, corresponding announcements for examinations for those titles shall be issued.

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 2ND DAY OF JULY, 2025



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