



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of M.C., Juvenile
Detention Officer, Camden County

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

CSC Docket No. 2025-1172

Medical Review Panel Appeal

ISSUED: September 10, 2025 (BS)

M.C. appeals his rejection as a Juvenile Detention Officer candidate by Camden County and its request to remove his name from consideration for the noncompetitive title of Juvenile Detention Officer on the basis of psychological unfitness to perform effectively the duties of the position.

This appeal was brought before the Medical Review Panel (Panel) on April 25, 2025, which rendered its Report and Recommendation on April 26, 2025. Exceptions were filed on behalf of the appointing authority, and cross exceptions were filed by the appellant.

The report by the Panel discusses all submitted evaluations. Dr. Karin Gepp, evaluator on behalf of the appointing authority, conducted a psychological evaluation of the appellant and characterized the appellant as demonstrating a longstanding interest in law enforcement and as being a strong mentor and positive influence on youth. Dr. Gepp noted that the appellant had a varied work history with leadership experience, showcasing an ability to manage operations and defuse conflicts in high pressure environments. However, inconsistencies in his employment history, including a probationary termination and vague explanations surrounding his terminations raised concerns with Dr. Gepp about his adaptability and accountability. Dr. Gepp noted that psychological testing revealed significant areas of concern which did not bode well for someone aspiring to work in a corrections environment. Test results highlighted a history of juvenile misconduct, impulsivity, and difficulty with authority. When paired with challenges in emotional control,

social competence, and adherence to rules, Dr. Gepp opined that these traits suggested potential difficulties in handling the demands of the position, particularly in stressful situations. Dr. Gepp also noted that, while his cognitive abilities are within the average range overall, the appellant had specific impairments in abstraction and vocabulary which could limit his capacity for critical problem-solving in high-stakes situations. Dr. Gepp concluded that the appellant was not psychologically suitable for employment as a Juvenile Detention Officer and did not recommend him for appointment.

Dr. Ange Puig, evaluator on behalf of the appellant, carried out a psychological evaluation and indicated that the appellant could meet the psychological stress management requirements for a Juvenile Detention Officer position. Dr. Puig indicated that the appellant had also no indication of any issue regarding substance abuse. Regarding the appellant's employment inconsistency, Dr. Puig found that there were external, reasonable circumstances leading to the appellant's job changes during the five-year period of time. Dr. Puig noted that the appellant's difficulties occurred in the early 2000s, when the appellant was in his early 20s. Dr. Puig noted that the appellant was now 46 years old and had achieved a substantial period of stability in his life. In Dr. Puig's opinion, with reasonable psychological certainty, the appellant was psychologically suitable to serve as a Juvenile Detention Officer.

As set forth in the Panel's report, the evaluators on behalf of the appellant and the appointing authority arrived at differing conclusions and recommendations. The negative recommendation found support in concerns about the appellant's work history and the results of the psychological testing. Dr. Puig found the appellant's explanation of the issues in his work history credible under the circumstances presented. The Panel noted that the appellant's legal issues had occurred in the early 2000s and were not a recurrent issue that represented a pattern of problematic behavior. The Panel further opined that concerns raised in the psychological testing, such as juvenile misconduct, impulsivity, and likelihood of substance abuse problems, were not present in the appellant's actual behavioral record. Although there had been recent job terminations from management positions, the Panel noted that the appellant had since maintained steady employment in a non-management position working with children. Taking into account the evaluations of Drs. Gepp and Puig, the psychological test data, the behavioral record, and the appellant's appearance before the Panel, the Panel found evidence to support the conclusions of Dr. Puig. Accordingly, the Panel concluded that the appellant was psychologically suitable to serve as a Juvenile Detention Officer.

In its exceptions, the appointing authority, represented by Jeremy Spear Garson, Esq., argues that the Panel failed to give appropriate weight to the results of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory 3 (MMPI-3) which revealed areas of concern that would not be readily apparent from the appellant's initial presentation, which included a tendency to minimize faults, irritability, low stress

tolerance, impulsivity, and difficulty with emotional control. The appointing authority offers that the MMPI-3 is one of the most widely validated psychological assessment tools used in correctional employment screening and is designed to identify traits such as authority conflict, emotional dysregulation, and behavioral instability. The appointing authority further asserts that the Panel failed to adequately consider or elaborate on the appellant's problematic job history and explanations, which included recent terminations from management positions. The appointing authority underscores the appellant's "shifting explanations of the circumstances" which led to these terminations. The appellant's explanations tended to minimize personal responsibility and the circumstances surrounding his terminations which the appointing authority contends demonstrates "conflictual relationships, difficulty with authority, and acting-out behaviors." As noted by Dr. Gepp in her supplemental report, the appointing authority emphasizes that the appellant consistently framed negative outcomes as the result of "employer misunderstanding or systematic error." The appointing authority finds the appellant's lack of candor in these instances reflected poorly on his ability to function in a high stress environment. Finally, the appointing authority maintains that the Panel failed to weigh the appellant's deflection of responsibility regarding his child support payments and the appellant's legal issues as they occurred a number of years ago. Accordingly, the appointing authority submits that the Panel made "multiple errors," and significant doubts remain about the appellant's ability to successfully function as a Juvenile Detention Officer. The appointing authority requests that the Civil Service Commission (Commission) not adopt the Panel's Report and Recommendation.

In his cross exceptions, the appellant argues that, although the MMPI-3 is a useful tool, it is not definitive on its own. The appellant notes that in addition to the MMPI-3, both Dr. Puig and the Panel conducted their own assessments and determined "there was no evidence of psychopathology, emotional dysregulation, or disqualifying traits in [his] demeanor, responses, or professional presentation." The appellant contends that the appointing authority overemphasized "speculative inferences from a standardized test while disregarding the judgment of a qualified independent evaluator." The appellant disputes the appointing authority's opinion that he provided inconsistent explanations regarding his terminations and argues that he "provided reasonable, clear, and consistent explanations to all reviewing professional." The appellant emphasizes that the Panel found no deception, misrepresentation, or behavioral red flags. The appellant submits that his termination in and of themselves do not constitute psychological unsuitability for the subject position. Finally, the appellant objects to "decades-old" child support issues, long since resolved, as a basis for psychological disqualification. The appellant respectfully requests that the Commission adopt the Panel's Report and Recommendation.

CONCLUSION

The Job Specification for the title, Juvenile Detention Officer, is the official job description for such positions within the Civil Service system. According to the specification, a Juvenile Detention Officer, under general direction of a supervisory employee during an assigned tour of duty, controls the general conduct and behavior of juvenile residents, the maintenance of discipline and custodial, recreational, transportation and housekeeping functions, and does other related duties as required. The specification lists examples of work and the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the job. Examples include the ability to cope with crisis situations that occur in a juvenile detention facility; the ability to apply knowledge and use of sound judgment in critical situations; the ability to empathize with juveniles from different backgrounds; the ability to write concise, accurate reports; the ability to function under difficult and stressful conditions; and the ability to interact and communicate with various professionals.

The Commission has reviewed the Job Specification for this title, the duties and abilities encompassed therein, and the Report and Recommendation of the Panel, which found the appellant to be psychologically suited to serve as a Juvenile Detention Officer. The Commission is not persuaded by the exceptions presented by the appointing authority. In this regard, the Commission agrees with the Panel that the appellant's behavioral record does not support the negative findings of the MMPI-3. Further, the Commission is satisfied with the Panel's findings that reasonable circumstances were presented by the appellant regarding his recent terminations and defers to the Panel's judgment on whether such matters weigh against the appellant's psychological suitability for the position at issue. With regard to the issue of the appellant's child support issues, the Commission notes that this occurred more than 20 years ago and has long since been resolved.

The Commission emphasizes that the Panel conducts an independent review of all of the raw data presented by the parties as well as the raw data and recommendations and conclusions drawn by the various evaluators prior to rendering its own conclusions and recommendations, which are based firmly on the totality of the record presented to it. The Panel's observations regarding the appellant's behavioral history, responses to the various assessment tools, and appearance before the Panel are based on its expertise in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, as well as its experience in evaluating hundreds of appellants for Civil Service positions. The Commission defers to the expertise of the Panel in this matter. Additionally, the Commission is mindful that the appellant's suitability will be further assessed during his working test period by the appointing authority and will ultimately demonstrate whether he has the actual ability to successfully perform the duties of a Juvenile Detention Officer.

Therefore, having considered the record, including the Job Specification for Juvenile Detention Officer and the duties and abilities encompassed therein, the Panel's Report and Recommendation issued thereon and the exceptions filed on behalf of the appointing authority and cross exceptions filed by the appellant, and having made an independent evaluation of the same, the Commission accepts and adopts the findings and conclusions as contained in the Panel's Report and Recommendation and grants the appellant's appeal.

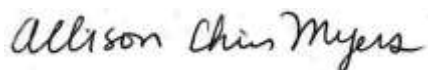
ORDER

The Commission finds that the appointing authority has not met its burden of proof that M.C. is psychologically unfit to perform effectively the duties of a Juvenile Detention Officer and, therefore, the Commission orders that the appellant's name be restored for consideration for appointment as a Juvenile Detention Officer. Absent any disqualification issue ascertained through an updated background check conducted after a conditional offer of appointment, the appellant's appointment is otherwise mandated. A federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C.A. §12112(d)(3), expressly requires that a job offer be made before any individual is required to submit to a medical or psychological examination. *See also* the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's *ADA Enforcement Guidelines: Preemployment Disability Related Questions and Medical Examination* (October 10, 1995). That offer having been made, it is clear that, absent the erroneous disqualification, the aggrieved individual would have been employed in the position.

Since the appointing authority has not supported its burden of proof, upon the successful completion of his working test period, the Commission orders that the appellant be granted a retroactive date of appointment to December 16, 2024, the date he would have been appointed if his name had not been removed from consideration for appointment as a Juvenile Detention Officer. This date is for salary step placement and seniority-based purposes only. However, the Commission does not grant any other relief, such as back pay, except the relief enumerated above.

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 10TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2025



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