

Commissioner of Social Services Tompkins County

Classification: Non-competitive

Labor Grade: Management Grade 92

Approved: 01/01/1969

Revised: 1/82; 5/91; 6/91; 9/96; 7/99; 4/03; 6/10; 4/17;3/25

By: RP, Commissioner of Human Resources

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered four-year college or university with a Master's degree in Social Work, Public Health, Public Administration, Psychology, Human Services, Sociology or related field and

Six years of satisfactory full-time paid experience in a health, education or social agency, four years of which

must have been in a satisfactory administrative or supervisory capacity where there is responsibility for strategic planning, policy and program development and implementation, budget and personnel management and allocation, and directing and/or coordinating the work of staff in several units with separate functions;

OR

Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Public Health, Public Administration, Psychology, Human Services, Sociology or related field and eight (8) years of experience as noted in A).

APPOINTMENT TO THE POSITION: Appointments to the title of Commissioner of Social Services shall be for a term of five years, pursuant to New York State law and the Tompkins County Charter and Code. Appointments are subject to the approval of the New York State Offices of Temporary and Disability Assistance. The position is in the non-competitive class of civil service

SPECIAL REQUIREMENT:

This position is considered to be a public officer. Pursuant to Article 3 of the NYS Public Officers law, the holder of this position must be a United States citizen and a resident of Tompkins County.

Tompkins County Government centers diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to the empowerment of employees and residents to dismantle systemic barriers that inhibit inclusive governance and the provision of government services to all. Guided by our values of Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Equity, and Stewardship, we strive to build a workplace and community rooted in trust, belonging, and opportunity for all.

Learn more about our [Strategic Plan](#) and [Institutionalizing Equity Report](#), which embed equity across our operations.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:

The Commissioner of Social Services is a senior executive role responsible for the administration and delivery of all mandated programs within the Department of Social Services, including eligibility assistance, child welfare programs, adult protective and guardianship of vulnerable adults and children, child support enforcement, and housing and homeless programming including county contracted or operated shelters as defined in the Social Services Law and provided for in annual directives from state oversight agencies. The Commissioner organizes, directs and coordinates the department's budget, personnel and resources to ensure effective and efficient operations and compliance with applicable federal, state and local regulations and guidelines as mandated by the Offices of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Department of Health, Department of Labor, the Office of Children and Family Services, and federal oversight including USDA and HUD. In collaboration with community partners,

contracted providers and external agencies, the Commissioner is responsible for the administration of state and federal programs in an inclusive and culturally competent manner to support those in need, regardless of background, to reach self-determination and independence. The incumbent is expected to take an equity centered approach to ensure that the most vulnerable populations receive fair and equitable access to services and support to achieve economic and personal stability. The Commissioner makes high-level decisions in complex and sensitive social service matters. Direct supervision is exercised over the work of deputies, division leaders and senior administrative staff. The incumbent will perform all related duties as required, ensuring that the department's work reflects the County's broader commitment to an inclusive, equitable, and safe community.

TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES:

Provide leadership and oversight of operations, programs and activities within the Department of Social Services;

Provide direct supervision of deputies, division leaders and senior administrative staff to ensure departmental goals and objectives are aligned with county priorities and community needs;

Develop, review and implement policies and strategies that guide programs and services, address systemic barriers and promote equitable access to services;

Oversee departmental budgeting and financial management, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to reduce disparities in service provision and improve outcomes for vulnerable populations;

Engage with local communities, advocacy groups, and service recipients to understand needs, improve equitable service delivery and bring continued understanding of county social service needs;

Represent the department among stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profits, and business and community leaders to ensure all clients, regardless of background, have the opportunity to achieve economic and personal stability;

Analyze data to assess program outcomes and identify areas for improvement;

Implement strategies to enhance program efficiency, quality, and client satisfaction;

Ensure that all programs comply with local, state and federal regulations and standards as provided for by the State Offices of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Children and Family Services, state departments of Health and Labor, as well as federal oversight agencies such as US Department of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development in the operation and development of the local social services district program;

Collaborate with other government agencies, healthcare providers, non-profit organizations and community groups to address broad social issues, provide comprehensive services to clients and advocate for funding and regulatory changes;

Provide leadership and direction in fostering a department culture that is inclusive, responsive and culturally competent, ensuring that all employees have the tools, support and understanding to meet the diverse needs of the community and clients served;

Ensure that staff receive appropriate training, professional development and resources to stay current with best practices in social work and equitable service delivery;

Submit reports to County Administration, County Legislature and state oversight agencies as required;

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Knowledge and understanding of federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations related to social services and public welfare;

Knowledge of the political structure that enacts laws that are promulgated as directives to local social service districts by state oversight agencies;

Basic knowledge of the local court system and social services collaborative relationship with the local Family Treatment Court;

Good understanding of social work principles, practices and ethics to ensure proper administration of programs and services;

Basic understanding of employment procedures and personnel management;

Excellent leadership, conflict and change management skills as well as familiarity with public service roles and requirements;

Effective communication and interpersonal skills to develop and foster strong relationships with a variety of stakeholders including the public, community partners and agencies, and governmental and private agencies;

Ability to build partnerships within local networks of community leadership to develop best practices and cultivate diverse and inclusive programs that serve as a standard of excellence in service provision in the county;

Ability to develop and manage budgets and resources to ensure fiscal sustainability;

Demonstrated ability to uplift and value the perspectives of diverse communities, cultivating respectful, inclusive and safe environments;

Ability to organize and analyze data for fiscal, evaluative and strategic planning purposes, utilizing inclusive practices to ensure equity in decision making;

Ability to plan, coordinate and supervise a wide variety of social services activities on a large scale;

Ability to interpret, implement and present complex material in ways that are accessible for diverse audiences.

Ingenuity and resourcefulness in solving complex and sensitive administrative problems;

Good judgment with a focus on attaining care for, and good decision making regarding and in the best interest of, those vulnerable populations (children, persons with disabilities, elders, court appointed guardians, individuals who may be homeless, mentally ill, and or with substance use disorder etc.);

Physical and mental condition commensurate with the demands of the position, with or without reasonable accommodation.

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