



Name: **SMITH, CHRISTOPHER**

Job: **ELIGIBILITY WORKER**

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"I don't know how to balance it; the agency is just not looking out for me... or for its clients at times! The work that we have to do for clients sometimes doesn't even fit what they really need! I don't know how much longer I can last. But, I can't just quit—who am I to choose not to help these people?"

My background:

I am currently working as an eligibility worker, processing clients' applications for TANF, SNAP, and Child Care. I am passionate about helping families who are dealing with difficult situations because I was in the foster care system as a child and want to help these kids and their parents. If I can give families a leg up *before* a crisis, then children won't have to be removed from their families and they will have a better chance in school, work, and life.

My goal right now... is to give back to the people I am serving. Even though I care about my job and the good that we do, I don't know how much longer I can keep going.

My frustrations are...

- Too many inefficient rules, regulations, and administrative processes that tie my hands and keep me from helping families in a meaningful way
- Feeling misjudged by clients when the system can't meet their needs
- Feeling vicariously traumatized while helping clients and not getting support despite the emotional and professional strain
- Thinking about the system and ultimately knowing nothing will change
- Watching some colleagues push certain programs not because they will be most helpful because we have those programs

My needs are...

- Mental health support and investment in me and my colleagues
- To spend more of my time on the important work, less on administrative work
- To understand where my job ends and where someone else's begins – we can't get credit for some of the work that I do
- Belief that my dedication will pay off





Name: **JOHNSON, MICHELLE**

Job: **STATE COMMISSIONER**

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"Ninety-eight percent of us get into this line of work because we want to take a combination of resources and effort and use that to transform people's lives."

My background:

I was appointed State Commissioner of Human Services five years ago. I started as a social worker and worked my way up through 13 different positions to get to where I am today.

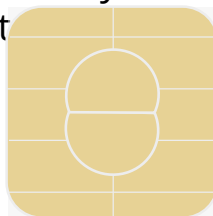
My goal right now... is to make my state a leader in the human services arena and promote practices that will actually help the lives of our clients in a sustainable way. I say, "Let people own their own lives." My job is to give them the resources to get there. Sometimes this work is frustrating, but I plan to keep busting through barriers that get in my way.

My frustrations are...

- Getting penalized when I implement a solution that actually achieves a sustained impact but doesn't meet myopic requirements like the workforce participation rate
- Inefficient rules, regulations, and processes (compliance, compliance, compliance) that prevent me from helping families in a meaningful way
- Feeling misjudged by the media, advocates, providers and others who don't understand the intricacies or constraints I'm working under
- Inter- and intra-department silos and politics that make us all less effective at improving outcomes because they inhibit collaboration and lead to frustration and turf battles

My needs are...

- Ways to innovate safely (despite a risk-averse system and constraints) and design programs for the future
 - Ways to support my employees and organization, giving them the frameworks and tools they need to be innovative (and resilient when faced with difficult situations) and belief that they are making a meaningful impact
 - Affirmative incentives and recognition, rather than only receiving feedback when we are being threatened or penalized for not meeting requirements
 - An alignment of measurements with actionable outcomes
- Opportunities to work with the broader state community and to create means of collaboration toward achieving our similar goals





Name: **WHITE, MATTHEW**

Job: **STATE COMMISSIONER**

Issued: 2018JUL20

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"I feel like I'm standing at the bottom of a mountain... and it's scalable, but I just don't have the means or support to actually climb it."

My background:

I was appointed Commissioner of the Department of Human Services 10 months ago. Previously I was in the nonprofit world advocating for more focus on the social determinants of health.

My goal right now... is to just keep this department focused on achieving our mission. With all the pressure on our executive branch personnel and lack of time and funding to develop and refresh them, it's a struggle to proactively serve the families and meet their needs. I got into this line of work to help people and enact change, but there are so many difficult factors including an organization below me that is busy checking the boxes. As a result, I need more support to actually do anything substantial.

My frustrations are...

- Inefficient rules, regulations, and processes that confuse me and that prevent me from helping families in a meaningful way
- Worse yet, this narrow focus on compliance trickles all the way down through my organization and down to our providers, inhibiting their ability to fully help clients
- The fact that we seem to focus on getting people out of the system without looking at their situation holistically and planning for a sustainable future where they will remain economically independent
- Not being supported in staff, funding, provider community, a more in order to get away from doing just the bare minimum to meet requirements

My needs are...

- Leadership from above, whether from the Governor, Statehouse or Feds, that will let me frame our work in a collaborative and multigenerational way so that I have an excuse to work across our silos and get my organization away from a narrow focus on compliance
- Ways to support my employees, giving them the tools they need to be resilient when faced with difficult situations and belief that they are making a meaningful impact
- Belief that my dedication will pay off
- More data tools, policy guidance, monetary support, and development for my employees to fulfill the day to day needs of our department

