



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Lori A. Weaver
Commissioner

Morissa Henn
Deputy Commissioner

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December 24, 2024

Her Excellency, Governor Kelly A. Ayotte
and the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 94:6, the Department of Health and Human Services respectfully requests to place Ross McLeod at Step 5 for the position of Supervising Staff Attorney, Division for Children, Youth and Families, Position #9U761, unclassified salary grade EE, earning \$97,435.00 effective January 24, 2025, upon Governor and Council approval. 36.8% Federal Funds and 63.2% General Funds

EXPLANATION

The DCYF Legal Team is a dynamic group of experienced child protection attorneys and their legal assistants, who seek judicial protection for children subjected to abuse or neglect. The focus of our work is on the immediate protection of the child and strengthening, whenever possible, families to eliminate abuse and neglect in the home. The DCYF Legal Team provides in-house counsel to DCYF's staff in the eleven (11) District Offices throughout the State of New Hampshire.

In accordance with HB 2, Chapter 79:218, Laws of 2023 the Department and the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office recommended, and the Korn Ferry Hay Group approved the labor grades establishing unclassified attorney positions within the Department of Health and Human Services, Division for Children, Youth and Families. Specifically, there are three (3) full-time unclassified Supervising Attorneys (Labor Grade FF) who will serve as supervising legal counsel for multiple DCYF District Office Child Protection Units; five (5) full-time unclassified Supervising Staff Attorney positions (Labor Grade EE) who will serve as the onsite lead legal counsel for five DCYF District Office Child Protection Service Units; and, twenty-four (24) full-time unclassified Staff Attorney positions (Labor Grade DD) who will serve as the onsite legal counsel for DCYF in a District Office Child Protective Service Unit. The Korn Ferry Hay Group determined the letter grades recommended by the Department are an appropriate letter grade assignment given the Department's business needs and the positions' responsibilities.

The Supervising Staff Attorney positions are new leadership positions within the DCYF Legal Team, which require technical and subject matter expertise and advanced education and experience. Supervising Staff Attorney's participate in the development of plans, priorities and processes to achieve DCYF objectives, and are guided by broad policies. They are responsible for providing sound legal guidance and training to Staff Attorneys, as well as navigating novel and unique cases and legal assessments.

Attorney McLeod graduated from Northeastern University School of Law and became a member of the New Hampshire Bar in 2007. Prior to joining DCYF as a Staff Attorney in 2017, Attorney McLeod practiced law in private law firms, and he was a prosecutor handling criminal cases (see resume). Attorney McLeod joined DCYF prior to the COVID pandemic's impact on DCYF attorney salaries. His current salary does not reflect the rate currently being paid to similarly experienced Staff Attorneys who have joined DCYF post-pandemic. In his current role as a DCYF Staff Attorney, Attorney McLeod frequently takes on additional work, not only in his office, but in other DCYF offices due to vacancies when there is an unmet legal need. In this newly created leadership position of Supervising Staff Attorney, he will take on even more responsibilities, while still carrying the same caseload as a Staff Attorney. A salary of \$97,435.00 acknowledges his years of experience as an attorney, including 7 years of experience with DCYF, by providing a salary commensurate with his experience within the unclassified wage schedule. Additionally, placing him at this salary will assist with the retention of DCYF attorneys, including Attorney McLeod, as contemplated in RSA 94:3-b, by valuing longevity of professionals employed by the State of New Hampshire.

I respectfully request that Mr. McLeod be placed in the position of Supervising Staff Attorney, Division for Children, Youth and Families, unclassified salary grade EE, at step 5 with an effective start date of January 24, 2025.

Sincerely,



Lori A. Weaver
Commissioner

Ross A. McLeod

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

NH DHHS, Division for Children, Youth & Families, Concord, NH **2017-present**
Staff Attorney

- Represent DCYF in child protection litigation (e.g., abuse/neglect proceedings, guardianships, terminations of parental rights, administrative appeals), including: pleadings and motion work; discovery; witness preparation; and presentation of evidence and oral argument at hearings.
- Provide counsel for social workers on child protection-related matters.

McLEOD LAW OFFICE, Windham, NH **2013-2017**
Owner

- Criminal defense in District and Superior Courts, including motions, hearings, trials; family law.
- Pro bono: divorce; criminal records annulment; and non-profit paperwork.

DIFRUSCIA LAW OFFICES, Methuen, MA **2012-2013**
Senior Associate

- Litigation: criminal defense; plaintiff-side personal injury and worker's compensation; family law (including restraining order hearings); contracts; small claims; landlord-side evictions; land use; attachments; miscellaneous defense-side civil actions.
- Trial work included a multi-day, multi-expert felony superior court jury trial with post-trial *Laurie*-issue hearings.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, Manchester, NH **2008-2012**
Assistant County Attorney

- Prosecuted felonies and misdemeanor appeals.
 - Participated in Child Advocacy Center forensic interviews of child victims.
 - Assessed cases to make charging decisions, and then drafted appropriate indictments and complaints.
 - Presented indictments to Grand Juries.
 - Worked with Victim Witness Advocates, victims, State agencies (e.g., DHHS, DOC) and law enforcement.
 - Researched, drafted and argued pre-trial motions, including *Laurie* and *Daubert* issues.
 - Formulated investigative strategies with investigators and law enforcement to procure more evidence.
- Prosecuted the involuntary civil commitments of Sexually Violent Predators, including two multi-day jury trials, and a plea deal, all with related depositions, expert witnesses and multi-day *Daubert* evidentiary hearings. The first trial was the State's first-ever trial under the then-recently enacted Sexually Violent Predator Act.
- Successfully took fraud and financial cases to verdict, such as "Welfare Fraud" and "Issuing Bad Checks" cases. Analyzed and utilized payroll and accounting software documents, government agency forms, and bank documents, then successfully explained and argued the documentation and accounting procedures of entities such as the Department of Health and Human Services and private businesses to juries.
- Trials to verdict: 26 jury trials and two bench trials in superior court, three bench trials in district court, and a probate court commitment.

Associate

- Successfully defended a municipality's denial of a tax abatement request for a contaminated property before the Board of Tax and Land Appeals ("BTLA"). Settled an eminent domain case through the BTLA.
- Successfully represented telecommunications clients before local land use boards for the co-location of telecommunications equipment on towers.
- Co-authored an appellants' Supreme Court brief in a probate matter. Researched and drafted pleadings and memoranda for property, real estate, business and contract matters.
- Pro bono: divorce.

BAR ADMISSIONS

STATE COURTS: Massachusetts (inactive), New Hampshire.

US DISTRICT COURTS: Massachusetts, New Hampshire.

EDUCATION

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, J.D., Boston, MA

Full-time internships:

- New Hampshire Department of Justice, Concord, NH
- McLane, Graf, Raulerson & Middleton, P.A., Manchester, NH
- Alaska Public Defender Agency, Palmer, AK
- United States Attorney's Office – District of New Hampshire, Concord, NH

Elective coursework: Advanced Legal Research, Advanced Criminal Procedure, Criminal Advocacy Clinic, Criminal Trial Practice, Family Law

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, M.B.A., University Park, PA

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, B.A., B.S., Ithaca, NY

AFFILIATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

WINDHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN

2009-present

- Chairman (2011, 2014, 2017-2021, 2023). Oversee a twenty-million-dollar budget and approximately 135 employees; manage a Town Administrator; establish local policies and regulations.

WINDHAM SOCCER ASSOCIATION

1999-present

- President (2008-2015); Executive Board Member (2008-2015, 2020-present); Referee Coordinator (2005-present). Administer a non-profit serving roughly 800 youth soccer players.

CASA of NH

2017

- CASA-GAL.