

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

I have submitted a copy of my exit interview for your review. Please note that I am very sorry that my career with the SC Department of Mental Health ended this way. I appreciated the opportunity to serve the clients and community of Orangeburg, Bamberg, and Calhoun Counties. This makes it a Great Day in South Carolina.

Sincerely,


Sarah M. Thomas

CONFIDENTIAL

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
Columbia, South Carolina

EXIT INTERVIEW

Date 3-9-16

Name Sarah M. Thomas Job Title Program Director

Facility Orangeburg Area Mental Health Center Separation Date 1-27-16

Organizational Component Children and Adolescent Unit

Length of Service with SCDMH 12 years

Length of Service in last job with SCDMH 8 years

Forwarding Address and Phone Number 1637 John Wesley Drive, Orangeburg, SC 29118-803-378-2268

How did you like your job? I thoroughly enjoyed my job. I considered it "a calling" and not a vocation. My job gave me the opportunity to serve and improve the lives of other

Did you consider your working hours reasonable? My working hours were reasonable; however, in order to provide quality services to the clients and community as a whole, it required me to go beyond the call of duty by consistently working after hours and on the weekends.

Do you feel you were paid fairly? No. I worked hard to improve the relationship with Family Court, DSS, DSS and the school districts. I provided good supervision to fifteen employees, acted as placement coordinator, school-based supervisor, and client advocate. I was able to keep children out of residential facilities. As a result, I was able to save the state thousands of dollars.

Did you receive adequate instructions and/or on-the-job training? No. not at the local level. I received excellent training and support at the state level. The staff provided guidance, direction, and leadership at the state level.

Did you have good supervision? No. Supervision was very limited (on the average once a month). Supervisor was not in the office on a regular basis. He didn't demonstrate any knowledge of my program area and/or clearly communicated the vision for the center. After he gave me the letter of termination, he called the police on me. For what, I don't know.

Are you sorry to leave? Yes. I was doing an excellent job, as evidenced of my last EPMs, July 2, 2015, a substantially exceed evaluation. Unfortunately, I was wrongfully terminated. There were no prior warnings or write-ups that I was producing substandard performance. Praises were consistently given throughout all evaluation periods.

What do you consider the actual reason for your separation? I think my supervisor used me as a scapegoat due to his poor performance.

What could have been done to avoid losing you? Because of my exceptional performance, as evidenced by my EPMS, I would have liked to be given the opportunity to address "whatever reason" my supervisor terminated me. I am sure I would have made the necessary correction.

Have you been treated fairly? If no, explain. No. Due to my excellent evaluations, no write-ups, and no prior warnings. I was shocked of the termination. No reason was given regarding the termination. I was making major contributions to Orangeburg, Calhoun, and

Bamberg Counties. I have heard from many stakeholders: legislators, DDS, DSS, school districts and the family court system expressing their disappointment in my termination.

Did you know where you stood with your organization? Yes. I thought I was doing an excellent job until the day I was terminated. Prior to January 27, 2016, there were no indications of substandard performance or dissatisfaction of my leadership skills.

Did you understand organizational and departmental policies? yes

If given the opportunity, would you consider working with SCDMH again? I would love to work with this fine organization again.

Based on your experience, will you give us some suggestions and comments to help us improve working conditions?

Provide better quality leadership at the local level that would help staff grow and enhance their skills.

Retain good / effective psychiatrists.

Have you observed any unresolved accidental or intentional illegal activity? (You may report illegal activity to your supervisor, CCO or anonymously to the Fraud Hotline at (800) 521-4493 or (803) 253-4156.)

no.

Ashah M. Thomas
Employee