

Realistic Job Preview ***Family Services Specialist (FSS)***

Carol Sideris: I'm Carol Sideris, Director of the Division of Client Services, and I'm delighted that you're considering a position with us. Over the next few minutes you're going to hear from a number of our staff about what it means to be a Family Services Specialist. I can tell you that if you choose to join the Division of Client Services you will become part of an extraordinary organization. We are committed to providing exemplary service to individuals having many needs, whether it be health care, emergency cash, long-term care, or even assistance in feeding one's family. This job requires us to have a whole-person view of each client. That means thinking beyond the assistance someone has requested to all services an individual may need to help them achieve independence and self-sufficiency. Client Services is comprised of hundreds of talented individuals who have the desire to work in a client-focused, fast-paced, and changing environment. If you are interested in a career that requires effective interpersonal skills, attention to detail, multitasking, and a desire for challenging work, then the Family Services Specialist position may be the right job for you. I hope that after completing this job preview you will consider a career with us. Whatever your decision, I wish you every success in your next career choice.

Woman: Every day staff from New Hampshire's Division of Client Services work to determine eligibility for services to meet our citizens' most basic needs of food, shelter, medical assistance and child care. The job of a Family Services Specialist is an important one, requiring responsibility for timely and accurate eligibility determinations and exemplary client service in a fast-paced, every-changing environment. This video was produced to give you a better understanding of what's involved with being a Family Service Specialist. Like many Human Service agencies across the country, the Division of Client Services found turnover of new employees to be higher than it should be because new employees found this was not the job they expected it to be. In just a moment you'll meet some of the Family Service Specialists who work directly with our clients. And you'll learn some of the challenges they face throughout their work day and the rewards they gain from serving those in need in New Hampshire. So as you learn more about the job of being a Family Service Specialist, we'd like you to ask yourself this question: "Is this the right job for me?" Let's get started now by taking a closer look at some of the things Family Service Specialists do.

Worker 1: Family Assistance, how may I help you?

Worker 2: Yep, you are absolutely open. You are able to go get your prescriptions tomorrow.

Worker 3: This is the daughter or the mom?

Worker 4: And so you said your husband's been laid off.

FSS, Rochester: My mother actually worked for the Department of Health & Human Services and she did work as a FSS at one point and she told me, “Don’t do it. Whatever you do, don’t take this job.”

Laura: I just thought I’d be meeting with people, you know, asking them a few questions and then getting them their benefits.

FSS, Laconia: Oh yeah, I’m gonna help everybody, I’m gonna change the world. You know you come in here and now it’s a whole different process.

Laura (phone call): Hi, is this Ken? Hi, Ken, this is Laura from Health & Human Services calling to do your interview. Is this a good time for you?

Laura: I had absolutely no idea the amount of policy that I was gonna have to know. I mean, I sat in training many times thinking, “What am I doing here?” You know, I was like I’ll never learn all this.

Laura (phone call): ...that you guys actually buy and prepare your meals separately okay? So just make sure that, um, you guys write a statement out. Make sure you say...

FSS, Rochester: I actually thought it was gonna be more or less data entry. When someone comes in they give me their information, I plug it in the computer, I say, “Yes, you’re eligible” or “No, you’re not”. Um, and it was not even close to that.

Supervisor: I can sit here and say its high stress, its multitasking, you are interrupted, you need to use a computer, you need good writing skills, communication skills... I can go on and on but most people sit here and say, “Oh I can do that. I can do that”.

FSS: You’re gonna want to bring all the information regarding your grandson.

FSS: Oh, could you bring that in to us as soon as you can so we can get this finished up?

FSS: Did you set the expected change?

FSS, Laconia: Beginning, it was really challenging just because there’s so much to learn and in order to do the job, you have to learn. I mean, policy itself... I mean, the policy manual is this thick.

Administrator: Not only do you have to know the variety of different programs, but each of those programs have different federal guidelines, different state laws, and different federal mandates relating to time frames and how the policies have to be implemented.

Laura: But they have a great training program to actually train us for it. You’re in training for a year and, um, that’s probably what helped me the most with this job. If they had hired me and

said, "Good luck," you know and put me out there, I probably wouldn't have survived at all. But the training program is really, really good.

Teacher: All right, I wanna ask first – I never got to do this yesterday – I'd like to go around the room, and tell me something that you learned about imaging.

FSS: If it's a deactivated card we can reissue a new card. If it's a lost card they have to get it themselves.

FSS, Rochester: I've never worked anywhere in my life where people are so willing to help you and, just, caring about their individual workers as well as clients.

FSS: Every day we have to tell somebody that they're ineligible, or that their benefits are ending because of a change in their circumstances and that's always the bad news that nobody wants to hear.

FSS, Concord: When they come to us, we're like their last stop. So they're just full of emotions by the time they come to us, and so they just start crying and telling us their story.

FSS, Concord: I don't like the fact that I have to deny people. Um, when I have to tell somebody that they don't qualify and they get upset. Whether its angry or sad or crying. Um, I don't like that part of the job; unfortunately it comes with the job.

Client: (*speaking over FSS*) I'm late on my oil bill. It's almost like you guys just don't care! You don't care about us people! Can you do something other than talk!

FSS, Concord: I have had to, um, tell people that if they continue to swear at me I'm gonna have to end the conversation. And I have had to end conversations before just because it's not getting anywhere.

FSS, Concord: You have to have a thick skin. You can't let, uh, everything bother you. You also can't be upset by all the hurt and pain that people see in life. Um, and stay positive.

FSS, Claremont: People tell you some, I mean some things that you just wanna look at them and say, "What are you gonna do?" But they're asking you that question, like, "What am I gonna, what am I supposed to do? I don't know what to do." They're coming to you for help and sometimes I feel like, you know we can get you a little bit of food stamps or we can point you to another agency, but...

FSS: They are not social workers; they are not trained social workers. They are, and I do make that clear, I have said to my staff before, "You are eligibility workers. You determine eligibility for the clients that we see. You are not a social worker."

FSS: Your heart might break for somebody and their circumstances where they might be six dollars over income. But that line is set in stone and there are no exceptions. If there is no eligibility, there is no eligibility.

Client: My husband walked out on us back some time in January. And I have two kids and I'm only working part time and I just don't know what to do.

FSS: You're talking about, um, interviewing people and talking to people, and learning about people's lives, um, details of their lives, and then having to follow through and finish a case isn't just, you know, an hour's worth of work. Its, its days.

FSS: It can be overwhelming because you have to be very organized, you have to be detail-oriented, you have to want to work in a very fast-paced position.

FSS, Rochester: I have a real big issue with, um, leaving work and having work on my desk to do. That's something that as an FSS I have to battle with, um, something I have to come to terms with and try to work with because I'm just not used to that. I'm used to: this is what I have to do today and you finish it and its' done. That's not the case with this job. It's never done.

FSS: There's never a day that I can say to myself, "Okay, I'm done, I finished my job," because there is no finishing this job. There is always somebody else waiting outside that door, um, to apply for benefits.

FSS: It's always go, go, go, go, go and, um, you know there's things where you'd like to spend a little more time making sure this is perfect, making sure – you just can't do it. You gotta do the best you can in the time allotted.

FSS: If you can't multitask, you definitely can't do this job because you've got, um, a popup from your supervisor on your screen "Come see me", your phone's ringing, someone's telling you that you have an appointment here. I mean, you've got a million different things going on at once and you have to be able to prioritize and figure out what it is that you need to do first.

FSS: The job also entails a lot of computer knowledge, technology. And we, all the programs that we offer we have to go into different computer systems throughout the department to determine these eligibilities. So they have to know at least five different software applications to do this job, along with use of the internet and email.

FSS: Okay, I'm gonna go scan this in for you and I'll give you back your original.

FSS: We actually started doing document imaging, which I think has really helped the Family Service Specialists so documents come in and they're scanning the document. They are able to now, instead of taking time and standing up and pulling records out of their drawers, they are

able to process their work at their desk, see the documents pop up on their computer screen, um, I think its helped them, um, to become a little more organized with their case loads.

Laura: Every document that comes into the office is scanned and we have an, a mailbox now on our, on our computer so I just click into my mailbox and I have all my mail.

FSS: *(reading from letter)* When we received the card it was such a huge weight lifted off our shoulders. You are by far the best case manager that anyone could ever ask for. Thank you for caring and making a difference. And this customer service award goes to...it is Scott!

FSS: The benefits to me of being able to help people far outweigh the stress that you're under to get the job done.

FSS: I would say apply if you think you're up for a challenge that can be rewarding and devastating every day.

FSS: I love my job. We all must be crazy.

FSS: I asked if she was paying medical bills and she said no. And then she said, you know and I even have to pay my co-pay for my insurance. Well I didn't know she had to pay a co-pay, so I had her sit back down and talked to her about that and, um, was able to get her open for food stamps and she started crying and said, "You don't understand how much this means to me."

FSS: Even that little bit of food stamps helps them a long way and they're so happy.

FSS: And they get tears in their eyes and they, you know it makes you feel really good and it reminds you why you're doing this job: to help people.

Client: Its allowed me to get little extras that I couldn't before. Every once in awhile, don't tell anybody, but I buy a lamb chop. A loin lamb chop.

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