

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE **ACTION** OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of L.M., Department of Corrections

CSC Docket No. 2016-2926

Discrimination Appeal

ISSUED 3 0 2016

(EG)

L.M., a Storekeeper 1 with Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility, Department of Corrections (DOC), appeals the determination of DOC's Director of the Equal Employment Division (EED), stating that the appellant failed to present sufficient evidence to support a finding that she had been subjected to violations of the New Jersey State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace (State Policy).

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The appellant filed a complaint alleging that she had been subjected to sexual/gender harassment/discrimination by Senior Correction Officer M.S. Specifically, the appellant made the following seven allegations: 1) M.S. described in detail the use of broom handles as sexual devices by the female inmates at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility (EMCF); 2) M.S. commented that EMCF inmates would strip, come on to him sexually, and call him "Big Daddy"; 3) M.S. would follow the appellant to her office and tell her these stories when they were alone; 4) M.S. would turn off the lights thereby causing the appellant to approach him in a darkened room to retrieve the mail; 5) during cold weather, M.S. would tell the appellant that notwithstanding the cold weather she was still hot; 6) upon the appellant returning from a day off, M.S. would tell her that he missed her; and 7) M.S. offered the appellant a hug upon her return from her brother's funeral. In response to the appellant's complaint, the EED conducted an investigation. substantiated a violation of the State Policy by M.S. when it found that he had engaged in inappropriate sexual conversations about the female inmates at EMCF. It also indicated that appropriate remedial action, as approved by the Commissioner, would be taken.

On appeal, the appellant argues that while the EED substantiated the claims of sexual conversations conducted by M.S., it did not address her allegations of direct sexual harassment by M.S. towards her. The appellant claims that M.S.'s harassing behavior stressed her to the point of not being able to sleep and being physically ill because of her situation at work. Additionally, the appellant claims that when she reported M.S.'s action to Correction Sergeant J.S., he made her worse by laughing at her and making remarks such "where is your buddy, you miss him" when M.S. was out of work. Further, the appellant states that while the EED investigation was ongoing M.S. had been moved to another area, but since the EED determination, M.S. was moved back to his normal work area making the situation uncomfortable for her. In this regard, the appellant argues that M.S. should not be permitted to work with her and that he should be transferred or at the very least moved to another area where they would not be in contact at all.

In response, the EED states that its investigation included witness interviews, and a review of evidence pertinent to the allegations. It asserts that it found that M.S. had engaged in inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature. Specifically, a witness confirmed the M.S. sat in an office with other male officers and shared stories of a sexual nature about inmates at EMCF. M.S. acknowledged that he shared such stories with officers on one occasion. However, M.S. denied to investigators that he shared such stories with the appellant and no witnesses could confirm that M.S. had shared such stories with the appellant. The EED adds that the allegations against J.S. could not be substantiated. Further, the EED argues that based on its findings, remedial action was taken against M.S. as he was issued a State Policy violation letter and a formal Letter of Counseling. Moreover, the EED asserts that it recommended that M.S. and the appellant would no longer have to work together so closely. In this regard, the EED indicates that the DOC does not permanently transfer employees for first time violations of the State Policy of this nature. Furthermore, the EED argues that the remedial action taken against M.S. was appropriate. Finally, the EED maintains that the appellant's complaint included allegations that did not touch upon the State Policy and that those allegations were forwarded to the Department's Special Investigation Division for review.

CONCLUSION

N.J.A.C. 4A:7-3.1(a) provides that under the State Policy, discrimination or harassment based upon the following protected categories are prohibited and will not be tolerated: race, creed, color, national origin, nationality, ancestry, age, sex/gender (including pregnancy), marital status, civil union status, domestic partnership status, familial status, religion, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, or disability. N.J.A.C. 4A:7-3.1(c) provides that it is a violation of this policy to engage

in sexual (or gender-based) harassment of any kind, including hostile work environment harassment, quid pro quo harassment, or same-sex harassment.

In the instant matter, the Commission has conducted a review of the record and finds that an adequate investigation was conducted. Specifically, the relevant parties were interviewed in this matter and the appropriate documents and records were reviewed. Specifically, the EED interviewed witnesses and M.S. The EED investigation found that M.S. had violated the State Policy when he sat in an office with other male officers and shared stories of a sexual nature about inmates at EMCF and took appropriate corrective action. However, the EED could not substantiate the appellant's claims regarding J.S. On appeal, the appellant merely disagrees with the determination and the corrective action but provides no arguments, evidence or other basis for her appeal. Therefore, the appellant has not sustained her burden of proof in this matter. Accordingly, based on the foregoing, no basis exists to find a violation of the New Jersey State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be denied.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ON THE 23RD DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2016

Robert M. Czech

Chairperson

Civil Service Commission

Inquiries

and

Correspondence

Henry Maurer

Director

Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs

Civil Service Commission Written Record Appeals Unit

P.O. Box 312

Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0312

c: L.M. Leila Lawrence, Esq. Mamta Patel Records Center