

What's in a Job Description?

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My official job description in a nut shell says I directly supervise staff; train new staff; counsel clients and provide services; schedule and assist with agency coverage; supervise data collection; ensure proper data entry; and work with the Administration on planning and evaluating rules and training. Yes, I do all of these things and all of my statements are true.



What my official agency job description doesn't outline for you is what we like to call the "10% other." The "10% other," while not listed specifically, is a large percentage of what we do. It can also be the most time consuming, emotionally challenging, and overwhelming part of our jobs at times. While it says only 10% of my time should be spent doing this "other" it seems as if it completely consumes my time, focus, and emotions on some days. While it is hard to spell out everything that is included in the "10% other" here are a few examples.



The "10% other" is an all-encompassing, catch-all that describes the best and worst parts of being a supervisor. What it doesn't specifically spell out for you are the days where you can second guess if you are doing the right thing in the right profession at the right time. It's laying down at night worrying if every decision you were a part of in the 80+ cases you supervise were the rights ones. It's comforting your staff when they are grieving the death of a child whom they have been working with. It's calling your staff to tell them they have lost yet another parent to drug abuse and its devastating effects. It's being the one to always ask staff to continually modify how they do their job thanks to changes in policy, rules, and statute when they just mastered the "old" way. It's listening to staff who just need to vent about their ever growing to-do list even when your own to-do list is a mile long. It's being the one who fights for your staff when you think they are right, even when the rest of the world thinks they are wrong. It's arguing with attorney's whose focus is the law when your heart is breaking for a young child who you feel desperately needs our help. It's being "middle management" and being pulled in at least twenty-five directions while trying to keep those above you and those you supervise happy at the same time. It's maintaining your composure when society shares their thoughts on what they think you do; and how your job is "what's wrong with kids today." It's putting on a smiling face and promising staff that "everything will be okay" and then doing everything you possibly can to make sure that is true.

Most of all it's laughing with your staff at things people outside this profession would not find the least bit humorous just to maintain your own sanity. It's enjoying milestones with your staff, both personal and professional, and encouraging them to reach their own goals. It's taking time to recognize staff for a job well done and not just talking to them when there is a problem. It's about being the person who can bring a smile to your staff's face with a silly note, a small token gift, or a special treat when their week has weighed them down. It's sharing a smile and a high five when a hard fought case has been won and a child is given a chance at safety, and support. It's beaming from ear-to-ear when a child who has been waiting is adopted into their forever family and you know they will be loved. It's wishing you literally had a nickel for every person who said "I don't know how you do that job" because it would make for one heck of a secondary retirement account. It's enjoying coming to work every day knowing that with each case, each family, and each decision you make, you are doing the best you can to make a difference in your small part of the world.

That “10% other” is a tricky thing. It’s the best and worst of this job all rolled into one. It can be the gray clouds one day and the sunshine you need the next. Had I known about the “10% other” maybe I wouldn’t have been as interested in becoming a supervisor. Then again think of all the “10% other” I would have missed!