



Danielle Whitworth Barnes serves as the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

Prior to joining DHS, she served as Deputy Commissioner & General Counsel for the Tennessee Department of Human Resources. In her capacity, she had oversight over all legal issues within the Department, offering counsel and advice to her agency, other state agencies and individuals on employment law matters. One of her greatest accomplishments has been co-authoring and implementing the Tennessee Excellence, Accountability and Management Act (T.E.A.M. Act), an overhaul of the State's antiquated civil service employment practices. This Act created the Board of Appeals and the Tennessee Employee Mediation Program, both of which fell under her areas of responsibility.

In addition, all matters dealing with departmental legislative affairs, employee relations, workplace discrimination and harassment, as well as the review of certain statewide employee transactions fell under her review. Further in her capacity, she oversaw the administration of state government's Performance Management Program, which was recently overhauled to focus on objective performance outcomes. Along with that program, Ms. Barnes was charged with the design and implementation of pay for performance in State government.

Prior to joining the Department of Human Resources, she served as the Legislative Coordinator and Assistant General Counsel for the Tennessee Department of Human Services. Her responsibilities in that role included representing the Department before the Tennessee General Assembly. She also served as legal counsel to the Department in various matters, including matters before the EEOC and THRC, general employment law consultation, contract disputes, and administrative hearings. Ms. Barnes also worked for a private law firm in Nashville and Memphis, practicing in the areas of employment law, insurance defense, general civil litigation, contract matters and government relations.

Ms. Barnes holds certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), Society for Human Resource Management Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), and International Public Management Association Senior Certified Professional (IPMA-SCP). In addition, she is a Rule 31 Listed Mediator.

She earned her undergraduate degree from Spelman College and her law degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law. She is a graduate of Tennessee Government Executive Institute, LEAD Tennessee, Leadership Nashville and Tennessee Bar Association Leadership Law. She was recognized by the Top Ladies of Distinction for Top Women in the Law and was a finalist for the Nashville Athena Young Leaders Award.