

IN THE MATTER OF	*	BEFORE THE
AVA BARRON-SHASHO, LCSW-C	*	MARYLAND
Respondent	*	BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK
	*	EXAMINERS
License Number: 08655	*	Case Number: 11-1735
* * * * *		

CONSENT ORDER

On or about April 13, 2012, the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board") issued charges against the social work license of Ava Barron-Shasho, LCSW-C ("Respondent") (D.O.B. 4/30/63), license number 08655, pursuant to the Maryland Social Workers Act (the "Act"), Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. §§ 19-101 *et seq.* (2009 Repl. Vol. and 2011 Supp.), for engaging in a sexual relationship with a patient.

The pertinent provisions of the Act under § 19-311 provide the following:

- Subject to the hearing provisions of § 19-312 of this subtitle, the Board may deny a license to any applicant, fine a licensee, reprimand any licensee, place any licensee on probation, or suspend or revoke a license if the applicant or licensee;
- (4) Commits any act of gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct in the practice of social work;
 - (5) Knowingly violates any provision of this title;
 - (6) Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work; [or]
 - (7) Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board[.]

The pertinent provisions of Md. Regs. Code tit. ("COMAR") 10 § 42.03.05 (June 13, 2011) provide the following:

.05 Relationships.

A. The licensee may not enter into a dual relationship with a client or an individual with whom the client has a close personal relationship.

C. The licensee may not engage in sexual misconduct with either current or former clients.

E. The licensee may not terminate professional services or a professional relationship with a client in order to enter into a nonprofessional, social, or sexual relationship with the client or an individual with whom the client has a personal relationship.

A Case Resolution Conference ("CRC") was held with the Respondent and members of the Board on April 27, 2012. Thereafter the Board and the Respondent agreed to resolve this matter as set forth in this Consent Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was licensed to practice social work in the State of Maryland.

2. The Respondent was originally licensed to practice social work in the State of Maryland on August 21, 1995, under License Number 08655.

3. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was employed as a therapist providing individual and group therapy, both at a private practice in Owings Mills, Maryland and at a cancer support center in Baltimore County, Maryland.

4. On or about November 18, 2011, Respondent self-reported to the Board that she had engaged in a sexual relationship with a former patient, Patient A.¹

5. On January 25, 2012, Respondent was interviewed under oath by the Board's investigator.

¹ Patient A's identity is omitted here to protect Patient's A privacy.

6. According to Respondent, she began treating Patient A in May, 2003 for adjustment disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder and continued to treat Patient A until November, 2004.

7. Respondent testified that there were two instances during the therapeutic relationship when she had invited Patient A and Patient A's family to her home and that on another occasion Respondent had made a visit to Patient A's office.

8. Respondent recalls that at some point Patient A had reported romantic feelings for Respondent, which Respondent thought would fade with time.

9. Respondent eventually decided to terminate the therapeutic relationship in November, 2004. Respondent testified, "I could see that I was not being therapeutic, I could see I was not doing my best work, and I said to [Patient A], I need to stop this."

10. Respondent testified that during her final treatment session with Patient A, she told Patient A, "I can't keep vacillating between therapist/friend/therapist...I need to stop it." Respondent also testified that she provided Patient A with several referrals to other therapists.

11. Respondent testified that a few days after the last session, she made contact with Patient A. Thereafter the two began talking on the phone, meeting at their respective offices and going to lunch.

12. Respondent testified that by January, 2005, she and Patient A began a sexual relationship.

13. Respondent admitted that she and Patient A engaged in an intimate relationship "on and off" until August, 2011.

14. As of the date of Respondent's interview, she testified that she had last spoken with Patient A on or about November 18, 2011.

15. Respondent further testified that “in hindsight, I should have had much stronger boundaries.”

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based upon the foregoing findings of fact, the Board concludes that Respondent is subject to discipline pursuant to Health Occ. § 19-311(4), (5), (6), and (7).

ORDER

Based on an affirmative vote of a quorum of the Board, it is hereby:

ORDERED that the Ms. Barron-Shasho’s license to practice social work is **SUSPENDED**, effective July 1, 2012, for at least **TWENTY-FOUR (24) MONTHS**, four (4) months of which shall be **STAYED**; and be it further,

ORDERED that prior to applying for reinstatement of her license, Respondent shall:

- a. Successfully complete a Board-approved professional ethics course with a concentration on boundary violations;
- b. Successfully complete a Board-approved one-on-one ethics tutorial focusing on the specific facts and issues of this case; and
- c. Successfully complete all continuing education requirements as mandated for license renewal; and be it further

ORDERED that upon successful completion of Respondent’s first twenty (20) months of suspension, Respondent may petition the Board for reinstatement of her license in accordance with Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 19-314 and its corresponding regulations; and be it further

ORDERED that upon reinstatement of Respondent’s license, said license shall be placed on **PROBATION** for a period of time to be determined by the Board upon her application for reinstatement, during which time Respondent shall:

- a. Submit to monthly supervision by a Board-approved supervisor, ensure that such supervisor submit monthly progress reports to the Board, and comply with the recommendations of the supervisor;

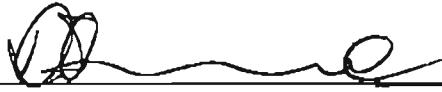
b. Consent to the release of monthly progress reports to the Board by her treating therapist; and be it further

ORDERED that Respondent shall be responsible for all costs incurred in fulfilling the terms and conditions of this Order; and be it further

ORDERED that should Respondent fail to comply with the any of the terms and/or conditions of this Order, the Board, in its discretion, after notice and an opportunity for a show cause hearing, may impose additional sanctions against Respondent's license, including revocation or suspension; and be it further,

ORDERED that this is a final order of the Board and as such is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-611, *et seq.*

6/8/12
Date

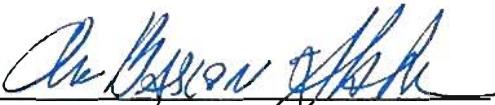


Daniel Buccino, LCSW-C, Board Chair
Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners

CONSENT

1. By signing this Consent, I hereby affirm the findings of fact contained herein and agree to be bound by the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions.
2. By this Consent, I submit to the foregoing Consent Order as a resolution of this matter.
3. By signing this Consent, I waive any rights I may have had to contest the findings and determinations contained in this Consent Order.
4. I acknowledge the legal authority and the jurisdiction of the Board to enter and enforce this Consent Order.
5. I sign this Consent Order freely and voluntarily, after having had the opportunity to consult with counsel.
6. I fully understand the language, meaning, and effect of this Consent Order.

~~6-23-12~~ ^{ASB} 5-23-12
Date


Ava Barron-Shasho, LCSW-C

STATE OF MARYLAND
COUNTY/CITY OF Baltimore :

I hereby certify that on this 03rd day of May, 2012, before me, a Notary Public of the State of Maryland and County/City aforesaid, personally appeared AVA BARRON-SHASHO, and made an oath in due form that the foregoing Consent was her voluntary act and deed.


Notary Public
My commission expires: 9/11/13