

IN THE MATTER OF

*

BEFORE THE STATE

FELICIA R. NORTHAN, LGSW

*

BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK

Respondent

*

EXAMINERS

License Number: 19752

*

Case No. 14-1938

* * * * *

CONSENT ORDER

On April 2, 2015, the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners ("the Board") issued a "Notice of Charges under the Maryland Social Work Act" (the "Charges") to **FELICIA R. NORTHAN, LGSW** (the "**Respondent**") license number **19752**, based on alleged violations of the Maryland Social Work Examiners Act ("the Act"), Md. Health Occ. Code Ann. ("H.O.") §§ 19-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol.).

Based upon the allegations made in the Complaint and the Board' investigation, the Board charged the Respondent under the following provisions of the Act:

H.O. § 19-301. License required; exceptions; practice without license.

(a) *In general.*-- Except as otherwise provided in this title, an individual shall be:

(1) Licensed by the Board before the individual may practice social work in this State while representing oneself as a social worker;

H.O. § 19-401. Practicing without a license.

(a) *Social work.* -- Except as otherwise provided in this title, a person may not practice, attempt to practice, or offer to practice social work in this State while representing oneself to be a social worker unless licensed by the Board.

H.O. § 19-402. Misrepresentation.

Unless authorized to practice social work under this title, a person may not:

- (1) Represent to the public that the person is a licensed social worker;
- (2) Use any title, abbreviation, sign, card, or other representation that the person is a licensed social worker, including the use of the words "social worker" or "social work" and the use of the abbreviations "LBSW", "LGSW", "LCSW" or "LCSW-C".

BACKGROUND

On May 11, 2015, the Respondent appeared before members of the Board and the Board's counsel for a Case Resolution Conference (CRC) to discuss the potential resolution of the Charges by consent. At the conclusion of the CRC, the Respondent agreed to enter into this Consent Order to resolve the pending charges and to avoid the expense and time of proceeding to an administrative hearing. The Respondent and the Board agreed to the inclusion of Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law as required by the Board, and with the terms and conditions set forth herein.

While accepting as a condition of resolving the Charges by consent that allegations set forth in the Findings of Fact will be included in this Consent Order, Respondent denies that she represented herself to her employer or any member of the public as a licensed social worker prior to passing the social worker licensure examination.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board finds the following:

1. The Respondent obtained her Master of Social Work in May 1998. The Respondent was initially licensed to practice as licensed graduate social worker ("LGSW") on March 24, 2014. Her license is currently active and is scheduled to expire on October 31, 2016.

2. On or about January 31, 2014, after Respondent learned that she passed the licensure examination, but before she received her license, the Board received an email from the Respondent regarding her application for licensure. The Respondent signed the email using "LGSW" after her name. At the time of her email, the Respondent was not a licensed social worker. Thereafter the Board initiated an investigation.

3. The Board's investigation revealed that on or about June 25, 2000, the Respondent applied for the position of "Social Worker II, Family Services". On August 28, 2000, the Respondent was notified that she was selected to fill the position of "Social Worker II, Family Services" for the Worcester County Department of Social Services. She began employment on September 20, 2000.

4. According to a document titled "Position Selection Plan (PSP) For Appointments Under Agency Delegated Approval," which was obtained from the Respondent's personnel file, the position's minimum qualifications were as follows: "Full Time Performance level of social [sic] work providing services to families and individuals. Must be a social work graduate certified by the State of Md. Social Work Examiners."

The PSP was not signed by Respondent and Respondent denies being shown the document when she was hired.

5. A review of the Respondent's personnel file revealed that the Respondent worked in the position of "Social Worker II" from September 20, 2000 until November 10, 2004.

6. On or about July 20, 2004, during her performance appraisal, the Respondent's supervisor inquired about whether the Respondent had obtained her social work license, which was a requirement of her classification. The Respondent had not obtained her social work license and had made no effort to take the examination.

7. The Respondent was given 30 days to schedule the social work licensure examination, which she took on September 18, 2004.

8. On or about September 20, 2004, the Respondent advised her employer that she did not pass the licensing exam and was not able to re-test for 90 days.

9. The Respondent continued to work as a "Social Worker II" during this time with the acquiescence of her employer, the Worcester County Department of Social Services.

10. As a result of the Respondent's failure to pass the licensure examination to obtain her social work license, the Respondent was demoted, effective November 10, 2004, to Family Services Caseworker II.

11. On June 13, 2013, the Board received the Respondent's Application for Social Work Licensure.

12. On January 21, 2014, the Respondent again took the social work licensure examination and earned a passing score.

13. On January 31, 2014, a member of the Board's staff contacted the Respondent by email to inform her that the Board was in receipt of her official examination score. The email also reminded the Respondent to submit the initial license fee of \$75 "to complete the application process."

14. The Respondent replied to the email to clarify the address to which she should remit the initial license fee. The Respondent's electronic signature included "LGSW" after her name, despite the fact that she was not yet licensed in Maryland as a social worker.

15. The Respondent's license was issued on March 24, 2014.

16. On October 2, 2014, the Respondent was interviewed by the Board's investigator. During the interview, the Respondent stated that she believed that passing the licensing examination allowed her to use the abbreviation "LGSW" after her name.

17. The Board's investigation revealed that Respondent worked in a position titled "Social Worker II" with the Worcester County Department of Social Services from September 20, 2000 until November 10, 2004, and that, during this time period, Respondent was not a licensed social worker.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concluded that, if proven true, the factual allegations would support a finding as a matter of law that the Respondent violated H.O. §§ 19-301, 19-401(a) and 19-402(2). The Board dismisses the charge under H.O. § 19-402(1).

ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and the agreed upon terms of the resolution of the Charges by consent at the CRC, on this 12th day of June, 2015, by a majority of the full authorized membership of the Board considering this case, it is hereby

ORDERED that the Respondent's license to practice social work in the State of Maryland is **REPRIMANDED**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall be placed on Board-supervised probation for a period of at least **ONE (1) YEAR**. The Respondent's probation shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The Respondent's status as a licensed graduate social worker will be listed in the Board's computer records and website as being on "Probation";

2. Within one (1) year, the Respondent shall pay a monetary fine in the amount of **\$1,000**;

3. During the probationary period, the Respondent shall enroll in and successfully complete a Board-approved course in professional ethics. The Respondent shall furnish the Board with written documentation of her successful completion of the course. The Respondent may not use any continuing education credits earned through taking such coursework to fulfill any continued education requirements that are mandated for licensure renewal in this State;

4. During the probationary period, the Respondent shall cause her employer to furnish the Board with copies of the quarterly reports that are required under the D.C. Order to confirm that the Respondent is practicing under the required level of

supervision. Failure to provide a quarterly report or an unsatisfactory quarterly report constitute a violation of this Consent Order;

5. The Respondent shall practice social work according to the Maryland Social Work Act and in accordance with all applicable laws, statutes and regulations pertaining to the practice of social work; and it is further

ORDERED that after the Respondent successfully completes the terms and conditions of her probation, including payment of the monetary fine and successful completion of the course in professional ethics, and after one year has passed, the Respondent may submit a written petition to the Board requesting termination of probation. After consideration of the petition, the probation may be terminated, through an order of the Board, or a designated Board committee. The Board, or designated Board committee, will grant the termination if the Respondent has fully and satisfactorily complied with all of the probationary terms and conditions and there are no pending complaints related to the charges; and it is further

ORDERED that if the Respondent violates any of the terms and conditions of Probation and this Consent Order, the Board, in its discretion, after notice and an opportunity for a show cause hearing before the Board, may impose any sanction which the Board may have imposed in this case, including a probationary term and conditions of probation, reprimand, suspension, lifting the stay of suspension, revocation and/or a monetary penalty; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent is solely responsible for all costs incurred in fulfilling the terms and conditions of the Consent Order; and it is further

ORDERED that this Consent Order is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT**, pursuant to Md. State Gov't Code Ann. §§ 10-611 et seq. (2014 Repl. Vol.), and is reportable to any entity to which the Board is obligated to report.

6-12-15
Date



Mark Lannon, LCSW-C, Board Chair
State Board of Social Work Examiners

CONSENT

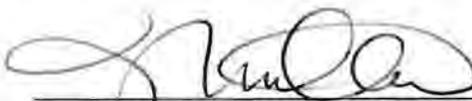
I, Felicia Northan, LGSW, acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to consult with counsel before signing this document. By this Consent, I accept to be bound by this Consent Order and its conditions and restrictions. I waive any rights I may have had to contest the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

I acknowledge the validity of this Consent Order as if entered into after the conclusion of a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have had the right to counsel, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections as provided by law. I acknowledge the legal authority and the jurisdiction of the Board to initiate these proceedings and to issue and enforce this Consent Order. I also affirm that I waive my right to appeal any adverse ruling of the Board that might have followed any such hearing.

I sign this Consent Order after having had an opportunity to consult with counsel, without reservation, and I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning and terms of this Consent Order. I voluntarily sign this Order, and understand its meaning and effect.

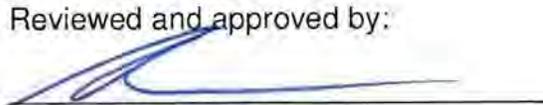
5/26/15

Date



Felicia Northan, LGSW, Respondent

Reviewed and approved by:



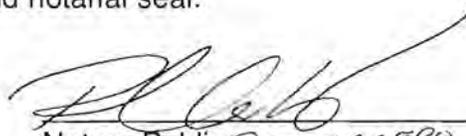
R. Scott Krause, Esq.
Attorney for the Respondent

NOTARY

STATE OF MARYLAND)
CITY/COUNTY OF Worcester :

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 26th day of May, 2015, before me, a Notary Public of the foregoing State personally appeared Felicia Northan, LGSW and made oath in due form of law that signing the foregoing Consent Order was her voluntary act and deed, and the statements made herein are true and correct.

AS WITNESSETH my hand and notarial seal.



Notary Public PAMELAGERO

My Commission Expires: 7-17-17