

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR NURSING

Department of Public Health

Petition No. 2003-0312-011-010

vs.

Barbara Severini, LPN Lic. No. 023715
Respondent

MEMORANDUM OF DECISION

Procedural Background

The Board of Examiners for Nursing (hereinafter "the Board") was presented by the Department of Public Health (hereinafter "the Department") with a Motion for Summary Suspension and Statement of Charges dated May 9, 2003. Dept. Exh. 1. The Statement of Charges alleged violations of certain provisions of Chapter 378 of the General Statutes of Connecticut by Barbara Severini (hereinafter "respondent") which would subject respondent's licensed practical nurse license to disciplinary action pursuant to *Conn. Gen. Stat.* §§ 19a-17 and 20-99(b).

Based on the allegations in the Statement of Charges and accompanying affidavits and reports, the Board found that respondent's continued nursing practice presented a clear and immediate danger to public health and safety. On May 21, 2003 the Board ordered, pursuant to its authority under § 4-182(c) and § 19a-17(c) of the General Statutes of Connecticut, that respondent's licensed practical nurse license be summarily suspended pending a final determination by the Board of the allegations contained in the Statement of Charges. Dept. Exh. 1.

The Board issued a Notice of Hearing dated May 21, 2003, scheduling a hearing for June 4, 2003. Dept. Exh. 1.

Respondent was provided notice of the hearing and charges against her. The Notice of Hearing and Statement of Charges mailed to respondent by certified mail. Dept. Exh. 1.

The hearing scheduled for June 4, 2003 was continued at respondent's request, and took place on September 17, 2003 in Room 2-A, Legislative Office Building, Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. Dept. Exh. 3.

Respondent was present during the hearing but was not represented by counsel. Transcript, September 17, 2003, pp. 2-3.

Respondent orally answered the Statement of Charges. Transcript, September 17, 2003, pp. 11-13. Respondent admitted to all of the allegations in paragraphs 1-5 of the Statement of Charges. Id.

Each member of the Board involved in this decision attests that he/she was present at the hearing or has reviewed the record, and that this decision is based entirely on the record, the law, and the Board's specialized professional knowledge in evaluating the evidence.

Findings of Fact

Based on the testimony given and the exhibits offered into evidence, the Board makes the following Findings of Fact:

1. Respondent was issued licensed practical nurse license number 0237150 on June 1, 1990. Respondent was the holder of said license at all times referenced in the Statement of Charges. Dept. Exh. 1C; Transcript, p. 11.
2. On or about February 1990, respondent began employment as a licensed practical nurse at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, New London, Connecticut. Dept. Exh. 2-A5, Transcript, p. 13.
3. From on or about February 2002 to February 2003, while working as a licensed practical nurse at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, respondent diverted for her own personal use the controlled substance Oxycodone and Ativan; failed to completely, properly and/or accurately document medical or hospital records; and/or falsified one or more controlled substance receipt records. Dept. Exh.1; Transcript, p. 12.
4. From approximately February 2002 to February 2003, respondent abused or utilized to excess Oxycodone, Ativan and cocaine. Transcript, p. 12.
5. Respondent's abuse of Oxycodone, Ativan and cocaine does, and/or may affect her practice as a licensed practical nurse. Transcript, p. 13.
6. Respondent has a history of depression, of family, financial, and work pressures, and a history of manipulation by a former boyfriend, which she believes caused her to divert and abuse Oxycodone, and Ativan, and cocaine. Transcript, pp. 17-18.
7. From February 20, 2003 to April 3, 2003, respondent underwent inpatient chemical dependency treatment at the Stonington Institute, Connecticut. Since January 2002, respondent has been receiving occasional individual therapy for depression and has been participating in Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. Resp. Exh. A; Transcript, pp. 15-16.

Conclusions of Law and Discussion

In consideration of the above Findings of Fact, the following conclusions are rendered:

Barbara Severini held a valid licensed practical nurse license in the State of Connecticut at all times referenced in the Statement of Charges.

The Notice of Hearing and Statement of Charges provided sufficient legal notice as mandated by *Conn. Gen. Stat.* §§ 4-177(a) and (b), and 4-182(c). The hearing was held in accordance with

Conn. Gen. Stat. Chapters 54 and 368a as well as §§ 19a-9-1 through 19a-9-29 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

The Notice of Hearing, Statement of Charges, and the hearing process provided respondent with the opportunity to demonstrate compliance with all lawful requirements for the retention of her license as required by *Conn. Gen. Stat.* § 4-182(c).

The Department bears the burden of proof by a preponderance of the evidence in this matter.

PARAGRAPH 3 of the Statement of Charges alleges that between approximately February 2002 and February 2003, while working as a licensed practical nurse at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, New London, Connecticut, respondent:

- a. diverted Oxycodone and Ativan from patient stock for her own personal use;
- b. falsified controlled substance receipt records/proof of use sheets;
- c. failed to completely, properly and/ or accurately document medical and/or hospital records;

PARAGRAPH 4 of the Statement of Charges alleges that from approximately February 2002 to February 2003, respondent has abused or utilized to excess Oxycodone, Ativan and cocaine.

PARAGRAPH 5 of the Statement of Charges alleges that respondent's abuse of controlled substances does, and/or may, affect her practice as a licensed practical nurse.

Respondent admits these charges. Transcript, pp. 11-13.

The General Statutes of Connecticut § 20-99 provides in relevant part:

- (a) The Board of Examiners for Nursing shall have jurisdiction to hear all charges of conduct which fails to conform to the accepted standards of the nursing profession brought against persons licensed to practice nursing. After holding a hearing . . . said board, if it finds such person to be guilty, may revoke or suspend his or her license or take any of the actions set forth in section 19a-17. . . .
- (b) Conduct which fails to conform to the accepted standards of the nursing profession includes, but is not limited to, the following . . . (2) illegal conduct, incompetence or negligence in carrying out usual nursing functions . . . (5) abuse or excessive use of drugs, including alcohol, narcotics or chemicals . . .

Based on its findings, the Board concludes that respondent's conduct as alleged in the Statement of Charges is proven by a preponderance of the evidence presented. The Board further concludes that said conduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary action pursuant to *Conn. Gen. Stat.* §§ 20-99(b)(2), (5) and 19a-17.

Order

Pursuant to its authority under *Conn. Gen. Stat.* §§ 19a-17 and 20-99, the Board of Examiners for Nursing hereby orders the following:

1. That the Summary Suspension of respondent's licensed practical nurse license, number 023715, ordered on May 21, 2003, is vacated on the effective date of this Memorandum of Decision.
2. That for Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of the Statement of Charges, respondent's licensed practical nurse license number 023715, is placed on probation for a period of four (4) years.
3. If any of the following conditions of probation are not met, respondent's licensed practical nurse license may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to §19a-17 of the General Statutes of Connecticut.
 - A. During the period of probation the Board shall pre-approve respondent's employment and/or change of employment within the nursing profession.
 - B. Respondent shall provide a copy of this Memorandum of Decision to any and all employers if employed as a nurse during the probationary period. The Board shall be notified in writing by any employer(s), within thirty (30) days of the commencement of employment, as to receipt of a copy of this Memorandum of Decision.
 - C. Respondent shall not administer, count or have access to controlled substances, or have responsibility for such activities in the course of nursing duties during the first six months of working as a nurse during the probationary period.
 - D. If employed as a nurse, respondent shall cause monthly employer reports to be submitted to the Board by her immediate supervisor during the entire probationary period.
 - E. The employer reports cited in Paragraph D above shall include documentation of respondent's ability to safely and competently practice nursing. Employer reports shall be submitted directly to the Board at the address cited in Paragraph P below.
 - F. Should respondent's employment as a nurse be involuntarily terminated, respondent and/or her employer shall notify the Board, within seventy-two (72) hours, of such termination.
 - G. If respondent pursues further training in any subject area that is regulated by the Department, respondent shall provide a copy of this Memorandum of Decision to the educational institution or, if not an institution, to respondent's instructor. Such institution or instructor shall notify the Department in writing as to receipt of a copy of this Memorandum of Decision within fifteen (15) days of receipt. Said notification

shall be submitted directly to the Department at the address cited in Paragraph P below.

- H. At her expense, respondent shall engage in therapy and counseling for chemical dependency with a licensed or certified therapist, approved by the Board and the Department, during the entire period of probation.
- I. Respondent shall provide a copy of this Memorandum of Decision to her therapist. The Board shall be notified in writing by her therapist, within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Decision, as to receipt of a copy of this Memorandum of Decision.
- J. Respondent shall cause monthly evaluation reports to be submitted to the Board by her therapist during the entire probationary period.
- K. The therapist reports cited in Paragraph J above shall include documentation of dates of treatment, and an evaluation of respondent's progress, including alcohol and drug free status, and ability to safely and competently practice nursing. Therapist reports shall be submitted directly to the Board at the address cited in Paragraph P below.
- L.
 - (1) At her expense, respondent shall be responsible for submitting to observed random chain of custody urine screens for alcohol and drugs for the entire probationary period, at a testing facility approved by the Board, after consultation with the Department, as ordered by her therapist, and/or personal physician, and/or employer. Alcohol/drug screening may also be ordered by the Board to ensure compliance with this Order. Random alcohol/drug screens shall be legally defensible in that specimen donor and chain of custody can be identified throughout the screening process.
 - (2) Respondent shall be responsible for notifying the laboratory, her therapist, the Board, the Department and her prescribing practitioner of any drug(s) she is taking. For any prescription of a controlled substance(s) for more than two consecutive weeks, the respondent shall cause the provider prescribing the controlled substance(s) to submit quarterly reports to the Board and the Department until such time as the controlled substance(s) are no longer prescribed. The reports shall include the following:
 - 1. A list of controlled substances prescribed by this provider for the respondent;
 - 2. A list of controlled substance(s) prescribed by other providers;
 - 3. An evaluation of the respondent's need for the controlled substance;
 - 4. An assessment of the respondent's continued need for the controlled substance(s).

(3) There must be at least one (1) such random alcohol/drug screen weekly during the entire probationary period.

(4) Random alcohol/drug screens shall be negative for the presence of alcohol and drugs. All positive results shall be confirmed by the Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer (GC/MS) testing method. Chain of custody documentation must accompany all laboratory reports and/or the laboratory reports must indicate that chain of custody procedures have been followed.

(5) Random alcohol/drug screens must include testing for the following substances:

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Amphetamines | Methadone |
| Barbiturates | Methaqualone |
| Benzodiazepines | Opiates (Metabolites) |
| Cannabinoids (THC Metabolites) | Phencyclidine (PCP) |
| Cocaine | Propoxyphene |
| Meperidine (Demerol) | Ethanol (alcohol) |

(6) Laboratory reports of random alcohol and drug screens shall be submitted directly to the Board and the Department, at the address cited in Paragraph Q below, by respondent's therapist, personal physician or the testing laboratory.

- M. Respondent shall not obtain for personal use and/or use alcohol or any drug that has not been prescribed for her, for a legitimate purpose, by a licensed health care practitioner authorized to prescribe medications. Respondent shall not abuse and/or excessively use any drugs that are prescribed for a legitimate medical purpose.
- N. Respondent is hereby advised that the ingestion of poppy seeds may produce a positive drug screen result indicating the presence of opiates/morphine and that the ingestion of mouthwash may produce a positive result indicating the presence of alcohol. For that reason, any food substance containing poppy seeds, and mouthwash should be avoided during the probationary period. In the event that a drug/alcohol screen is positive for opiates/morphine and/or alcohol, the ingestion of poppy seeds and/or mouthwash shall not constitute a defense to such positive screen.
- O. The Board must be informed in writing prior to any change of address.

P. All correspondence and reports are to be addressed to:

Bonnie Pinkerton, RN, Nurse Consultant
Department of Public Health
Division of Health Systems Regulation
Board of Examiners For Nursing
410 Capitol Avenue, MS #12HSR
P. O. Box 340308
Hartford CT 06134-0308

4. Any deviation from the terms of probation, without prior written approval by the Board, shall constitute a violation of probation which will be cause for an immediate hearing on charges of violating this Order. Any finding that respondent has violated this Order will subject respondent to sanctions under §19a-17(a) and (c) of the General Statutes of Connecticut, including but not limited to, the revocation of her license. Any extension of time or grace period for reporting granted by the Board shall not be a waiver or preclude the Board's right to take subsequent action. The Board shall not be required to grant future extensions of time or grace periods. Notice of revocation or other disciplinary action shall be sent to respondent's address of record (most current address reported to the Office of Practitioner Licensing and Certification of the Department of Public Health or the Board).

5. This Memorandum of Decision becomes effective, and the (4) year probation of practical nurse license 023715 shall commence, on MARCH 1, 2004.

The Board of Examiners for Nursing hereby informs respondent, Barbara Severini, and the Department of Public Health of the State of Connecticut of this decision.

Dated at Newington, Connecticut this 18th day of February, 2004.

BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR NURSING

By 