

<b>IN THE MATTER OF</b>	*	<b>BEFORE THE MARYLAND STATE</b>
<b>KAREN COOPER, CAC-AD</b>	*	<b>BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL</b>
<b>Respondent</b>	*	<b>COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS</b>
<b>Certificate Number: AC1160</b>	*	<b>Case Numbers: 2012-03, 2013-03, &amp; 2020-045</b>

\* \* \* \* \*

**FINAL ORDER**

On or about August 21, 2020, the Maryland State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (the “Board”) notified **KAREN COOPER, CAC-AD** (the “Respondent”), of the Board’s intent to revoke her certificate to practice as a Certified Associate Counselor – Alcohol and Drug (“CAC-AD”), Certificate Number: AC1160, under the Maryland Professional Counselors and Therapists Act (the “Act”), codified at Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. §§ 17-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. & 2019 Supp.).

Specifically, the Board based its intent to revoke on the following provisions of the Act:

§ 17-509. Denial, probation, suspension or revocation of trainee status, license, or certificate.

Subject to the hearing provisions of § 17-511 of this subtitle, the Board, on the affirmative vote of a majority of its members then serving, may deny trainee status, a license, or a certificate to any applicant, place any trainee, licensee, or certificate holder on probation, reprimand any trainee, licensee, or certificate holder, or suspend, rescind, or revoke the status of any trainee, a license of any licensee, or a certificate of any certificate holder if the applicant, trainee, licensee, or certificate holder:

- (6) Willfully makes or files a false report or record in the practice of counseling or therapy;
- (8) Violates the code of ethics adopted by the Board;

- (9) Knowingly violates any provision of this title;
- (13) Violates any rule or regulation adopted by the Board;
- (16) Commits an act of immoral or unprofessional conduct in the practice of clinical or nonclinical counseling or therapy[.]

Pursuant to Health Occ. § 17-509(8) and (13), shown above, the Board also based its action on the following provisions of the Code of Ethics adopted by the board, codified at Md. Code Regs. (“COMAR”) 10.58.03 *et seq.*, in particular:

COMAR 10.58.03.04

A. A counselor shall:

- (11) Be familiar with and adhere to this chapter;

B. A counselor may not:

- (2) Participate in dishonest, fraudulent, or deceitful activity in the capacity of a counselor[.]

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Board makes the following Findings of Fact:

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

1. At all times relevant, the Respondent was authorized to practice alcohol and drug counseling in the State of Maryland. The Respondent was originally certified to practice as a CAC-AD in the State of Maryland on December 20, 2002, under Certificate Number AC1160. The Respondent’s CAC-AD certificate is currently active and on probation with an expiration date of January 31, 2021.

## II. VIOLATION OF CONSENT ORDER

2. On September 19, 2014, under case number 2012-03, the Board executed a Consent Order, which concluded that the Respondent misrepresented her credentials in counseling-related documents, supervised other counselors without proper qualifications, and continued practice with the owner of a facility despite knowing the owner was misrepresenting himself as a CAC-AD in documents and to clients when the owner was not a CAC-AD. Pursuant to the Consent Order, the Board suspended the Respondent's CAC-AD certificate for a minimum of six months with all but sixty (60) days of the suspension stayed. The Board further ordered that after "the conclusion of the entire sixty (60) days of active suspension, the Respondent [could] file a written request with the Board to stay the remainder of the suspension," at which time, the Respondent would be reinstated and placed on probation for a minimum of two years and continuing until she "fully and successfully complie[s]" with the terms and conditions. The probationary terms and conditions include completion of a professional ethics course during the first twelve (12) months of probation, completion of continuing education units in alcohol and drug counseling within the second twelve (12) months of probation, and supervision by a Board-approved supervisor for the entirety of the probationary period.<sup>1</sup> Finally, pursuant

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<sup>1</sup> After obtaining Board approval for a supervisor, for the first six months of supervision the Respondent was required to have biweekly face-to-face meetings with the supervisor and the supervisor was required to submit biweekly reports to the Board. For the remaining eighteen months of supervision the Respondent was required to have monthly face-to-face meetings with the supervisor and the supervisor was required to submit quarterly reports to the Board. A final report was due to the Board at the completion of the supervision period. The Respondent was also required to immediately notify the Board if a supervisor discontinues supervision and obtain Board approval for a replacement supervisor.

to the Consent Order, the Respondent was required to “comply with the Maryland Professional Counselors and Therapists Act and all applicable laws, statutes and regulations pertaining to the practice of counseling and therapy.”

3. After completing the 60-day suspension, the Respondent petitioned the Board to lift the suspension. On March 13, 2015, under case number 2013-03, the Board stayed the suspension and placed the Respondent on two years of probation subject to the terms and conditions of the September 19, 2014 Consent Order.

4. A review of the Board’s records revealed the Respondent failed to submit documentation demonstrating that she complied with any of the required conditions of her probation, including the professional ethics course or the provisions related to a Board approved supervisor.

### **III. CURRENT ALLEGATIONS OF FORGERY**

5. On or about December 2, 2019, the vice president (the “Vice President”) of an alcohol and drug treatment center (the “Organization”) contacted the Board’s licensure coordinator and alleged that the Respondent forged a letter from the Board’s licensure coordinator and submitted it to the Vice President.

6. After being contacted by the Vice President, the Board initiated an investigation of the Respondent under Case Number 2020-045.

7. As part of its investigation, the Board obtained the Respondent’s personnel file from the Organization and the fraudulent letter the Respondent submitted to the Vice President. The Board also interviewed the Respondent.

8. The Respondent was hired as a Clinical Supervisor at the Organization in or around July of 2019. According to the Vice President, at the time she was hired, the Respondent said she needed to pass a Board issued test to have her status as a supervisor reinstated. Therefore, the Respondent was placed in a non-clinical position until she provided documented verification from the Board of compliance with the reinstatement requirements. Then, “[a]fter an extended period of time [the Respondent] informed [the Vice President] that the board was requiring her to take an ethics class and then at that time her licence [*sic*] would be reinstated.” According to the Vice President, the Respondent was supposed to provide the documentation within a month of being hired.

9. The Vice President said he contacted the Respondent on or about September 20, 2019, asking that she provide documentation verifying that she registered for her required course and a verification letter from the Board. The Respondent did not provide the documents.

10. On or about November 27, 2019, the Vice President informed the Respondent that she would be suspended unless she provided them “with proof of these items by close of business on Monday.”

11. On or about December 1, 2019, the Respondent informed the Vice President she was in the office. The Respondent also sent the Vice President a letter via email, which the Respondent claimed was a verification letter from the Board regarding her ethics course requirement. The letter stated the Respondent’s “application for CAC-AD/S” could not be processed because the Board had not received “recent ethics credits.” The letter included the signature of the Board’s licensure coordinator.

12. On or about December 2, 2019, while the Vice President was in the Organization's office, the Vice President noticed a piece of Board letterhead left by the copying machine. The Vice President reviewed video footage from the Organization's security camera for the previous day, where he saw the Respondent make multiple trips to the copying machine. He also observed the Respondent take a bag of trash to the dumpster. The Vice President retrieved the bag of trash and found torn up pieces of other attempts to forge the letter.

13. The Vice President sent the letter to the Board's licensing coordinator for verification. According to the Board's licensing coordinator, the letter was a forgery - the letter was on old letterhead and her signature was forged.

14. After the Vice President spoke with the Board and verified the letter was forged, the Respondent was terminated.

15. In an interview with the Board's investigator on June 5, 2020, under oath, the Respondent:

- i. Admitted she forged the letter.
- ii. Stated she has no intention of ever returning to the field of counseling.
- iii. She further stated that while she was employed at the Organization, she "ended up having to run groups. I filled in when clinicians were out, but then I ended up having to run groups of my own."
- iv. Additionally, she reported that she did not have a Board-approved supervisor for her employment at the Organization.

- v. In fact, she stated that the only time she has ever had a supervisor since initially obtaining her CAC-AD was when she was employed at the Treatment Center, the same employer that initiated the case resulting in the 2014 Consent Order. She stated that she had a supervisor for approximately five or six months at the Treatment Center before the supervisor changed to a different supervisor.<sup>2</sup> Finally, she admitted that she did not notify the Board of the change in supervisor at the Treatment Center.

### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concludes as a matter of law that the Respondent's conduct as described above constitutes violations of the Act and a basis on which to revoke the Respondent's certificate to practice as a Certified Associate Counselor – Alcohol and Drug. Specifically:

The Respondent's actions, including violating her probation and forging documentation from the Board, constitutes violation of: Health Occ. § 17-509(6) ("Willfully makes or files a false report or record in the practice of counseling or therapy"), (8) ("Violates the code of ethics adopted by the Board"), (9) ("Knowingly violates any provision of this title"), (13) ("Violates any rule or regulation adopted by the Board"), (16) ("Commits an act of immoral or unprofessional conduct in the practice of

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Board's records, the Board never received a request for approval of any supervisors or any supervision reports for the Respondent. *See supra* ¶ 4.

clinical or nonclinical counseling or therapy”), and COMAR 10.58.03.04(A)(11) and (B)(2).

### **ORDER**

Based on the foregoing, it is this 16th day of October 2020, by the Board hereby:

**ORDERED** that the Respondent’s certificate to practice as a Certified Associate Counselor – Alcohol and Drug is hereby **REVOKED**; and it is further

**ORDERED** that this is a Final Order and as such is a **PUBLIC RECORD** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. §§ 4-101-4-601 (2014).

### **NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL**

Pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 17-512(b), the Respondent has the right to take a direct judicial appeal. Any appeal shall be filed within thirty (30) days from the date of this Final Order and shall be made as provided for judicial review of a final decision in the Maryland Administrative Procedure Act, Md. Code Ann., State Gov’t § 10-222; and Title 7, Chapter 200 of the Maryland Rules of Procedure.

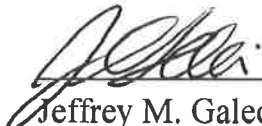
If the Respondent files an appeal, the Board is a party and should be served with the court’s process at the following address:

Danielle Vallone, Acting Executive Director  
Maryland State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists  
4201 Patterson Avenue  
Baltimore, Maryland 21215-2299  
Fax: 410-358-1610



At that point, the Administrative Prosecutor is no longer a party to this case and need not be served or copied.

October 16, 2020  
Date

  
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Jeffrey M. Galecki, MS, LCADC, LCPC  
Board Chair  
Maryland State Board of Professional  
Counselors and Therapists