

IN THE MATTER OF
HEATHER ALBERT

License Number: 32326

Case Number: 2025-3752

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BEFORE THE MARYLAND
STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL
WORK EXAMINERS

FINAL ORDER OF SUSPENSION AND PROBATION

I. Procedural History

On or about June 24, 2025 the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board") received a complaint regarding the conduct of Heather Albert, lic. No.: 32326 (the "Respondent"). The complaint alleged instances of unprofessional conduct including multiple failures to appear for client sessions as well as leaving a minor client unattended following the early conclusion of a therapy session.

The Board opened an investigation into the Respondent and on April 14, 2026 issued Charges Under the Maryland Social Workers Practice Act (the "Charging Document") (State's Ex. 23), charging the Respondent with multiple violations of the Board's Practice Act (the "Practice Act") codified at Annotated Code of Maryland Health Occupations ("Md. Code Ann. H.O.") §§ 19-101 *et seq.*

The Charging Document charged the Respondent with the following violations of the Practice Act:

H.O. § 19-311

(4) *Commits any act of gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct in the*

practice of social work;

...

- (5) *Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work;*

...

- (6) *Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board;*

...

- (20) *Fails to maintain adequate patient records[.]”*

H.O. § 19-402

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

...

- (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”, “LMSW”, “LCSW”, or “LCSW-C”.*

The Charging Document also alleged violations of the following portions of the Board’s regulations:

COMAR 10.42.03.03 Responsibilities to Clients.

A. The licensee shall:

(3) Notify the client promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or continuation of service in relation to the client's need or preference if the licensee anticipates the termination or interruption of service;

(4) Prepare and disseminate to an identified colleague or record custodian a written plan for the transfer of clients and files in the event of the licensee's incapacitation, death, or termination of service; and

(5) Maintain documentation in the client's record which:

(a) Is legible;

(b) Accurately reflects the services provided, including treatment plans, treatment goals, and contact notes;

(c) Indicates the time and date the services were provided;

(e) Is sufficient and timely to facilitate the delivery and continuity of future services;

COMAR 10.42.03.06 Standards of Practice

A. Professional Competence. The licensee shall:

(7) Document and maintain appropriate and accurate records of professional service, supervision, and research work;

B. A licensee may not:

(1) Undertake or continue a professional relationship with a client when the competence or objectivity of the licensee is or could reasonably be expected to be impaired due to:

(a) Mental, emotional, physiological, pharmacological, substance abuse, or personal problems;

On July 10, 2026 the Board sent the Respondent a hearing notice (State's Ex. 24) advising the Respondent that a virtual hearing in the above captioned matter was scheduled for August 14, 2026 at 1:30pm. The notices were sent through the US Postal Service and certified mail. The Board sent the notice to the address the Respondent had on file with the Board.

On August 14, 2026 with a quorum of the Board present, the Board conducted an evidentiary hearing. The Board conducted the hearing pursuant to H.O. § 19-312, the Board's regulations governing hearings located at COMAR 10.42.04 *et seq.* An Administrative Prosecutor was present on behalf of the State. The Respondent did not attend.

STATE'S EXHIBITS

<u>EXHIBIT NUMBER</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE NUMBERS</u>
1	JOB APPLICATION	1-2

2	JOB DESCRIPTION	3-5
3	OFFER LETTER	6-15
4	SUPERVISION CONTRACT	16
5	CLINICAL SUPERVISION AGREEMENT	17-19
6	CLINICAL SUPERVISION NOTES	20-22
7	CORRECTIVE ACTION FORM	23-24
8	COMPLAINT	25-29
9	TEAMS CORRESPONDENCE	30-32
10	OATH FOR ORAL TESTIMONY - P.T.L. ¹	33
11	INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – P.T.L.	34-51
12	MARYLAND LICENSE VERIFICATION	52

¹ For privacy purposes, the names of individuals and facilities have been withheld and replaced with anonymous identifiers. The Respondent was provided with the identities of all witnesses and the names of facilities involved in the complaint.

13	2024 LCSW-C APPLICATION	53-55
14	GEORGIA LICENSE VERIFICATION	56-57
15	SUBPOENA TO FACILITY 1	58
16	FACILITY 1 RECORDS	59-108
17	LETTER OF RESPONSE	109-113
18	INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH RESPONDENT	114-136
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21	<i>CURRICULUM VITAE</i> FOR J.S.	139-142
22	EXPERT REPORT	143-150
23	NOTICE OF CHARGES UNDER THE SOCIAL WORKERS PRACTICE ACT	151-164
24	NOTICE OF HEARING, JULY 10 2026	165

RESPONDENT'S EXHIBITS

None.

STATE'S WITNESSES

1. Mary McLaughlin, Board Investigator
2. P.T.L.
3. J.S.

RESPONDENT'S WITNESSES

None.

II. FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board makes the following findings of fact based upon the entirety of the record:

1. On September 25, 2024 the Board issued the Respondent a LMSW license to practice social work in Maryland under license number 32326. (State's Ex. 12, p. 52)
2. On October 26, 2024 the Respondent submitted an application for advanced licensure seeking a "LCSW-C" license. (State's Ex. 13)
3. The Respondent used the email address "heatheralbertiscw@gmail.com" in her application. (State's Ex. 13, pg. 53)
4. In May 2025, the Respondent started working at Facility 1 under the clinical supervision of licensee P.T.L. (Transcript p. 13, ln. 1; State's Ex. 11, pg. 35)

5. The Respondent had difficulty maintaining appointments and only kept approximately twenty percent of the appointments with clients on her calendar. (State's Ex. 11, pg. 36)
6. During an audit of the Respondent's appointments, P.T.L. discovered that there was "zero documentation on any patient...there were no notes at all." (State's Ex., 11, pg. 36)
7. The Respondent was also observed being "disorganized" and raised concerns around clinical care. (Transcript p. 18)
8. P.T.L. observed the Respondent "not showing up for her scheduled work hours...checking in patients late after the scheduled appointment time; having patients leave from the appointments early; and again, no documentation." (State's Ex. 11, pg. 36)
9. P.T.L. also recalled the Respondent sharing increasingly strange personal stories. (State's Ex. 11, pg. 37)
10. P.T.L. was "deeply concerned" the Respondent was having a break from reality after one particular conversation with the Respondent over an internal messaging app used at Facility 1. (State's Ex. 11, pg. 37; State's Ex. 9)
11. P.T.L. recalled the Respondent making statements about being physically targeted at work and a "terroristic possession" which raised additional concerns. (State's Ex. 11, pg. 37; State's Ex. 9)
12. Based on the Respondent's statements, P.T.L. asked the Respondent to visit Facility 1 in order to "physically assess" the Respondent to make sure the Respondent was "fit for duty." (State's Ex. 11, pg. 37)
13. P.T.L. observed the Respondent at Facility 1 and concluded that the Respondent "was in a place where...she was ready." (Transcript p. 24, ln. 8-10)
14. After appearing at Facility 1 and demonstrating "more clear-minded thinking" according to P.T.L., the Respondent was allowed to treat patients that day. Later that evening, the

Respondent left a minor child patient in Facility 1's waiting room unattended and exited the building. (State's Ex. 11, pg. 37)

15. P.T.L. and Facility 1 decided to terminate the Respondent's employment and held a virtual meeting with the Respondent who appeared at the virtual meeting "holding something over her chest like a towel." (State's Ex. 11, pg. 38; Transcript p. 26, ln. 15-19)
16. Between August 2025 and October 2025 the Respondent worked at Facility 2.
(Transcript p. 39, ln. 20-23)
17. While working at Facility 2, the Respondent attended a meeting at a school with school administrators wearing a bathrobe and sunglasses. (Transcript p. 36, ln. 18-22)
18. In December 2025 the Respondent met with J.S. on two occasions as part of a fitness for duty evaluation pursuant to H.O. § 19-317. (Transcript p. 48-52)
19. J.S.'s evaluation of the Respondent found that the Respondent lacked "competence in being able to practice in a professional manner." (Transcript p. 68, ln. 6-11 ; State's Ex. 22, pg. 150)

DISCUSSION

The Respondent's Evidence

None

The State's Evidence

The State presented testimony and documentary evidence indicating the Respondent had difficulty maintaining appointments with clients, recording notes where required and

exhibited behavior concerning enough that the Respondent's supervisor met with the Respondent to assess her fitness to continue working with clients. (State's Ex, 11 pg. 37; Transcript p. 13, 18, 24-26)

The Respondent did not complete the notes required under COMAR 10.42.03.03 as indicated by testimony from P.T.L. that there was "no documentation" when P.T.L. conducted an audit on the Respondent's appointments. (State's Ex. 11, pg. 36) The regulations are clear that licensees *shall* maintain documentation that is legible, reflects the services provided, the time the services were provided and is sufficient to facilitate the delivery and continuity of future services. COMAR 10.42.03.03. There is no question the Respondent failed to maintain the documentation required under regulations and Practice Act. H.O. § 19-311(20)

The Respondent used an email address with the abbreviation "lcsw" in the title. (State's Ex. 13, pg. 53) At the time the Respondent used the "lcsw" abbreviation, she was only licensed as an LMSW. (State's Ex. 12, pg. 52) Under H.O. § 19-402 a person is prohibited from using any title, abbreviation, sign, card or *other representation* that the person is either a licensee or a specific level of licensee. H.O. § 19-402. The Respondent utilized the "lcsw" abbreviation without holding a LCSW license and is in violation of the Practice Act.

The Respondent's decision-making, including leaving a minor unattended and exiting Facility 1 and attending a meeting at a school in a bathrobe and sunglasses, are examples of gross negligence, incompetence or misconduct in the practice of social work and also indicate the Respondent's lack of competence and deviation from generally accepted professional standards of social work practice. (Transcript p. 26, ln. 15-19; p. 36, ln. 18-22; State's Ex. 11, pg. 38)

The Board places great weight on the evaluation from J.S. who was admitted as an expert in the area of professional standards of social work including professional competence and social work forensic examinations. (Transcript p 47, ln. 10-15) Based on J.S.'s evaluation, the Respondent was not competent to practice in a professional manner. This expert opinion

was introduced into evidence unopposed and is the only expert opinion regarding professional competence before the Board. (State's Ex. 22)

The Board also finds that leaving a minor unattended following a session is so clearly a grossly negligent or incompetent act that the Board did not require expert testimony to conclude the Respondent violated the Practice Act.

Based on the preceding analysis, the Board will find the Respondent has violated the charged portions of the Practice Act and the Board's Regulations.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the preceding analysis, the Board finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the Respondent violated the following portions of the Practice Act: H.O. § 19-311(4), (5), (6), (20) and H.O. § 19-402. The Board also finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the Respondent violated the following portions of the Board's regulations: COMAR 10.42.03.03A(3), (4),(5), COMAR 10.42.03.06A(7) and COMAR 10.42.03.06B

DETERMINATION OF SANCTION

The Board's guidelines for the violations in the instant case range from probation for one year and a \$1000 or both to revocation, a \$10,000 or both. COMAR 10.42.09.04.

The Board has taken into account any aggravating and mitigating factors involved in this case pursuant to COMAR 10.42.09.05.

Among the mitigating factors in the Respondent's favor, the Board finds that there is no prior disciplinary history.

The Board also finds there are aggravating factors at issue in this case including the violation being committed with gross negligence or recklessness, the violation having the

potential to cause serious patient or public harm and the violations being part of a pattern of detrimental conduct.

The aggravating factors outweigh the mitigating factors which leads the Board to issue a sanction above the minimum. The Respondent cannot be permitted to treat members of the public unless and until it is safe for her to do so. Therefore, the Board will suspend the Respondent's license.

ORDER

Based upon the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law it is hereby

ORDERED that the Respondent's license to practice social work, license number 32326 is hereby **SUSPENDED FOR A MINIMUM PERIOD OF ONE (1) YEAR**; and it is further

ORDERED that during the period of suspension the Respondent shall engage in a regular course of therapy with a Board-approved mental health provider at intervals determined by the mental health provider; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall submit to a Board-approved fitness to practice evaluation and provide the results to the Board within **FORTY-FIVE (45) DAYS** of any petition to lift the suspension in this case, and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall not petition to lift the suspension in this matter for at least **ONE (1) YEAR** and that the Board shall not consider early termination of this suspension; and it is further

ORDERED that the Board may require the Respondent to appear before the Board pursuant to the Respondent's petition to lift the suspension in this case; and it is further

ORDERED that the Board shall have sole discretion in determining whether to lift the suspension in this case; and is further

ORDERED that if the Board lifts the suspension in this case, the Respondent's license shall be placed on **PROBATION FOR A MINIMUM PERIOD OF TWO (2) YEARS, AND THAT THE BOARD SHALL DETERMINE THE CONDITIONS FOR PROBATION IN A SEPARATE ORDER**; and it is further

ORDERED that failure to comply with the terms and conditions of this Order constitutes a violation of the Order. The Board, in its discretion, after notice and an opportunity for a Show Cause hearing before the Board, may impose any appropriate sanction under the Act; and it is further

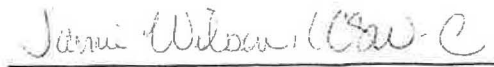
ORDERED that the Respondent shall bear all costs associated with this Order; and is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall comply with the Maryland Social Workers Practice Act and all laws, statutes and regulations pertaining thereof; and it is further

ORDERED that the effective date of this Order is the date that it is signed by the Board; and it is further

ORDERED that this Order is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. §4-333(b)(7).

9/24/2026



Date

Jamie Wilson, LCSW-C
Board Chair

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by a Final Decision of the Board under Md. Code Ann., H.O. §19-311 may file a petition for judicial review in the Circuit Court within thirty (30) days pursuant to Md. Code Ann. H.O. §19-313, State Gov't §10-222, and Title 7, Chapter 200 of the Maryland Rules, including Md. Rule 7-203 ("Time for Filing Action").