

IN THE MATTER OF

\* BEFORE THE MARYLAND

LORENZO COOPER, LMSW

\* STATE BOARD OF

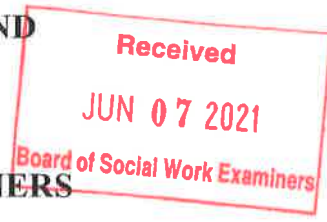
RESPONDENT

\* SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

License Number: 22439

\* Case Numbers: 2020-2813  
2020-2777

\* \* \* \* \*



**CONSENT ORDER**

On or about March 15, 2021, the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board") charged **LORENZO COOPER, LMSW** (the "Respondent"), License Number 22439, with violating the Maryland Social Workers Act (the "Act") codified at Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. §§ 19-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2020 Supp.).

The pertinent provisions of the Act provide the following:

§ 19-311. Grounds for license denials, discipline

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

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Board finds the following facts:

## **I. Background**

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was licensed to practice masters social work in the State of Maryland. The Respondent was initially licensed as a master social worker (“LMSW”) in Maryland on or about December 5, 2016 under license number 22439. The Respondent’s license expires on October 31, 2022.

2. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was employed at an organization (the “Organization”)<sup>1</sup> that has a contract with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services to provide residential care at a group home (the “Group Home”) and services to youth referred by the Department of Juvenile Services. Those services include behavioral services, mental health services, and social work services.

3. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was also employed at a Maryland Circuit Court’s Juvenile Division as a case coordinator.

## **II. Complaints**

4. The Board received a complaint (“Complaint #1”) dated February 1, 2020, from the executive director of the Organization (“Executive Director”) alleging that the Respondent had an inappropriate relationship with a male client (“Client #2”).

5. Based on Complaint #1, the Board began an investigation in case number 2020-2777.

6. The Board received a second complaint (“Complaint #2”) dated February 10, 2020, from a Circuit Court’s juvenile court service coordinator (“Juvenile Court

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of ensuring confidentiality, health care facility and proper names have been omitted and replaced with generic placeholders. Upon written request, the Administrative Prosecutor will provide the information to the Respondent.

Service Coordinator”), also alleging that the Respondent had an inappropriate relationship with Client #2.

7. Based on Complaint #2, the Board began an investigation in case number 2020-2813.

### **III. Board Investigation**

8. In furtherance of its investigations, the Board obtained records from Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Juvenile Services, and conducted interviews.

9. According to the Board investigator’s interview of the Juvenile Court Service Coordinator, a young woman with whom Client #2 has a minor child (Client #1) received services through the Circuit Court Juvenile Division’s adolescent girls’ group. According to the Respondent, he worked with Client #1 through her anger management group.

10. According to the records received, Client #2 resided at the Group Home from October 2016 to January 2018. According to the Respondent, he was the case manager at the time Client #2 resided at the Group Home and that is how he met Client #2.

11. On or about December 19, 2019, Client #1 reported to the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services that the Respondent was engaging in an inappropriate relationship with her son’s father (Client #2).

12. After the Department of Juvenile Services received the report, the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Juvenile Services initiated an investigation.

13. During the course of the Office of the Inspector General's investigation, Client #2 was interviewed. During Client #2's interview he reported that the Respondent was "helping (him) get food stamps and fill out job applications," the Respondent would give him "money for food . . . usually \$40-\$60."

14. During the course of the Office of the Inspector General's investigation, the Respondent was interviewed. During the Respondent's interview he reported that he became "closely connected" to Client #2 after Client #2 turned 18; Client #2 spent the night at his house one time; and he has assisted Client #2 financially for items such as food and diapers but has not provided Client #2 with a "lump sum" of money.

15. During the course of the Office of the Inspector General's investigation, a written statement dated December 24, 2019, was obtained from the Respondent. As part of the written statement the Respondent provided the following, in part:

....

During the time of [Client #2's] discharge, he expressed a desire to return home but stated that his mother was not prepared at the moment for him to transition home. This Writer stated that he would assist him with stabilizing during his transition back home. This Writer maintained contact with [Client #2] irregularly until the summer time. During the summer he disclosed that he had gotten his girlfriend [Client #1] pregnant . . . . Throughout the summer, [Client #2] would contact me when things were going amiss at home or between him and his girlfriend. . . . Around his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, he had contacted this Writer after [Client #1] had called the police on him after they had gotten into a fight. This Writer provided him with shelter (not an overnight stay) during this event simply to give him time to collect his thoughts and address the matter maturely. . . . This Writer maintained contact with [Client #2] on a platonic level. He was allowed to come to my house when he was hungry or needed a place to

stay. . . . When things became stressful at wherever he was staying he would come to my house.

August of 2019, [Client #2] began to communicate with this Writer by Facebook. [Client #2] had remained in contact with this Writer since August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 almost every day. We became close platonically and I referred to him as my "family"

Fast forward to October 2019, [Client #2] was arrested once more . . . . . This Writer offered him residency until his court date. This Writer began to look into housing for him because at this point he was homeless.

. . . . .

. . . December 15, 2019, he gets into an argument with [Client #1] and she put him out. He inquired if I was home, but I had informed him that I was ill and honestly was not in any position to entertain company. He offered to take care of me but I told him that I appreciated the gest and that I would contact him when I recovered. I had invited him to spend Christmas with my family. . . .

On December 19, 2019, I reached out to him stating that I hope things were okay and that I would be seeing him the coming weekend . . . . It was at this point I thought his page was being hacked or someone had accessed his account was posing as him. The conversation was not like him so I strategically placed key terms in the conversation that only he would know the answer too. . . . Long story short, I was aware that she [Client #1] had his phone based off of the line of questioning. I responded the way I responded during the conversation, because I was well aware of whom I was talking to and I was upset that she was trying to bait me with this conversation. . . . It should be noted that [Client #2] only spent the night at my house once . . . . I pride myself with always being available to the young men well after they have been discharged some more than others. . . .

16. The Respondent acknowledged giving his Facebook messenger contact information to Client #2 while he was a client at the Organization. However, the Respondent denied being a “friend” of Client #2.

17. In a written statement provided to the Board dated June 12, 2020, the Respondent stated in part:

. . . My position was that of a case manager. . . . When [Client #2] transitioned home, he reached out to me to assist him with accessing employment and other supportive measures. . . . During his residency at [the Group Home], he was never a guest at my home. . . . When [Client #2] transitioned to his home, he did reach out to me periodically to assist him with filling out applications for employment, housing and other resources. . . . When [Client #2] accessed me by Facebook it was because he did not have a working phone and that was the easiest way for him to contact me. During his conversations with me, he was never inappropriate nor did he mention having romantic feelings towards me. The reason I responded to [Client #1] during her messenger conversation in which she was attempting to portray [Client #2] was because I was aware that someone else was using his page. . . . The reason I was aware was because I had been speaking to him and the nature of our conversations was never sexual. [Client #2] only accessed me via messenger to inform me if something was going on with regards to him residing with his mother, having any issue with his girlfriend and/or him needing some assistance with his baby. He did not need to have a conversation about his feelings for me over Facebook messenger when he could access me at the courthouse or in my neighborhood. I was aware that this was not [Client #2] and I definitely was misrepresenting myself, because I felt like someone was invading my personal space and playing childish games. . . . I suspected his girlfriend, but did not receive confirmation until the evening of December 19, 2019. . . .

. . . . I spent almost 3 years working with [Client #2]. I will NEVER see any of my client’s without. I have told my clients that should they need me they can access me for assistance,

and I will [sic] help out in any way shape or form that I can. . . .

18. In an interview with the Board's investigator on August 3, 2020, the Respondent reported the following under oath:

- a. At the time of the incidents, he was employed part-time at the Group Home as the case manager, and full-time at a Circuit Court's Juvenile Division as a case coordinator.
- b. He met Client #1 when he "worked with [Client #1] in a capacity of facilitator of an anger management group that she participated in."
- c. He met Client #2 when Client #2 was a resident at the Group Home where the Respondent was the case manager.
- d. After Client #2 was discharged from the Group Home he continued to maintain contact with the Respondent.
- e. The Respondent gave Client #2 his telephone number and his Facebook contact information.
- f. He communicated with Client #2 through Facebook. His Facebook messenger name was Bleu Waters and Client #2's Facebook messenger name was Adonis.
- g. When the Respondent reached out to Client #2 on Facebook on December 19, 2019, he realized he was not actually communicating with Client #2 based on the sexual nature of the correspondence. He decided to maintain the conversation in order to see whether it was

someone Client #2 knew or whether it was someone that hacked Client #2's account. Based on the conversation he realized that he was conversing with Client #1 posing as Client #2. He further explained that in the conversation he was "being sarcastic" and "was being facetious the entire time because I knew this was not him." Later Client #2 contacted the Respondent from jail and confirmed the Respondent's suspicion that Client #1 was posing as Client #2.

- h. The Respondent admitted that he still communicates with Client #2 and the last time he communicated with Client #2 was two weeks ago.
- i. In addition to communicating with Client #2, Client #2 has also been to the Respondent's house. On one occasion after Client #2's girlfriend kicked him out of their house, Client #2 spent the night at the Respondent's house. On another occasion, Client #2 brought his son to the Respondent's house for a visit. The Respondent, however, asserted that he has "never invited [Client #2] to my home."
- j. Finally, the Respondent proclaimed that his actions were not unethical or unprofessional, he did not cross boundaries, and he did not engage in a dual relationship. He further stated, "I don't believe that I did anything wrong. I don't believe that, that I violated . . . the social work code of ethics." He explained that his interactions with Client #2 were not a dual relationship "because I understand what a



dual relationship is. It wasn't a social dual relationship because I was not on his level to be a friend. He hasn't experienced any of the things that I've experienced . . . . the only time he contacted me was when he was going through some sort of issue that he needed some solutions to or needed someplace to vent, that was it. It wasn't a . . . business relationship or professional relationship."

### 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 generally, constitutes violations of the Act and the regulations adopted by the Board as cited above.

### ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is hereby by a majority of the Board members considering this case

**ORDERED** that the Respondent is **REPRIMANDED**; and it is further

**ORDERED** that the Respondent's license to practice social work in the State of Maryland is **SUSPENDED** for a period of **THIRTY (30) DAYS**; and it is further

**ORDERED** that the Respondent is placed on Board-supervised **PROBATION** for a period of at least **THREE (3) YEARS** and until the following terms and conditions are fully and satisfactorily complied with:

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

2. Within 6 months of the effective date of the Consent Order, the Respondent shall submit documentation to the Board showing that he has successfully completed a course, approved by the Board in advance, in professional ethics. The course shall not count towards the Respondent's Continuing Education requirements for renewal of licensure;

3. Within 6 months of the effective date of the Consent Order, the Respondent shall submit documentation to the Board showing that he has successfully completed a course, approved by the Board in advance, in professional boundaries. The course shall not count towards the Respondent's Continuing Education requirements for renewal of licensure;

4. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of the Consent Order, the Respondent shall engage the services of a supervisor whom he has chosen from a list of Board-approved supervisors that the Board shall provide to him. The focus of the supervision shall include, but is not limited to, professional boundaries and ethics. The Respondent shall make his records available for inspection by the supervisor, and the Respondent shall meet with the supervisor, in person, once per month for at least 60 minutes;

5. During the probationary period the supervisor may make a written request to the Board to reduce or modify the terms of the supervision as the supervisor deems appropriate. Whether to grant such a request is solely within the Board's discretion;

6. The supervisor shall supply the Board with quarterly, written reports on the Respondent's practice. The Respondent shall provide the supervisor with a copy of this Consent Order prior to their initial meeting, and the Board may release to the supervisor any portion of the investigative file as is deemed necessary by the Board and/or the supervisor, provided that a copy of the investigative file is also released to the Respondent;

7. A negative report from the supervisor, as determined in the sole discretion of the Board, constitutes a violation this Consent Order;

8. The Respondent shall abide by any and all recommendations made by the supervisor. Failure to cooperate and failure to abide by the supervisor's recommendations shall be deemed a violation of Order; and

9. 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 the Respondent shall not serve or continue to serve as: a Board-authorized sponsor, presenter, and/or trainer of social work continuing education learning activities, an ethics tutor, an evaluator for the Board, or a Board-approved supervisor for a period of 5 (five) years from the effective date of this Consent Order; and it is further

**ORDERED** that after three (3) years from the date of this Consent Order, 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** the Board will not consider any application for advanced licensure from the Respondent during the probationary period; and it is further

**ORDERED** that if the Respondent violates any of the terms and conditions of 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, said allegations of violation of the terms and condition of this Consent Order shall be proven by a preponderance of the evidence; 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. Code Ann., State Gov't §§ 10-611 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol.), and is reportable to any entity to which the Board is obligated to report.

06/11/2021



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Date

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Gerard Farrell, Board Chair  
Maryland State Board of Social Work  
Examiners

**CONSENT**

I, Lorenzo Cooper, LMSW, 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

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.

6/4/2021  
Date

Lorenzo Cooper, LMSW  
Lorenzo Cooper, LMSW  
The Respondent

**NOTARY**

STATE OF Maryland

CITY/COUNTY OF: Baltimore

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 6/4/2021 day of June 4, 2021, before me, a Notary Public of the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Lorenzo Cooper, LMSW, and gave oath in due form of law that the foregoing Consent Order was his voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS, my hand and Notary Seal.

Nina N. Robinson

Notary Public

My commission expires:

