

IN THE MATTER OF HEATHER MARIE EASTER, LCSW-C RESPONDENT License Number: 13126	* * * * *	BEFORE THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS Case Number: 18-2584
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CONSENT ORDER

On June 14, 2019, the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (the “Board”) charged **HEATHER MARIE EASTER, LCSW-C** (the “Respondent”), License Number **13126**, with violating various provisions of the Maryland Social Workers Act (the “Act”) codified at Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. (“Health Occ.”) §§ 19-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2018 Supp.).

The pertinent provisions of the Act provide the following:

§19-311 – Denials, reprimands, suspensions, and revocations – Grounds.

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:

- (5) Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work; [and]
- (6) Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board[.]

The pertinent provisions of COMAR, the code of ethics, provide the following:

COMAR 10.42.06.03. Continuing Education Requirements.

- A. The Board shall renew a license for an additional 2-year period if the social worker:
 - (1) Completes 40 (30 for Licensed Bachelor Social Workers) continuing education units within the renewal period, of which a minimum of:

Easter, Heather Marie
License # 13126
Consent Order

- (a) 20 (15 for Licensed Bachelor Social Workers) continuing education units shall be obtained from approved programs which are Category I;
 - (b) 3 of the required Category I or Category II continuing education units shall have a content area focusing on ethics and professional conduct, including boundary issues, or pertaining to the standards of practice and laws governing the profession of social work in Maryland; and
 - (c) For registered and Board-approved supervisors, 3 of the required Category I or Category II continuing education units shall have a content area focusing on supervision as stipulated in COMAR 10.42.08.04A(2)(c);
- (2) Submits an application as set forth in COMAR 10.42.01 attesting to completion of the required continuing education units in approved programs; and
 - (3) Completes the required continuing education units within a 2-year period as set forth in §B of this regulation.

B. Time Frame.

- (1) Renewed licenses are valid for a 2-year period from November 1 through and including October 31, during which time continuing education units may be earned.
- (2) Continuing education units obtained in one renewal period may not be carried over to the next renewal period.

On July 15, 2019, the parties appeared at a Case Resolution Conference (“CRC”) before a committee of the Board. The Respondent, represented by counsel, and the Administrative Prosecutor assigned to the case participated in the CRC. As a result of the negotiations at the CRC, the parties agreed to the following Consent Order consisting of Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board finds that:

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was licensed to practice clinical social work in the State of Maryland, License No. 13126. The Respondent was initially licensed to practice clinical social work in Maryland on or about May 12, 2006, and her license is currently active with an expiration date of October 31, 2020.
2. The Respondent was included in a Post Renewal Continuing Education Audit (“Audit”) conducted by the Board on licenses requiring renewal by October 31, 2016. As a condition of licensure, licensed social workers are required to obtain forty (40) credit hours of Continuing Education Units (“CEUs”) every two years in programs and categories approved by the Board, in accordance with Health Occ. § 19-309(d)(3)(ii) and COMAR 10.42.06.03. The CEUs may all be in Category I but may not consist of more than twenty CEUs in Category II. A minimum of three CEU’s, of the required forty CEU’s shall focus on ethics and professional conduct, including boundary issues.
3. All licensees are required to sign a statement on the renewal application attesting to having completed this requirement.
4. On or about January 4, 2017 the Respondent was mailed a letter from the Association of Social Work Boards (“ASWB”) on behalf of the Board stating that she was randomly chosen as a part of the Audit. This letter requested that the Respondent supply continuing education documentation within thirty days of the letter.
5. On or about January 29, 2017, the Respondent submitted the requested documentation to ASWB.

Easter, Heather Marie
License # 13126
Consent Order

6. ASWB conducted an initial review of the Respondent's documentation and found that it was not in compliance.
7. On or about February 8, 2017, ASWB sent a letter titled "2016 Post Renewal Audit -- Problem Notice" to the Respondent explaining that some of her CE activities were not in compliance because they were not pre-approved activities.
8. On or about February 13, 2017, the Respondent sent an email to ASWB addressing the issues identified in the Audit.
9. On or about February 16, 2017, ASWB sent a second "2016 Post Renewal Audit- Problem Notice" to the Respondent stating her explanation has been received and her audit file will be forwarded to the Board.
10. The Board's staff reviewed the Respondent's file and determined that three of the trainings listed on the Respondent's "Continuing Education Report Form -- 2016 Post Renewal Audit" were offered by non-approved sponsors. In addition, the documentation the Respondent provided for Peer Case Conference did not contain enough information and was therefore not in compliance.
11. A review of the Respondent's CEU certificates by the Board's Continuing Education Office revealed that the Respondent completed 12.50 credit hours of Category I Continuing Education Units and 13 credit hours of Category II Continuing Education Units-far short of the 40 CEUs required. Therefore, the Respondent did not meet the continuing education requirements and failed the Audit.
12. On or about May 30, 2019, the Respondent submitted to the Board, documentation from two approved continuing education providers totaling 14.50 hours of continuing

Easter, Heather Marie
License # 13126
Consent Order

education units. (4/25/2019 – Provider1, 6.25 hours; 5/9/2019 – Provider1, 6.25 hours;
5/30/2019 – Provider 2, 2.0 hours)

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concludes as a matter of law that the Respondent violated Health Occ. § 19-311 (5) and (6), and COMAR 10.42.06.03.

ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is this 8th day of August, 2019, by a majority of the quorum of the Board considering this case hereby:

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

ORDERED that the Respondent shall pay a fine in the amount of **FIVE HUNDRED dollars (\$500)** by certified check or money order to the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners. The fine shall be paid within ninety (90) days of the date of this order; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent will automatically be audited during the next license renewal cycle; 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 years from the effective date of this Consent Order; and it is further

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

Easter, Heather Marie
License # 13126
Consent Order

ORDERED that for purposes of public disclosure, this Consent Order is considered a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Provisions, §§ 4-101 *et seq.* (2014) and is reportable to any entity to whom the Board is obligated to report.¹

8/9/19
Date


Sherryl Silberman, LCSW-C,
Board Chair
Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners

¹ This includes the Board's public website and NPDB.

Easter, Heather Marie
License # 13126
Consent Order

CONSENT

I, Heather Marie Easter, LCSW-C, License No. 13126, by affixing my signature hereto, acknowledge that:

1. I am represented by counsel and I have consulted with counsel on this matter. I have knowingly and voluntarily agreed to enter into this Consent Order. By this Consent and for the purpose of resolving the issues raised by the Board, I agree and accept to be bound by the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions.
2. I am aware that I am entitled to a formal evidentiary hearing, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 19-312 (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2018 Supp.) and Md. Code Ann., State Gov't, §§ 10-201 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2018 Supp.).
3. I acknowledge the validity and enforceability of this Consent Order as if entered into after the conclusions of a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have the right to counsel, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural precautions as provided by law. I am waiving those procedural and substantive processes.
4. I voluntarily enter into and agree to abide by the terms and conditions set forth herein as a resolution of the Charges against me. I waive any right to contest the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and I waive my right to a full evidentiary hearing, as set forth above, and any right to appeal this Consent Order or any adverse ruling of the Board that might have followed any such hearing.
5. I acknowledge that any failure to abide by the conditions set forth in this Consent Order, I may be subject to further disciplinary actions, including up to revocation of my license to practice as a social worker.
6. I sign this Consent Order voluntarily, without reservation, and I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning and terms of this Consent Order.

7/18/19
Date

Heather M. Easter, LCSW-C
Heather Marie Easter, LCSW-C

Easter, Heather Marie
License # 13126
Consent Order

NOTARY

STATE OF Colorado

COUNTY OF Douglas

I **HEREBY CERTIFY** that on this 18 day of July, 2019, before me, a Notary Public of the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared **Heather Marie Easter, LCSW-C**, License Number: **13126**, and gave oath in due form of law that the foregoing Consent Order was her voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS, my hand and Notary Seal.

DeMillan
Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 06/02/2021

