

IN THE MATTER OF	*	BEFORE THE STATE
LISA A. PEASE, LCSW-C	*	BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK
Respondent	*	EXAMINERS
License Number: 10208	*	Case Nos. 13-1877; 13-1902; 14-1985

**ORDER FOR SUMMARY SUSPENSION
OF LICENSE TO PRACTICE SOCIALWORK**

The State Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board"), hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDS** the license of Lisa A. Pease, LCSW-C, (the "Respondent"), License Number 10208, to practice social work in the State of Maryland. The Board takes such action pursuant to its authority under Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-226(c)(2)(i)(2009 Repl. Vol. & 2013 Supp.), concluding that the public health safety or welfare imperatively require emergency action.

INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS¹

Based on information received by, and made known to, the Board and the investigatory information obtained by, received by and made known to the Board, and the Office of the Attorney General, including the instances described below, the Board has reason to believe that the following facts are true:

I. General Findings

1. Respondent was originally issued a license to practice social work in the State of Maryland on March 18, 1999, being issued license number 10208. Respondent

¹ The statements of Respondent's conduct with respect to the clients identified herein are intended to provide notice of the basis for the summary suspension. They are not intended as, and do not necessarily represent, a complete description of the evidence, either documentary or testimonial, to be offered against Respondent in connection with the charges.

renewed her license biannually until 2003, which license expired on October 31, 2005.

2. From November 1, 2005 to October 21, 2007, Respondent did not renew her license to practice social work in Maryland.²

3. Respondent is not, and never has been, licensed to practice social work in Delaware. (See footnote 2.)

4. On or about October 21, 2007, Respondent's license to practice social work in Maryland was reinstated.

5. Since 2007, Respondent has renewed her license biannually. Respondent last renewed her license in or about July 2013, which will expire on October 31, 2015.

6. From August 27, 2008 to May 22, 2012, Respondent was employed as a clinical social worker at a community health center ("Office A"), which also provides mental health services, in Salisbury, Maryland. For reasons set forth herein, Respondent was terminated from her position at Office A on May 22, 2012.

7. From January 24, 2008 to June 26, 2013, Respondent was employed as a clinical social worker at the private office ("Office B") of a mental health provider in Salisbury, Maryland. For reasons set forth herein, Respondent was terminated from her position at Office B on June 26, 2013.

8. From November 6, 2012 to May 21, 2014, Respondent was employed as a clinical social worker at a non-profit mental health clinic ("Office C") in Cambridge, Maryland. For reasons set forth herein, Respondent was terminated from her position at Office C on May 21, 2014.

² According to Respondent's CV, from July 2004 to November 2007, Respondent was employed as a "psychotherapist" at a for-profit counseling center in Laurel, Delaware.

9. On or about September 1, 2013, Respondent began part-time employment as a clinical social worker at a for-profit group practice ("Office D") in Salisbury, Maryland, where she is employed to date. On July 2, 2014, upon learning that the Board was investigating a complaint against Respondent, Office D informed Respondent that they would be withholding assignment of new clients until they learned the result of the investigation.

10. Since June 2013, the Board has received three complaints from clients and supervisory social work personnel from Offices A, B, and C regarding Respondent's alleged boundary violations with clients. The Board's Code of Ethics:

- a. Prohibits a licensee from exploiting a relationship with a client for personal advantage or satisfaction (Md. Code Regs. 10.42.03.03B(3));
- b. Prohibits a licensee from entering into a nonprofessional, social, or dual relationship with a client (Md. Code Regs. 10.42.03.05A); and
- c. Prohibits a licensee from engaging in sexual misconduct with either current or former clients (Md. Code Regs. 10.42.03.05C).

II. Investigative Findings Pertaining to Client A - Case No. 13-1877

11. On or about June 26, 2013, the Director of Office B submitted a complaint to the Board regarding Respondent, stating "initial attempt to correct boundary crossing and professional behavior failed." Attached to the Director's complaint was a letter from the Director to Respondent dated June 26, 2013 regarding Respondent's behavior with one of Respondent's clients, Client A,³ and a series of "text messages" between Respondent and Client A which Client A had forwarded to the Director.

12. On or about June 27, 2013, Client A, who had been seen by Respondent

³ Client names are confidential and are not used in the Order. Respondent is aware of the identity of Client A.

at Office B for counseling, submitted a complaint with the Board regarding her discomfort with "text messages" she had been receiving from Respondent which were "personal" and confrontational." Client A stated that she saved the text messages and provided them to the Director of Office B.

13. Thereafter, the Board initiated an investigation of the complaints. As part of the investigation, the Board subpoenaed Respondent's complete treatment file from Office B for Client A.

14. The "Patient Ledger" shows that Respondent met with Client A, then a 48 year old female, on fourteen (14) dates. The initial office visit was on March 18, 2013. Thereafter, Respondent billed for thirteen "psychotherapy" sessions of 45 minutes duration, initially every four or five days, and later weekly, ending on June 20, 2013.

15. In addition, during this same timeframe, Client A was seen by a psychiatrist at Office B on three occasions for "pharmacologic management."

16. Respondent's treatment records of Client A revealed a computer generated, typed "Initial Diagnostic Evaluation" and social work progress notes in which Respondent described Client A's issues with a former fiancé, transitioning out of the relationship, and her mood.

17. Client A was seen by a psychiatrist at Office B in April 2013 and on two occasions in May 2013. The psychiatrist prescribed medication for sleep and anxiety.

18. Respondent did not document a progress/termination note on Thursday June 20, 2013, the date of Client A's last psychotherapy visit with Respondent.

19. Respondent did not document having referred Client A to another therapist.

20. According to the correspondence of June 26, 2013, from the Director of Office B to Respondent, Respondent was terminated from Office B, effective June 26, 2013. In the correspondence, the Director informed Respondent of the following:

- a. He received a telephone call from Client A on (Tuesday) June 25, 2013;
- b. Client A expressed concerns about Respondent's professional behavior including the attempt on Respondent's part to establish a personal relationship with Client A outside of her therapeutic relationship. Client A conveyed to the Director her discomfort with Respondent's appearing to pressure her into a personal relationship;
- c. Client A conveyed a concern that Respondent was desirous of a romantic relationship;
- d. Client A received text messages from Respondent from (Friday) June 21, 2013 through (Monday) June 24, 2013;
- e. The Director informed Respondent that she was immediately terminated from employment at Office B; and
- f. The Director noted that Respondent failed to document all of her clinical work in the patient record.

21. The text messages from Respondent to Client A, in pertinent part, are as follows:

- a. 6/20/13 (Thursday) 9:44 pm Respondent to Client A – Hey I'm going out on a limb here and want to say that if I wasn't ur therapist id want to hang out and get to know u better....ur pretty awesome and deserve a whole lot more. I hope I'm not making u uncomfortable or upset w me...just want to be honest w u...u may hav already figured this out since u are pretty good at reading people. Anything is possible...don't wantu (sic) to make any bad decisions next time...just keep an open mind. Did (friend⁴) show up...how's it going. Let me know wjll (sic) be up for awhile. Oh and plz keep this between us...no telling (Client A's daughter)⁵ or anyone.

⁴ The name of the friend is confidential. Respondent is aware of the identity of the friend.

⁵ The name of Client A's daughter is confidential. Respondent is aware of the identity of Client A's daughter.

- b. 6/20/13 10:01 pm Respondent to Client A - sounds like ur good w boundaries...trust me and just go with the flow...life is about taking chances.
- c. 6/21/13 (Friday) 6:45 am Respondent to Client A - Mornin.....did u sleep ok last nite?
- d. Respondent to Client A - I work 9-8 today and 9-5 tomorrow then I see my therapist at 5. Even I need help too.
- e. 8:11 am Respondent to Client A - Hey do u want to meet in Easton sometime Sunday and get something to eat?
- f. 8:33 am Respondent to Client A - come on make my day!
- g. 3:24 pm Respondent to Client A - How's your day going
- h. 8:43 pm Respondent to Client A - Omg⁸ just got home....watcha doing
- i. 6/22/13 (Saturday) 7:26 pm Respondent to Client A - Hope ur day wasn't as busy as mine....if u would rather meet in kent narrows that's fine ...just let me know where and when if u still want to meet.
- j. 10:37 pm Respondent to Client A - Im sorry u hav to work so late....I really hope u can make it tomorrow.
- k. 6/23/13 (Sunday) 8:26 am - Client A to Respondent: water filter broke on the garage and its flooded... sorry but I'm gonna have to cancel
- l. 11:13 am Respondent to Client A - would be happy to come help u if u want....
- m. 1:40 pm Respondent to Client A - Is this the phone u keep on u all the time? Seriously I don't mind coming out there to help u or just hang out a bit. We both deserve a break with working so much. Hope ur situation isn't too bad w the garage...txt me when u can.
- n. 4:07 pm Respondent to Client A - Hey (client A's first name) do me a favor and tell me you are just busy or to f**k off....am having a really bad day and not knowing what's going on or hearing from us is making it worse. Hope ur just busy and haven't checked ur phone?
- o. Respondent to Client A - Get some rest and unwindjust please always be honest w me about what ur feeling or thinking....its hard to get u to open up.

⁸ Omg or OMG is shorthand for "oh my god."

- p. 6/24/13 (Monday) 8:03 pm Respondent to Client A - Thought I might hear from you today hope your day was okay can we try again for Sunday.
- q. 8:25 pm Respondent to Client A - Do u get a day off during the week when u work Saturday.
- r. Client A to Respondent - ... it got a little weird yesterday. Seems stretching over a line for a patient-therapist relationship. Also knowing you are interested in more than friends and I am not and made that clear. I am also not interested in any relationships and am feeling pressured to respond to you which is very strange. I don't think this is something I want to explore further.
- s. Respondent to Client A: Sorry got a little confused didn't mean to make u feel that way. No problem don't have to see me anymore.
- t. Respondent to Client A 8:46 pm Think u and (Client A's daughter) will be fine so I will just cx appt maybe u can find someone closer.
22. The Board's investigator interviewed Client A who stated the following:
- a. Client A initially sought counseling at Office B for her adult daughter. Client A then requested counseling for herself. Respondent saw both client A and Client A's daughter;
- b. Client A stated that Respondent revealed to Client A the names and personal information of some of her current clients;
- c. Client A had a counseling session with Respondent on June 20, 2012. Later, the same day, Client A received a text message from Respondent which Client A understood was asking client A to explore a "romantic relationship with Respondent. Client A was uncomfortable with the message;
- d. Respondent sent Client A a text message in which Respondent invited Client A to lunch on Sunday. Client A felt uncomfortable and pressured; and
- e. Respondent sent a text message to Client A abruptly ending counseling without stating why Respondent thought Client and her daughter no longer needed counseling. Client A felt "victimized" and concerned about her daughter's emotional state.

23. The Board's investigator interviewed Respondent under oath who stated the following regarding Client A:

- a. Respondent initially began treating Client A and Client A's daughter because of Client A's daughter's depression;
- b. Respondent described her relationship with Client A as "like colleagues" or a "friend";
- c. Respondent does not dispute any of the text messages she sent to Client A;
- d. Respondent did not document any of her text messages with Client A in Client A's progress notes; and
- e. Respondent did not provide Client A with a referral to a new therapist.

III. Investigative Findings Pertaining to Client B - Case No. 13-1902

24. On or about September 18, 2013, a staff member of a shelter for women and children submitted a complaint regarding Respondent to the Board, stating that on September 12, 2013, the staff member had been contacted by a woman, Client B, for domestic violence victim services. Client B informed the complainant that she had been a client of Respondent at Office A in 2012 and that after her second session with Respondent, Respondent asked her out to dinner. Thereafter, Respondent and Client B had a personal relationship during which Respondent was allegedly verbally, emotionally and physically abusive to Client B.

25. Thereafter, the Board initiated an investigation of the complaint. As part of the investigation, the Board subpoenaed the complete treatment records for Client B from Office A.

26. Respondent's treatment records from Office A in regard to Client B, then a 38 year old female, contain the following:

- a. Psychiatrist's Progress Note for Adults 12/6/08 (not legible).
- b. Informed Consent to Treatment with Medication, 3/14/12.
- c. "Therapist Progress Notes for Adults," signed and dated by Respondent on 3/8/12. Respondent completed a checklist pertaining to mental status, thought content, perceptual disturbance, delusions, suicidal ideation, insight, and patient education barriers.

Respondent diagnosed: Axis I 314.00, 300.00, Axis II none.

Respondent's assessment of Client B stated: "Reviewed events since we last met. Client was on Ritalin for awhile but it wore off too quickly so she stopped it. Client just ended a 9 ½ year relationship and moved out into her own place. She has a child with disabilities. Processed feelings about loss of the relationship with her GF.⁷ Client is looking for work again. Worked on acceptance and grieving of loss of the relationship. Client expressed herself well today. She is not suicide risk at this time."

Respondent's plan was that Client B would return to the clinic in 2 to 4 weeks and she would continue CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).

Respondent met with Client B for 45 minutes.

- d. "Therapist Progress Notes for Adults," signed and dated by Respondent on 3/20/12. Respondent completed a checklist pertaining to mental status, thought content, perceptual disturbance, delusions, suicidal ideation, insight, and patient education barriers.

Respondent diagnosed: Axis I 314.00, 300.00, Axis II none.

Respondent's assessment of Client B stated: "Reviewed events since we last met client. Is doing well. Talked about how her kids are doing with the changes that have taken place. She has been taking (illegible) to run errands once a week. Client feels 'free' now. Worked on patience and self growth. Client's son wants to move back home. Client expressed herself well today. She is not a suicide risk at this time."

Respondent's plan was that Client B would return to the clinic in 2 to 4 weeks and she would continue CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy).

Respondent met with Client B for 45 minutes.

- e. Psychiatrist's Progress Note for Adults, May 17, 2012.

⁷ GF is short for "girlfriend."

27. Respondent did not document a termination note.
28. The Board's investigator interviewed Client B under oath who stated:
 - a. Client B met Respondent in March 2012 at Office A where Client B had been a Client "for many years";
 - b. Client B was Respondent's "patient" and Respondent was her "therapist";
 - c. Client B met with Respondent for three visits at Office A;
 - d. After the third visit, Respondent called Client B and told her "I want you to check your email and will you respond to me right away so I know what you think";
 - e. Respondent sent Client B an email stating "I really like you and if there is anything you need, gas money, shopping, do not hesitate to ask me," and "asking me (Client B) out";
 - f. After the email, Respondent called Client B two days in a row;
 - g. Respondent was "very aggressive. Like I didn't respond soon enough, she started sending me text messages. Did you read the email, what are your thoughts? ... I called her Mrs. Pease at the time. And she had, you know, reminded me, I asked you to call me Lisa, so I called her Lisa, as she had asked me to";
 - h. The next day, Respondent came to Client B's apartment. "It was like a whirlwind. Like I said, she would call and she would just stop by. And before I knew it, you know, I'm in something (a relationship) that I wasn't even so sure I wanted to be in";
 - i. The relationship between Respondent and Client B became "intimate pretty much right away";
 - j. At times, Respondent wanted Client B to spend the night with her. "That was what upset her, denying her affection";
 - k. Respondent wanted to keep Client B as a client but Client B wanted to find a different therapist, which she did;
 - l. Client B has continued to see the subsequent therapist from 2012 to date;
 - m. The relationship between Client B and Respondent had a lot of "ups and downs";

- n. Respondent cosigned Client B's a lease on a house where Client B lived until on or about September 2013;
 - o. Client B ended her personal relationship with Respondent in June 2013;
 - p. In September 2013, Client B was evicted from her house;
 - q. After she was evicted, she stayed for one night with her "ex," referring to Respondent;
 - r. Client B left Respondent's home the next day at approximately 9:30 p.m. and went to the shelter because she and Respondent argued and fought; and
 - s. One of the topics they argued about was Respondent's being "forced to resign" from Office A, where Client B had been a client of Respondent, because Office A had found out that Respondent had "asked her (Client B) out."
29. Client B gave the Board investigator a copy of an electronic ("email")

exchange between Respondent and Client B, which revealed the following:

- a. From Respondent - Tuesday March 20, 2012⁸ 4:50 pm – Hi (Client's first name) It was good to see you today... I wanted to tell you that I am "family" if you know what that means... which may make it easier for you to talk about certain stuff. I don't want you to tell anyone this as I don't usually come out to my clients so you are a first ... I think you are doing great and want you to know that you deserve better... Love will come again. Life is a journey ... You are a good person I can tell and trust me you will be ok. So please feel free to write and ask me anything you want – I like to read so don't hesitate to email me what you are thinking/feeling as much as you want. I'm glad to be here for you. TTYL⁹ - Lisa

From Client B - March 20, 2102 11:05 pm- Hey Lisa...Thank you for trusting that you could share that with me. Don't worry I would never say a word to anyone. Thank you for your encouragement.

- b. From Respondent - Wednesday March 21, 2012 6:22 pm Hey (Client B's first name)...I wanted to tell you that you have a good looking son... he must get his good looks genes from you! Promise me you will call or write when you are having a rough time or a weak moment – you have to stay

⁸ March 20, 2012 was the date of Respondent's second clinical session with Client B.

⁹ TTYL is shorthand for "talk to you later."

strong and focused on what lies ahead – good things for you I promise.
Later...

- c. From Respondent - Saturday March 24, 2012 8:56 am OMG – you are something. I cant believe I found you. Cant wait to be with you and love you all over. I hope you are sleeping this morning so one of us is with it. Love the rainy days, good company and good music and whatever else. It was so good to hold you close last night and kiss you forever. Cant wait to do that again! So I have to work now but am sure I will hear from you soon. Love Lisa
- d. From Respondent - Monday March 26, 2012 8:36 am /hi sweetheart – God I miss you and cant stop thinking about you -...Love is so wonderful and you are so wonderful – I just know how I feel about you and how much I care about you and your kids. So stay strong and when you feel weak come to me baby and I will hold you up and love you back to being true to yourself...now it's your tum sweetheart to be loved like never before.- I am so there with you inside of you and loving everything I see and feel from you...And I hope you know how I feel about you cause you make me crazy – I could make love to you for days...You are beautiful baby and I miss you terribly...until I see you again.

25. Pursuant to a subpoena, the Board obtained Respondent's personnel file from Office A, which revealed the following:

- a. Respondent began full time employment on or about September 15, 2008; and
- b. On May 22, 2012, Respondent was terminated from employment at Office A for violation of her employment contract which permitted "immediate termination upon a determination ...that the Social Worker is not providing reasonably adequate patient care and that the safety of patients is being jeopardized by continuing the employment of the Social Worker."¹⁰

26. The Board's investigator interviewed Respondent under oath who stated the following regarding Client B:

- a. In March (2012) Respondent performed an intake interview and a follow-up interview of Client B;

¹⁰ Respondent's personnel file did not contain the specific reason for the termination. Respondent stated under oath to the Board investigator that when Office A became aware of her relationship with Client B, she was "asked to resign." See paragraph 27 d.

- b. Respondent acknowledged that she later had "a romantic relationship" with Client B;
- c. Respondent acknowledged that she sent an email to Client B after she performed an intake because Respondent "thought I might be able to help her get set up and get some help. I believe I asked her if she wanted to go have dinner sometime";
- d. Respondent stated that at the end of May (2012), she was asked to resign¹¹ from Office A because of her relationship with Client B. A co-worker had seen Respondent and Client A in public together and informed Respondent's supervisor;
- e. Respondent co-signed a lease for an apartment for Client B and helped Client B with the rent;
- f. Respondent did not live with Client B; and
- g. Respondent ended her relationship with Client B in June 2013.

IV. Investigative Findings Pertaining to Various Clients - Case No. 14-1985

27. On July 8, 2014, the Board received a complaint from the clinic coordinator of Office C informing the Board of a series of concerns about Respondent, including:

- a. In January 2014, Office C learned that Respondent had been giving her personal cell phone number to all of her clients at Office C. Office C learned of this when one of Respondent's clients informed staff that Respondent had texted him, around 11:45 pm, stating that she would be transferring his treatment to another therapist within Office C because Respondent did not feel that he was working hard enough toward his treatment goals. Respondent was instructed to stop using her personal phone to communicate with clients and to stop giving her personal number to her clients;
- b. Respondent requested the clinic coordinator to be her "Facebook friend." The clinic coordinator saw a picture of one of Respondent's clients posted on Respondent's Facebook wall. Respondent was instructed to cease this behavior;
- c. On March 25, 2014, Respondent used the full name of a client of Office C in front of another client of Office C;

¹¹ According to Respondent's personnel file, Respondent was terminated from Office A. See paragraph 26 b.

- d. In early May 2014, the clinical coordinator learned that one of Respondent's clients was requesting to be assigned to a different therapist. The client was transferred to the clinical coordinator. The client reported to the clinical coordinator that Respondent had informed the client that Respondent was also providing therapy for the father of one of the client's children and for the other child's mother. The clinical coordinator confirmed that these individuals were in Respondent's caseload. Respondent had failed to report to the clinical coordinator that she was seeing multiple members of a family or close relation, as required. The client told the clinical coordinator that Respondent told the client several private details about Respondent's therapy session with the client's child's father. The client also reported that Respondent took a private phone call from her lawyer and discussed her personal legal case in front of the client. The client reported that after she submitted a request for a change of therapist, Respondent contacted the client from Respondent's personal cell phone "begging" the client not to change therapists. The client stated that Respondent had covered for her by not marking her "no shows" as "no shows," offering to give the client a free phone, and calling the client from Respondent's personal phone.

28. Pursuant to a subpoena, the Board obtained Respondent's employment file from Office C, which revealed the following:

- a. Respondent began employment at Office C on November 6, 2012; and
- b. On May 21, 2014, Respondent was terminated from Office C, effective immediately, based on violation of Office C's Code of Ethics and the Social Work Code of Ethics.

V. Summary of Findings

29. Respondent's:
- a. Repetitively exploiting her relationships with clients, at least since Spring 2012 and continuing to the present, for personal advantage or satisfaction;
 - b. Entering into a nonprofessional, social, or dual relationship with her clients; and
 - c. Engaging in sexual misconduct with either current or former clients, support the Board's finding that the public health, safety, or welfare imperatively require the immediate suspension of Respondent's license to practice social work under State Gov't. Code Ann. § 10-226(c)(2) and Md. Code Regs. 10.42.04.07D(1).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing facts, the Board concludes that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively require emergency action in this case, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-2269(c)(2)(i) (2009 Repl. Vol. & 2013 Supp.).

ORDER

Based on the foregoing, it is this 28th day of July, 2014, by the Board:

ORDERED that pursuant to the authority vested by Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 10-226(c)(2), Respondent's license to practice social work in the State of Maryland is hereby **SUMMARILY SUSPENDED**; and be it further

ORDERED that a post-deprivation hearing on the **SUMMARY SUSPENSION** in accordance with Md. Code Regs. 10.42.04.07D will be held on **Friday August 8, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.** at the Maryland Board of Social Workers, 4201 Patterson Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21215; and be it further

ORDERED that at the conclusion of the summary suspension hearing before the Board, Respondent, if dissatisfied with the result of the hearing, may request within ten (10) days, an evidentiary hearing, such hearing to be held within thirty (30) days of the request, before an Administrative Law Judge at the Office of Administrative Hearings, Administrative Law Building, 11101 Gilroy Road, Hunt Valley, Maryland 21031-1301; and be it further

ORDERED that on presentation of this Order, the Respondent **SHALL SURRENDER** to Board staff the following items:

- (1) Respondent's original Maryland license 10208; and
- (2) Respondent's current renewal certificate; and be it further

ORDERED that this is a Final Order of the Board, and as such, is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. State Gov't Code Ann. § 10-611 *et seq.*

7/28/2014

Date



Mark Lannon, LCSW-C, Chair
Board of Social Work Examiners