

IN THE MATTER OF

ESTHER VANDERWAL, LCSW-C

RESPONDENT

License Number: 16047

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BEFORE THE MARYLAND BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

STATE BOARD OF

SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

Case Numbers: 2022-3248
2024-3621**CONSENT ORDER OF SUSPENSION AND PROBATION**

On December 6, 2025 the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board") issued Charges Under the Maryland Social Workers Practice Act (the "Charges") against Esther Vanderwal, LCSW-C (the "Respondent") in connection with cases 2022-3248 and 2024-3621.

On March 19, 2026 the Respondent, with the assistance of counsel, participated in a post-charge Case Resolution Conference (the "CRC"). Two members of the Board were present to represent the Board and the Administrative Prosecutor was present on behalf of the State.

On April 7, 2026 the parties advised the Board that the Respondent would accept the proposed settlement offer. Accordingly, the Board and the Respondent have entered into the following Consent Order of Suspension and Probation (the "Consent Order") to resolve both disciplinary cases before the Board.

FINDINGS OF FACT IN CASE 2022-3248

1. On May 14, 2015 the Board issued the Respondent a license to practice social work in the State of Maryland. The Respondent's license was active and in good standing at all times relevant to this case.
2. On August 20, 2018 the Respondent became a Board approved supervisor pursuant to Code of Maryland Regulations ("COMAR") 10.42.08.07.
3. As a Board approved supervisor, the Respondent was responsible for certain tasks, including but not limited to, completing a supervision verification form and

providing a written evaluation of any supervisee under their supervision to the supervisee every six (6) months.

4. At all times relevant to this case the Respondent owned Social Work Practice A¹ ("SW Practice A") in St. Mary's County, Maryland.
5. From August 2020 to May 2022 "Supervisee X" worked for Social Work Practice A. The Respondent served as Supervisee X's initial clinical supervisor before Supervisee X was assigned to a new clinical supervisor, Supervisor 2
6. Supervisee X requested, but did not receive, a copy of their supervision contract. Supervisee X also requested, but did not receive, their six (6) month progress written evaluations and total accounting of clinical hours.
7. In May 2022 Supervisee X submitted their resignation to Supervisor 2. Following their resignation, Supervisee X attempted to obtain documents from the Respondent, including the supervision contract, an accounting of the clinical hours and supervision verification form. The Respondent did not provide the items at Supervisee X's request.
8. Supervisee X ultimately hired private counsel to assist with obtaining the documents. After being contacted by Supervisee X's attorney, the Respondent provided the supervision contract and a log with an accounting of the supervision hours. The Respondent refused to provide the supervision verification form which was required for Supervisee X to apply for advanced licensure.

¹ For the purpose of confidentiality, names of individuals and businesses have been redacted.

9. On or about September 23, 2022 Supervisee X filed a complaint with the Board alleging that the Respondent refused to provide the record of supervision hours until Supervisee X paid \$125.00/hr of supervision that the Respondent provided.
10. On or about June 30, 2023 the Board initiated an investigation into the complaint. Pursuant to the Board's subpoena, the Board obtained and reviewed documents from SW Practice A. These documents included an employment offer letter to Supervisee X, a resignation email from Supervisee X, and emails between Supervisee X, the Respondent and Supervisor 2.
11. The employment offer letter contained language which stated SW Practice A would be reimbursed at the rate of \$125.00/hr of clinical supervision if Supervisee X separated from or was terminated by SW Practice A prior to the completion of the clinical hours required for advanced licensure.
12. On July 19, 2023 the Respondent participated in an under oath interview with the Board's investigator. The Respondent, with counsel present, admitted she did not complete the clinical supervision forms when asked, admitted to deliberately not completing or submitting the forms to the Board when asked because Supervisee had not finished the hours for advanced licensure or paid the reimbursement rate of \$125.00/hr of clinical supervision. The Respondent further admitted if Supervisee X paid the reimbursement rate of \$125.00/hr of clinical supervision, the Respondent would sign the clinical supervision forms.

FINDINGS OF FACT IN CASE 2024-3621

13. On May 14, 2015 the Board issued the Respondent a license to practice social work in the State of Maryland. The Respondent's license was active and in good standing at all times relevant to this case.
14. At all times relevant to this case the Respondent owned Social Work Practice A² ("SW Practice A") in St. Mary's County, Maryland.
15. Client R is an individual the Respondent treated between 2019 and May 2021.
16. Client R discussed their living situation with the Respondent during therapy sessions. This included Client R disclosing issues with family as well as a desire to move out of their current home. At some point prior to May 2021, the Respondent informed Client R that the Respondent purchased a home (the "Rental Property") for the Respondent's daughter to live in. The Respondent was aware that Client R previously worked with the Respondent's daughter.
17. The Respondent suggested that Client R could move into the Rental Property that Respondent purchased.
18. Client R and their partner lived in the Rental Property from May 2021 until August 2022.
19. While living in the Rental Property, the Respondent charged Client R \$1,000.00/month. Client R and their partner paid the rent via PayPal directly to the Respondent's business account.

² For the purpose of confidentiality, names of individuals and businesses have been redacted.

20. In August 2022 the Respondent served Client R a 60-day notice to vacate the Rental Property.

21. On September 26, 2024 Client R filed a complaint with the Board regarding the Respondent's conduct.

22. On or about April 10, 2025 the Respondent participated in an under-oath interview with the Board's investigator. During the interview the Respondent admitted that Client R was a client and that Respondent told Client R that the therapeutic relationship could not continue if Client R moved into the Rental Property.

DISCUSSION

The Respondent's actions in case 2022-3248 demonstrate a lack of adherence to the regulations governing Board approved supervisors. The obligations of a Board approved supervisor are enumerated in COMAR 10.42.08.07. Nowhere in the list does it include the ability for a Board approved supervisor to withhold completing documentation required under COMAR 10.42.08.07 in exchange for payment from a supervisee.

Similarly, the Respondent's actions in case 2024-3621 demonstrate a lack of adherence to the regulations governing dual relationships. COMAR 10.42.03.03 is explicit that a licensee may not exploit a relationship with a client for personal advantage, or engage in solicitation. The Respondent was aware of Client R's living situation because of information shared during treatment and leveraged that knowledge to her own benefit. COMAR 10.42.03.05 prohibits licensees from entering into a dual relationship with a client *and* terminating services in order to enter into a nonprofessional, social, or

sexual relationship with the client. The Respondent's decision to terminate therapeutic services when Client R agreed to move into the Rental Property is a clear example of what licensees are explicitly prohibited from doing.

The Respondent's actions in both cases constitute misconduct as contemplated by Code of Maryland Annotated Health Occupations ("Md. Code Ann. H.O.") §19-311(4) and a violation of specific provisions of the Board's regulations as contemplated by H.O. §19-311(6). The Respondent violated the regulations located in COMAR 10.42.03.03, 10.42.03.05 and 10.42.08.07.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Pursuant to H.O. §19-311 and subject to the hearing provisions of H.O. §19-312, 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" commits any of the twenty-one actions listed in the statute.

Based on the foregoing Findings of Facts, the Board finds beyond a preponderance of the evidence that the Respondent violated the following portions of the Practice Act:

H.O. §19-311

- (4) Commits any act of gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct 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;

Based on the foregoing Findings of Facts, the Board finds beyond a preponderance of the evidence that the Respondent violated the following portions of the Board's regulations:

COMAR 10.42.03.03(B)

B. The licensee may not:

- (3) Exploit a relationship with a client for personal advantage or satisfaction;
- (4) Engage in solicitation which amounts to fraud, intimidation, or undue influence;..."

COMAR 10.42.03.05(F):

The licensee may not terminate professional services or a professional relationship with a client in order to enter into a nonprofessional, social, or sexual relationship with the client or an individual with whom the client has a personal relationship.

COMAR 10.42.08.07

C. A supervisor shall:

- (11) Complete the supervision verification form;
- (12) Provide a written evaluation of the supervisee's progress to the supervisee every 6 months;
- (13) Provide a copy of the documentation required by Regulation .04 of this chapter:
 - (a) On request by the supervisee; and
 - (b) On request, by the Board or its authorized agent; and
- (14) Comply with a Board audit of a supervisor's compliance with regard to the supervision requirements and supervisory responsibilities.

ORDER

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

ORDERED, that the Respondent's license to practice Social Work in the State of Maryland., Lic. No: 16047, is hereby **SUSPENDED for a minimum period of SIX (6) months** from the effective date of this Order; and it is further

ORDERED that the Board shall impose and suspend a fine in the amount of **ONE THOUSAND (\$1,000.00)**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent's license shall be listed as **SUSPENDED** on the Board's website for the duration of the suspension; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall petition the in writing in order to lift the suspension and that the Respondent may be required to appear before the Board or a committee of the Board to discuss the petition to lift the suspension; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall not be eligible to lift the suspension in this Order if there are either pending complaints involving similar violations found in these cases before the Board; and it is further

ORDERED that after the Respondent has successfully petitioned the Board to terminate the suspension, the Respondent's license to practice Social Work in the State of Maryland, Lic. No: 16047, shall be placed on **PROBATION** for a minimum period of **THREE (3) YEARS**; and it is further

ORDERED that within twelve (12) months of the date of this Consent Order, the Respondent shall successfully complete one Board-approved, one-on-one, ethics tutorial, equivalent to at least twelve (12) continuing education credits, focusing on the issues that gave rise to this case, specifically dual relationships and patient-therapist boundaries. After the successful completion of the ethics tutorial, the instructor shall provide the Board with a written report detailing the Respondent's participation in and completion of the course. The Respondent shall also submit a written statement to the Board stating what she has learned from the ethics tutorial. The Respondent shall not use any coursework required under this Order to fulfill any continuing education requirements mandated for licensure; and it is further

ORDERED that during the probationary period and upon gainful employment as a social worker, the Respondent shall meet at least once a month, for a minimum of three (3) clinical hours, with a Board-approved supervisor for random chart review and discussion at the Respondent's expense. At these meetings, the supervisor shall choose a random sample of at least ten (10) of the Respondent's active cases to review. The supervisor shall review the charts to determine the Respondent's compliance with documentation and record keeping standards; and it is further

ORDERED that the supervisor shall submit quarterly written reports to the Board, which shall include but not be limited to the number and type of cases reviewed, issues discussed and his/her assessment of the Respondent's compliance with documentation and record keeping standard; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall be responsible for requesting the probation supervisor submits the required documentation to the Board in a timely manner; and it is further

ORDERED that the Board has sole authority to implement any changes in supervision and retains all authority to approve any changes in supervision; and it is further

ORDERED that in the event the Respondent's probation supervisor terminates or discontinues the probation supervision for any reason, the Respondent shall immediately notify the in writing and collaborate with the Board to find a suitable replacement; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall seek the Board's preapproval for any and all coursework required under this Order by contacting the Board's Director of Compliance; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent **SHALL NOT** serve or attempt to serve as a Board approved supervisor pursuant to COMAR 10.42.07 *et seq.*, Board authorized sponsor, presenter and/or trainer of social work continuing education learning activities, an ethics tutor or an evaluator for the Board while suspended **OR** during the period of probation and that doing so, **SHALL** constitute a violation of this Order; and it is further

ORDERED that after a minimum period of **THREE (3) YEARS**, the Respondent may petition the Board in writing to terminate the probation in this Order; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent may be required to appear before the Board or a committee of the Board to discuss the petition to terminate the probation; and it is further

ORDERED, that the Respondent shall not be eligible to terminate the probation in this Order if there are either pending complaints involving similar violations found in these cases before the Board; and it is further

ORDERED that if the Board determines, after notice and an opportunity for an evidentiary hearing if there is a genuine dispute as to a material fact or a show cause hearing before the Board if there is no genuine dispute as to a material fact, that the Respondent has failed to comply with any terms or condition of probation or this Consent Order, the Board may reprimand the Respondent, place the Respondent on probation with appropriate terms and conditions, impose a civil monetary fine upon the Respondent, or suspend or revoke the Respondent's license to practice social work in Maryland; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent is responsible for any and all costs associated with complying with this Order; and it is further

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

ORDERED that this is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. Ann. Code. Gen. Prov. §4-101 et seq. (2021 Repl. Vol. & 2025 Supp.).

CONSENT

By this Consent, I acknowledge that I have read this Consent Order in its entirety and I hereby admit the truth of the Findings of Fact, and accept and submit to the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions. 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 legal counsel authorized to practice law in Maryland, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to request subpoenas for witnesses, to call witnesses on my own behalf, to introduce testimony and evidence on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections provided by law. I waive these rights, as well as any appeal rights under Maryland Code Annotated, State Government Article § 10-222.

I sign this Consent Order after having an opportunity to consult with an attorney, voluntarily and without reservation, and I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning, terms, and effect of this Consent Order.

5-14-2026
Date


ESTHER VANDERWAL, LIC. NO. : 16047

NOTARIZATION

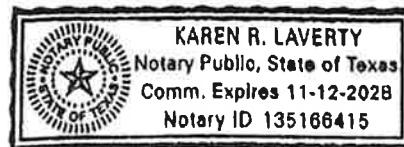
STATE OF MARYLAND CITY/COUNTY of St. Marys

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 14 day of May, 2026, before me, a Notary Public of the State and City/County aforesaid, **ESTHER VANDERWAL** personally appeared, and declared and affirmed under penalties of perjury that signing the foregoing Consent Order was her voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS my hand and Notarial Seal.

Notary Public

Karen Laverty
Karen Laverty



My Commission Expires:

11-12-2028

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BEFORE THE MARYLAND

ESTHER VANDERWAL, LCSW-C

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STATE BOARD OF

RESPONDENT

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SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

License Number: 16047

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Case Numbers:

2022-3248

2024-3621

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Consent Order of Suspension and Probation is effective on the date it was signed by the Board Chair below:

Jamie Wilson, LCSW-C

August 13, 2026

Jamie Wilson, LCSWC
Board Chair

Date