



Ontario College of
Social Workers and
Social Service Workers

Ordre des travailleurs
sociaux et des techniciens
en travail social de l'Ontario

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Discipline Decision Summaries

These summaries of the Discipline Committee's Decisions and Reasons for Decision are published either pursuant to the Discipline Committee's penalty order or with the agreement of the College member who is the subject of the Decisions.

By publishing such summaries, the College endeavours to:

- illustrate for social workers, social service workers and members of the public, what does or does not constitute professional misconduct;
- provide social workers and social service workers with direction about the College's standards of practice and professional behaviour, to be applied in future, should they find themselves in similar circumstances;
- implement the Discipline Committee's decision; and
- provide social workers, social service workers and members of the public with an understanding to the College's discipline process.

DISHONOURABLE AND UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

NORYNE GLENDA BENNETT-RILLING, RSW – Member #321214

Allegations and Plea

Neither the member nor her legal counsel was present. The member was therefore deemed to have denied the following College allegations of professional misconduct:

1. Abusing a client physically, sexually, verbally, psychologically or emotionally, when she established a personal and/or sexual relationship with the client.
2. Engaging in behaviour of a sexual nature with the client or former client when she established a personal and/or sexual relationship with the client.
3. Engaging in conduct or performing an act relevant to the practice of the profession that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional when she established a personal and/or sexual relationship with the client to whom she provided counselling and/or psychotherapy services.
4. Failing to regard the well-being of her client, as her primary professional obligation when she established and pursued a personal and/or sexual relationship with the client and, by doing so, failed to distinguish her own needs from those of her client, failed to appreciate how her needs might impact on her professional relationship with the client, placed her own needs before those of the client and failed to ensure that the client's interests were paramount.

5. Failing to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries in her professional relationship with the client when she established a personal and/or sexual relationship with the client, to whom the member provided counselling services and/or psychotherapy services. In doing so, she misused and abused her professional position of authority and engaged in conduct which could reasonably be perceived as reflecting negatively on the profession of social work.
6. Failing to ensure that professional services were provided responsibly to the client when she established a personal and/or sexual relationship with the client, a client to whom she provided counselling services and/or psychotherapy services. In doing so she placed herself in a conflict of interest situation and/or established a dual relationship with the client or former client which may have impaired her professional judgment or increased the risk of exploitation or harm to the client.
7. Engaging in the practice of social work while under the influence of any substance (namely, alcohol).
8. Including in the client's social work record statements that she knew or ought reasonably to have known, were false, misleading, inaccurate or otherwise improper; removing the contents of the client's social work record from her employer's premises (contrary to the policies of her employer) and failing to take necessary steps to protect the confidentiality and security of that record.
9. Contravening a federal law (namely, s.153(a) of the *Criminal Code*), the contravention of which is relevant to her suitability to practice the profession of social work.

The Evidence

The College provided the Discipline Committee with evidence that,

- The member is a social worker who, at all times relevant to the allegations, was employed by an Ontario regional hospital (the "Hospital") as a Child and Adolescent Crisis Worker.
- For a period of approximately 7 ½ months, during her Hospital employment, the member provided counselling and psychotherapy services to an adolescent client of the Hospital, with respect to issues of anger management, substance dependence and abuse, and difficulties regarding the client's relationship with the client's parents.
- During this period of time, the member met and had counselling sessions with the client outside of her office and outside of regular office hours. She also admits that the client lived in her home for a period of time when the client was released into her care after the client's court appearance.
- One night, during the last month in which the member provided social work services to the client, while parked in her own personal vehicle, the member:
 - a) Consumed alcohol with the client;
 - b) Provided counselling services to the client and discussed with the client what had occurred earlier that day with her, the client and the client's father;
 - c) Engaged in physical sexual relations with the client (kissing of a sexual nature); and
 - d) Failed a roadside breath demand by a police officer who had attended at that location.

- The member also took the client’s file from her office and left only an intake report, a discharge report, and a case note of her last-referred to meeting with the client and the client’s father in the file. Additionally, three days later, she inserted a note in the client’s file which indicated that the “notes” had gone missing.
- The member was subsequently charged and found guilty of touching a young person towards whom she was in a position of authority (namely, the client) for a sexual purpose, contrary to s.153(a) of the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

Finding

The Discipline Committee found that the evidence supports a finding of professional misconduct, and in particular, found that Ms. Bennett-Rilling committed the acts of professional misconduct alleged in the above paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9.

The Discipline Committee found that Ms. Bennett-Rilling “acted in a manner that showed patent disregard for the College’s Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice which are critical for Members to abide by and are, more importantly, critical for protection of the public.”

Penalty Order

The Discipline Committee made an order in accordance with the submissions of the College that,

- The member’s certificate of registration with the College be revoked; and
- The Discipline Committee’s finding and Order (or a summary thereof) be published (with identifying information relating to the client removed), in the College’s official publication, and the results of the hearing be recorded on the College Register.

The panel’s reasons for imposing these penalties were that they meet the objectives of,

- General deterrence, and send a clear message to the profession to deter College members from engaging in similar professional misconduct; and
- Specific deterrence to the member.

The Discipline Committee also found that there were no mitigating circumstances to warrant an alternate penalty.