



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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On April 14, 2022 allegations of the Member's professional misconduct were referred to the Discipline Committee for hearing, on a date yet to be fixed. Please see the Notice of Hearing below:

**ONTARIO COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS
AND SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS**

IN THE MATTER OF Sections 26 and 28 of the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998*, S.O. 1998, Chapter 31;

AND IN THE MATTER OF a hearing directed to be held by the Discipline Committee of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers under the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998*;

AND IN THE MATTER OF allegations respecting the professional conduct of Natalie Dickinson, a Social Worker and member of the said College;

NOTICE OF HEARING

TAKE NOTICE that a hearing will take place on a date to be fixed by the Registrar at the hour of 9:30 o'clock in the forenoon (or as soon after that time as a panel can be convened for the purpose of conducting the hearing) at the Board Room of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, 250 Bloor Street East, Suite 1000, Toronto, Ontario before the Discipline Committee of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. The hearing will be held pursuant to the provisions of sections 26 and 28 of the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998* (the "Act") and pursuant to the Regulations made thereunder, for the purpose of hearing and determining allegations of professional misconduct against you, Natalie

Dickinson, which allegations were referred to the Discipline Committee pursuant to section 25(1) of the Act.

AND TAKE NOTICE that you are alleged to be guilty of professional misconduct within the meaning of section 26(2) of the Act in that you are alleged to have engaged in conduct that contravenes the Act, Ontario Regulation 384/00 (the "**Professional Misconduct Regulation**"), Schedule "A" to By-law No. 66 of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, being the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Code of Ethics (the "**Code of Ethics**"), and Schedule "B" to By-law No. 66 of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, being the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Standards of Practice Handbook (the "**Handbook**")¹.

I. **The following are particulars of the said allegations:**

1. You have been registered as a social worker with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the "**College**") since before 2017.
2. Between October 2017 and May 2021, you were self-employed as a Social Worker in private practice.
3. Between in or about October 2017 and September 2018, you provided professional services to *[redacted]* (the "**Client**") in relation to the Client's anxiety, substance use and/or abuse and/or dependence, marital issues, and past experiences of trauma.
4. During that time, the professional services you provided to the Client included counselling services.
5. To your knowledge, the Client was in a vulnerable state because of her previous traumatic experiences. She experienced suicidal ideation and substance abuse issues. She was also experiencing marital and familial issues.
6. Between in or about June 2018 and September 2018, you began a personal relationship with the Client.

¹ By-law 24, as amended by By-law Nos. 32 and 48 and revoked effective July 1, 2008 by By-law 66, continues to apply to conduct which occurred prior to July 1, 2008.

7. You also developed feelings of a sexual nature towards the Client and began a sexual relationship with the Client, during the time that you were providing professional services (including counselling services) to the Client and/or after the termination of your professional relationship with the Client.
8. Between in or about February 2021 and April 2021, the Client terminated your personal/sexual relationship, stating that this relationship had a negative impact on her.
9. Your relationship with the Client negatively affected her mental health, sobriety, and marriage.
10. You engaged in boundary violations and provided professional services (including counselling services) to the Client while you were in a conflict of interest and/or a dual relationship, beginning in or about January 2018. These violations include, but are not limited to the fact that you:
 - (a) gave the Client extra attention;
 - (b) had on-going client relationships consisting of simultaneous individual and joint sessions with the Client and her spouse;
 - (c) exchanged text messages with the Client, including after regular business hours and/or without a clinical purpose;
 - (d) requested that your husband join a session with the Client without the Client's informed consent;
 - (e) arranged for your husband, a family physician, to prescribe anti-anxiety medication to the Client;
 - (f) provided your husband's contact information to the Client for the purposes of obtaining a prescription for the Client's spouse;
 - (g) told the Client that it would be good not to talk about the fact that your husband prescribed medication to her;
 - (h) permitted the Client to attend at your home for non-clinical and/or personal and/or social purposes;
 - (i) attended health and medical appointments with the Client;

- (j) acted “more like a friend than a therapist”;
- (k) stopped charging the Client for services in June 2018;
- (l) drank alcohol with the Client;
- (m) engaged in behaviours, such as the above, that led the Client to ask if you were “into her”;
- (n) allowed the Client in your home for social and/or personal purposes;
- (o) allowed the Client to go to the beach with you and your children;
- (p) had the Client take care of your children;
- (q) visited the Client while she attended for residential treatment services;
- (r) spoke with the Client by telephone and texted the Client;
- (s) went running together and/or ran a half marathon together;
- (t) went swimming together;
- (u) watched TV together;
- (v) initiated and/or engaged in a personal and/or romantic and/or sexual relationship with the Client;
- (w) engaged in touching of a sexual nature, such as kissing, hugging and sex;
- (x) told the Client something to the effect of, “this can’t come out or else I could lose my job”; and
- (y) discussed with the Client the potential need for her to get a new family doctor after you perceived a personal conflict between yourself and the family doctor;

11. You also breached confidentiality in or between September 2018 and May 2021. This included, but is not limited to the fact that you:

- (a) disclosed personal client information about [redacted] (“Client A”) and [redacted] (“Client B”), including their first names, to the Client;
 - (b) disclosed Client A’s sexual orientation to the Client;
 - (c) disclosed to the Client that you went on walks with Client A and went with Client A to the hospital;
 - (d) disclosed Client B’s diagnosis to the Client;
 - (e) disclosed details of Client B’s previous traumatic experiences to the Client;
 - (f) disclosed to the Client that Client B would text you at night when in crisis.
12. You failed to meet the standards of the profession and/or displayed poor clinical judgment including (among other things) that you :
- (a) failed to accurately portray your husband’s involvement in the Client’s care;
 - (b) failed to assume full responsibility for demonstrating that the Client has not been exploited, coerced or manipulated, intentionally or unintentionally;
 - (c) facilitated a treatment session between the Client and your husband;
 - (d) facilitated a treatment session between the Client’s spouse and your husband;
 - (e) continued to provide the Client with services despite recognizing that you did not have the necessary skills to do so;
 - (f) acted “more like a friend than a therapist” in providing services to the Client;
 - (g) failed to adequately document your text communications with the Client in your clinical record;
 - (h) failed to adequately record the Client’s history and/or failed to adequately canvas the Client’s history;

- (i) failed to accurately describe the Client's session with your husband in your clinical record;
- (j) failed to document information provided by the Client in the clinical record and failed to document interventions, assessments, and/or your formulation and plan;
- (k) failed to be knowledgeable and sensitive to imbalances of power that affected the Client; and/or
- (l) used your position of authority to improperly influence the Client.

II. It is alleged that by reason of engaging in some or all of the conduct outlined above, you are guilty of professional misconduct as set out in section 26(2)(a) and (c) of the Act:

- (a) In that you violated **sections 2.2, 2.9 and 2.10 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation and Principle I of the Handbook (commented on in Interpretations 1.5 and 1.6)** by failing to be aware of your values, attitudes and needs and how these impact on your professional relationship with your client; by failing to distinguish your needs and interests from those of your clients and to ensure that, within professional relationships, your clients' needs and interests remained paramount;
- (b) In that you violated **sections 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 2.9 and 2.10 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation and Principle II of the Handbook (commented on in Interpretation 2.1.5, 2.2, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.5, 2.2.8, 2.2.9)** by failing to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries in a professional relationship; by failing to engage in the process of self-review and evaluation of your practice and seeking consultation when appropriate; by having sexual relations with a former client; by using your professional position of authority to coerce, improperly influence, harass, abuse or exploit a client; by failing to avoid conduct which could reasonably be perceived as reflecting negatively on the profession of social work; by engaging in professional relationships that constitute a conflict of interest or situations in which members ought reasonably to have known that the client

would be at risk in any way and providing professional service to the client while you were in a conflict of interest. You failed to:

- (i) evaluate professional relationships and other situations involving clients or former clients for potential conflicts of interest and seek consultation to assist in identifying and dealing with such potential conflicts of interest;
 - (ii) avoid conflicts of interest and/or dual relationships with clients or former clients, or with students, employees and supervisees, that could impair members' professional judgement or increase the risk of exploitation or harm to clients; and
 - (iii) declare the conflict of interest and take steps to address it and to eliminate the conflict when a conflict of interest did arise;
- (c) In that you violated **sections 2.2 and 2.6 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation** and **Principle III of the Handbook (commented on in Interpretation 3.7)** by failing to assume full responsibility for demonstrating that your former client was not exploited, coerced or manipulated, intentionally or unintentionally, in a situation where a personal relationship occurred between you and a client or former client;
- (d) In that you violated **sections 2.2 and 2.5 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation** and **Principle VIII of the Handbook (as commented on in Interpretations 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.6, 8.7 and 8.8)** by failing to ensure that sexual misconduct did not occur; by engaging in sexual intercourse or another form of physical sexual relations between yourself and your client and/or former client, by engaging in touching, of a sexual nature, of your client and/or former client, and by engaging in behaviour of a sexual nature towards your client and/or former client; by developing sexual feelings towards your client and/or former client that could put the client and/or former client at risk, and failing to seek consultation/supervision or develop an appropriate plan; by failing to clearly state to the client and/or former client that behaviour of a sexual nature is inappropriate by virtue of the professional relationship and/or former professional relationship;

by engaging in sexual relations with your former client after having provided counselling services to that client;

- (e) In that you violated **sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.9, 2.10, and 2.34 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation and Principle II of the Handbook (commented on in Interpretation 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.5, 2.2, 2.2.5)** by failing to be aware of the extent and parameters of your competence and your professional scope of practice and limit their practice accordingly; by failing to inform a client of the option to be referred to another professional when a client's needs fall outside the your usual area of practice; by failing to engage in the process of self-review and evaluation of your practice and failing to seek consultation when appropriate, as part of maintaining competence and acquiring skills in social work or social service work practice;
- (f) In that you violated **sections 2.2, 2.9 and 2.10 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation and Principle III of the Handbook (commented on in Interpretation 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8 and 3.12)** by failing to notify your client of the extent, nature and limitations of services available; by failing to respond to client queries, concerns and/or complaints in a timely and reasonable manner; by failing to inform your clients of foreseeable risks as well as rights, opportunities and obligations associated with the provision of services; by providing services as a courtesy without remuneration without adhering to College standards and while acting in a conflict of interest; by failing to provide services that are relevant and conform to College standards, and/or by providing a service that you knew or ought reasonably to have known was not likely to benefit the client;
- (g) In that you violated **sections 2.2, 2.20 and 2.21 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation and Principle IV of the Handbook (commented on in Interpretation 4.1.1 and 4.1.2)** by failing to accurately record information and failing to record information in a format that facilitates monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the service/intervention; by making a statement in the record in the course of practicing the profession that you knew or ought reasonably to have known was false, misleading, inaccurate or otherwise improper;
- (h) In that you violated **sections 2.2 and 2.11 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation and Principle V of the Handbook**

(commented on in Interpretation 5.1, 5.3, and 5.3.6) by failing to comply with applicable privacy and other legislation and/or failing to obtain consent to collect, use or disclose client information including personal information, unless otherwise permitted or required by law; by disclosing information concerning or received from clients that was not subject to any exceptions contained in interpretations 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5, 5.3.6, or 5.3.7; and,

- (i) In that you violated **section 2.36 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation** by engaging in conduct or performing an act relevant to the practice of the profession that, having regard to all circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.

AND TAKE NOTICE that the Discipline Committee may make an order under Section 26(4), (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9) of the Act, or any of them, in respect of any or all of the above allegations.

AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that the parties (including the College and you) shall be given the opportunity to examine before the hearing any documents that will be given in evidence at the hearing.

AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that at the said hearing, you are entitled to be present and to be represented by counsel.

IF YOU DO NOT ATTEND AT THE HEARING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS NOTICE OF HEARING, THE DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE MAY PROCEED WITH THE HEARING, AND MAY DEAL WITH THE ABOVE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST YOU, IN YOUR ABSENCE AND WITHOUT ANY FURTHER NOTICE TO YOU.

Dated at Toronto, the 19th day of April, 2022

By: _____

Registrar and CEO

Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers