

# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF REGULATION & LICENSING



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STATE OF WISCONSIN  
BEFORE THE SOCIAL WORKER SECTION  
EXAMINING BOARD OF SOCIAL WORKERS,  
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS AND PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

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IN THE MATTER OF THE DISCIPLINARY

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST:

PAUL K. CHRISTOPHERSON,  
RESPONDENT

FINAL DECISION AND ORDER  
LS0103151SOC

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The parties to this action for the purposes of § 227.53, Stats., are:

Paul K. Christopherson, C.S.W.

1156 Emilie Street

Green Bay, WI 54301

Social Worker Section

Wisconsin Examining Board of Social Workers,

Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors

P.O. Box 8935

Madison, WI 53708-8935

Department of Regulation and Licensing

Division of Enforcement

P.O. Box 8935

Madison, WI 53708-8935

The parties in this matter agree to the terms and conditions of the attached Stipulation as the final decision in this matter, subject to the approval of the Social Worker Section. The Section has reviewed this Stipulation and considers it acceptable.

Accordingly, the Section in this matter adopts the attached Stipulation and makes the following:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Paul K. Christopherson, C.S.W., Respondent, date of birth April 20, 1957, is certified by the Social Worker Section as a social worker in the state of Wisconsin pursuant to certificate number 5708, which was first granted November 1, 1995.
2. Respondent was granted certification pursuant to the grand-parenting provisions of 1991 Act 160, § 21(2)(a)2, based upon his having been employed as a social worker at some time between May 1, 1992 and April 30, 1993. Respondent received a bachelor of science degree in recreation and parks administration from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse on August 1, 1980.
3. Respondent's last address reported to the Department of Regulation and Licensing is 1156 Emilie Street, Green

Bay, WI 54310.

4. Respondent was employed as a social worker in the Long-term Support Unit at the Brown County Department of Human Services (Department) in Green Bay, Wisconsin. As a case manager, part of Respondent's job responsibilities included creating case plans for disabled persons.

5. On August 31, 1999, Respondent was terminated from his employment at the Department following an investigation by the Department which found, among other things:

- o Respondent authorized payments by the Department totaling \$10,700 to Respondent's friend for services the friend had purportedly provided to a client, but which Respondent knew had never been provided.
- o Forged signatures on nine documents within Respondent's client case files, which Respondent submitted to the State to obtain Medicaid funding for those clients.
- o Two of the documents contained forged signatures of a parent and/or guardian purporting that they agreed with the Service Plan presented by Respondent.
- o Respondent falsely reported the current status of a client to the State in order to obtain Medicaid funding, to which the client was not entitled.

6. Following Respondent's termination from the Department, the Brown County Sheriff's Department investigated Respondent's conduct while employed at the Department. As a result of the investigation by the Sheriff's Department, on January 6, 2000, Respondent was charged in Brown County Wisconsin Circuit Court case number 00CF6 with:

- a. One count of Party to the Crime of Theft by Fraud >\$2500, a Class C felony, in violation of §§ 943.20(1)(d)&(3)(c) and 939.05, Stats.
- b. One count of Theft by Fraud >\$2500, a Class C felony, in violation of § 943.20(1)(d)&(3)(c), Stats.
- c. One count of Misconduct in Public Office, a Class E felony, in violation of § 946.12(4), Stats.
- d. Eight counts of Forgery-Uttering, a Class C felony, in violation of § 943.38(2), Stats.

7. On February 17, 2000, an amended complaint was filed against Respondent in Brown County Wisconsin Circuit Court case number 00CF6. In the amended complaint, Respondent was charged with an additional count of Theft by Employee >\$1000, a Class E felony, in violation of § 943.20(1)(b)&(3)(b), Stats.

8. The matter was set for jury trial, but on October 13, 2000, Respondent entered into a plea agreement, by which:

- a. One count of Forgery-Uttering, § 943.38(2), Stats., a Class C felony, was amended to Misconduct in Public Office, a violation of § 946.12(4), Stats., a Class E felony.
- b. Respondent pled no contest and was then found guilty and convicted of:
  - i. One count of Party to the Crime of Theft by Fraud >\$2500, a violation of §§ 943.20(1)(d)&(3)(c) and 939.05, Stats., a Class C felony.
  - ii. One count of Misconduct in Public Office, a violation of § 946.12(4), Stats., a Class E felony.
  - iii. Two counts of Forgery-Uttering, a violation of § 943.38(2), Stats., a Class C felony.
- c. One count of Misconduct in Public Office, § 946.12(4), Stats., was dismissed.
- d. The other count of Theft by Fraud >\$2500, in violation of § 943.20(1)(d)&(3)(c), Stats.; five counts of Forgery-Uttering, in violation of § 948.38(2), Stats.; and the count of Theft by Employee >\$1000, in violation of § 943.20(1)(b)&(3)(b), Stats., were all dismissed, but read into the record for purposes of consideration by the judge in determining the sentence to impose.

9. As of the date the attached stipulation was signed by the Division of Enforcement, Respondent's sentencing on the criminal charges is scheduled for March 7, 2001.

10. Party to the Crime of Theft by Fraud >\$2500, a violation of §§ 943.20(1)(d)&(3)(c) and 939.05, Stats.; Misconduct in Public Office, a violation of § 946.12(4), Stats.; and Forgery-Uttering, a violation of § 943.38(2), Stats., are all offenses the circumstances of which substantially relate to Respondent's practice of social work under his certificate.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Social Worker Section of the Wisconsin Examining Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to § 457.26(2), Stats.
2. The Social Worker Section of the Wisconsin Examining Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors has authority to enter into this stipulated resolution of this matter pursuant to § 227.44(5), Stats.
3. Respondent, by having violated laws, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the practice under his credential, has engaged in unprofessional conduct as defined by Wis. Admin. Code § SFC 20.02(2) and is subject to discipline pursuant to § 457.26(2)(f), Stats.
4. Respondent, by having been convicted of offenses, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the practice of social work, is subject to discipline pursuant to § 457.26(2)(b), Stats.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. That the surrender by Paul K. Christopherson, C.S.W., of his certificate to practice as a social worker in the state of Wisconsin is hereby accepted, effective immediately.
2. If Respondent ever petitions the Section for any certification as a social worker:
  - a. Respondent shall satisfy all requirements for that credential which are then required by statute and administrative rule.
  - b. Respondent shall notify the Division of Enforcement (Division) of the request and the Division shall have the opportunity to apprise the Section of all allegations and information contained in the investigative file.
  - c. If the Section believes that it will be of assistance to the Section in responding to Respondent's petition:
    - i. Respondent shall, at his own expense, have undergone an assessment by a mental health care practitioner, who has not treated Respondent.
    - ii. The practitioner performing the assessment must have been approved by the Section or its designee, with an opportunity for the Division of Enforcement to make its recommendation, prior to the assessment being performed.
    - iii. Respondent shall provide the Section with the practitioner's written report and provide the Section with the opportunity to discuss the evaluation and findings with the practitioner.
  - d. Following the presentation of information by the Division and review of any assessment requested by the Section, the Section may in its sole discretion elect to certify Respondent, with or without limitations, or to deny Respondent's petition.
  - e. If Respondent believes that the Section's denial of certification is inappropriate or that any limitation imposed by the Section is inappropriate, Respondent may seek a class 1 hearing pursuant to § 227.01(3)(a), Stats., in which the burden shall be on Respondent to show that the Section's decision is arbitrary or capricious. The denial of certification or limitations on Respondent's certification shall remain in effect until there is a final decision in Respondent's favor on the issue.
  - f. Any petition for certification or request for approval of an evaluator, therapist, supervisor or educational program required by this order shall be mailed, faxed or delivered to:

Department Monitor  
Department of Regulation And Licensing  
Division of Enforcement  
1400 East Washington Ave.  
P.O. Box 8935  
Madison, WI 53708-8935  
Fax (608) 266-2264

The rights of a party aggrieved by this Decision to petition the Section for rehearing and to petition for judicial review are set forth on the attached "Notice of Appeal Information."

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin this 15th day of March, 2001.

Cornelia Gordon-Hempe

Chairperson

Social Worker Section