

# 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:

TRESSA L. STROUD, C.I.C.S.W.,

FINAL DECISION AND ORDER

RESPONDENT

LS0206133SOC

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

Tressa L. Stroud, C.I.C.S.W.

P.O. Box 418

Wausau, WI 54402

Social Worker Section

Examining Board of Social Workers,

Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors

PO Box 8935

Madison, WI 53708-8935

Department of Regulation and Licensing

Division of Enforcement

PO 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. Tressa L. Stroud, C.I.C.S.W., Respondent, date of birth July 11, 1967, was certified as an independent clinical social worker in the State of Wisconsin, pursuant to certificate number 4305, which was first granted on December 20, 1995.
2. In May 1993, Respondent received a master of science degree with a major in counseling & psychological services from Springfield College in Springfield, MA.
3. Respondent was granted certification pursuant to the grandparenting provisions of 1991 Wisconsin Act 160, § 21(2)(c) [nonstatutory provisions], based upon her having a master's degree in counseling, having two years of postgraduate full time social work practice and having submitted her application for certification prior to May 31,

1995.

4. Respondent, for personal reasons not related to this matter, elected not to renew her certification when it expired June 30, 2001. Respondent's certification remains expired.

5. Respondent's last address reported to the Department of Regulation and Licensing is P.O. Box 418, Wausau, Wisconsin, 54402.

6. Respondent was employed by Children's Service Society of Wisconsin (Children's) from April 3, 1995 until February 16, 1999, to provide outpatient counseling in the Marshfield and Wausau offices.

7. In her employment at Children's, Respondent provided treatment to Ms. A, as follows:

a. Treatment began on August 11, 1997.

b. Respondent indicated a diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder, by history.

c. Respondent made treatment notes of the first nine sessions with Ms. A, the last of which was October 20, 1997.

d. Calendars and other records at Children's indicate that after October 20, 1997 through November 23, 1998, Respondent had 46 additional sessions with Ms. A, for which Respondent did not make any treatment notes.

e. Respondent's therapy sessions with Ms. A at the office were often 2-3 hours in length. Respondent had even longer therapy sessions with Ms. A outside of the office.

f. Respondent did not include a treatment plan or objective in Ms. A's record until March 1998, when she specified:

i. Building rapport with parts.

ii. Establish trusting relationships.

iii. Increase self worth.

g. On October 22, 1998, Respondent completed a progress review with the same treatment goals and no indication whether there had been any progress. There was no indication that termination was being considered.

h. After November 23, 1998, there are no records of any kind indicating that Respondent continued to have sessions with Ms. A. However, there is no indication in the record that treatment had been terminated or that the therapeutic relationship had ended.

i. Respondent's calendar also showed the following meetings with Ms. A:

11-25-98 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

11-30-98 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

11-30-98 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.

12-14-98 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

12-16-98 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

12-28-98 12 noon – 7 p.m.

8. Prior to treating Ms. A, Respondent had experience working with victims of sexual abuse. However, Respondent had no experience treating or working with anyone diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder (DID), which was formerly called multiple personality disorder (MPD).

9. Early in her treatment of Ms. A, Respondent sought consultation with another certified independent clinical social worker who was a therapist at Children's and who had experience treating clients diagnosed with MPD and DID. During the consultations:

a. The other therapist repeatedly cautioned Respondent about the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries in treating a client with Ms. A's condition.

b. The other therapist advised Respondent that Ms. A should be hospitalized, but Respondent rejected that advice.

c. Respondent stopped asking for consultation with the other therapist, after April 16, 1998, because she knew the other therapist would not approve of the way she was handling the client's care.

10. During the course of treatment, Respondent and Ms. A became friends. Respondent:

a. Kissed Ms. A's toddler as Ms. A was leaving a session.

b. Accompanied Ms. A and Ms. A's children to social gatherings, including a charity night in November 1998.

c. Developed a social relationship with Ms. A. that included going shopping together and to movies.

11. In early 1999, Respondent's relationship with her significant other was ending. On February 10, 1999, one of Ms. Stroud's clients had a crisis and the clinic attempted to contact Respondent. They were unable to do so because Respondent was not staying at the home she had been sharing with her significant other and she had not given her supervisor a new address or phone number.

12. Respondent later told the clinic that she and her partner had split up and she had no support system. Ms. A and her husband had offered to allow Respondent to spend some nights with them and she spent three nights at their home.

#### 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 pursuant to § 227.44(5), Stats.

3. Respondent, by engaging in the conduct set out above, has committed unprofessional conduct and is subject to discipline pursuant to § 457.26(2)(f), Stats., for having violated Wis. Adm. Code § SFC 20.02:

a. Performing or offering to perform services for which the certificate holder is not qualified by education, training or experience. [§ SFC 20.02(1)]

b. Failing to avoid dual relationships or relationships that may impair the credentialed person's objectivity or create a conflict of interest. [§ SFC 20.02(13)]

c. Failing to maintain adequate records relating to services provided a client in the course of a professional relationship. [§ SFC 20.02(18)]

d. Gross negligence in practice. [§ SFC 20.02(22)]

#### ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. If Respondent ever seeks to renew her certification as an independent clinical social worker or applies to the Section for any certification as a social worker:

a. Respondent shall be required to meet all requirements for that certification which are then required by statute and administrative rule, prior to being renewed or certified.

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 investigative file 99 SOC 019.

c. If the Section believes that it will be of assistance to the Section in responding to Respondent's petition:

i. Respondent shall, at her own expense, have undergone an assessment by a mental health care practitioner with experience in assessing health care providers who have had difficulties with professional-client boundaries.

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 renew or certify Respondent, with or without limitations, or to deny Respondent's petition.

e. If Respondent believes that the Section's denial of renewal or 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 renewal or 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. Respondent shall appear before the Section on an annual basis, if requested by the Section, to review the progress of any treatment and rehabilitation.

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 13th day of June, 2002.

Douglas Knight

Chairperson

Social Worker Section