

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF REGULATION & LICENSING



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FILE COPY

STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE BOARD OF NURSING

IN THE MATTER OF :
DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS AGAINST :
RHONDA L. STERN, R.N., : FINAL DECISION AND ORDER
RESPONDENT. : 96 NUR 181
: LS97071122NUR

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

Rhonda L. Stern
2258 Glendalen Rd. N
Mosinee, WI 54455

Wisconsin Board of Nursing
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 of this matter, subject to the approval of the Board. The Board has reviewed this Stipulation and considers it acceptable.

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

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent, Rhonda L. Stern (dob 8/05/59) is and was at all times relevant to the facts set forth herein a registered nurse licensed in the State of Wisconsin pursuant to license # 89037, first granted on August 21, 1984.
2. Between October, 1995, and May, 1996, while employed as a registered nurse at North Central Health Care Facility, Wausau, Respondent diverted at least 480 Vicodin tablets from unit dose cassette drawers for her own personal use.
3. On or about April 4, 1996, Respondent took from her place of employment a blank prescription order which had been signed by Sailandra Basu, M.D. Respondent wrote a prescription to herself for 45 Vicodin tablets and passed the prescription at the Kmart pharmacy in Wausau.
4. On April 10, 1997, Respondent was diagnosed with opioid abuse.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

5. The Wisconsin Board of Nursing has jurisdiction to act in this matter pursuant to §441.07(1)(b)(c) and(d) Wis. Stats. and is authorized to enter into the attached Stipulation pursuant to §227.44(5), Wis. Stats.

6. The conduct described in paragraphs 2 through 4, above, violated § N 7.03(2) and N 7.04(1), (2) and (15) Wis. Adm. Code. Such conduct constitutes unprofessional conduct within the meaning of the Code and statutes.

ORDER

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, that the attached Stipulation is accepted.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that effective on the date of this Order, the license of Rhonda L. Stern to practice as a registered nurse in the state of Wisconsin is SUSPENDED for a period of not less than two (2) years.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that the suspension shall be stayed for a period of three (3) months, conditioned upon compliance with the conditions and limitations outlined below.

- a. Respondent may apply for consecutive three (3) month extensions of the stay of suspension, which shall be granted upon acceptable demonstration of compliance with the conditions and limitations imposed on the respondent for rehabilitation and practice during the prior three (3) month period.
- b. The Board may without hearing deny an application for extension of the stay, or commence other appropriate action, upon receipt of information that respondent has violated any of the terms or conditions of this Order. If the Board denies the petition by the respondent for an extension, the Board shall afford an opportunity for hearing in accordance with the procedures set forth in ch. RL 1, Wis. Adm. Code upon timely receipt of a request for hearing.
- c. Upon a showing by respondent of successful compliance for a period of two years of active practice with the terms of this order and compliance with all other terms of this Order, the Board may grant a petition by the Respondent for return of full licensure. (See ¶23, below.)

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that the license to practice of respondent shall be LIMITED as follows:

REHABILITATION, MONITORING AND TREATMENT

Treatment Required

1. Respondent shall continue successful participation in all components of a drug and alcohol treatment program at a treatment facility acceptable to the Board as respondent's Supervising Health Care Provider shall determine to be appropriate for respondent's rehabilitation. Respondent shall commence involvement in the drug and alcohol rehabilitation program within 5 days of the date of the Final Decision and Order of the Board.

Therapy. The rehabilitation program shall include and respondent shall participate in individual and/or group therapy sessions for the first year of the stayed suspension upon a schedule as recommended by the supervising physician or therapist, but not less than once weekly. Such therapy shall be conducted by the supervising physician or therapist, or another qualified physician or therapist as designated by the supervising physician or therapist and acceptable to the Board. After the first year of stayed suspension, this requirement for therapy sessions may be modified only upon written petition, and a written recommendation by the supervising physician or therapist expressly supporting the modifications sought. A denial of such petition for modification shall not be deemed a denial of the license under §§ 227.01(3) or 227.42, Wis. Stats., or ch. RL 1, Wis. Adm. Code, and shall not be subject to any right to further hearing or appeal.

AA/NA Meetings. Respondent shall attend Narcotics Anonymous and/or Alcoholic Anonymous meetings or an equivalent program for recovering professionals, upon a frequency as recommended by the supervising physician or therapist, but not less than one meeting per week. Attendance of Respondent at such meetings shall be verified and reported monthly to the supervising physician or therapist.

Sobriety

2. Respondent shall abstain from all personal use of prescription medications and controlled substances as defined in Sec. 161.01(4), Stats. except when necessitated by a legitimate medical condition and then only with the prior approval of the Supervising Health Care Provider.
3. Respondent shall abstain from all personal use of alcohol.
4. Respondent shall in addition refrain from the consumption of over-the-counter medications or other substances which may mask consumption of controlled substances or of alcohol, or which may create false positive screening results, or which may interfere with respondent's treatment and rehabilitation. Respondent shall report all medications and drugs, over-the-counter or prescription, taken by respondent to the Supervising Health Care Provider within 24 hours of ingestion or administration, and shall identify the person or persons who prescribed, dispensed, administered or ordered said medications or drugs. Within 24 hours of a request by the Supervising Health Care Provider or the Board or its designee, Respondent shall provide releases which comply with state and federal laws authorizing release of all health care records by the person who prescribed, dispensed, administered or ordered this medication for respondent. These releases shall also authorize the Supervising Health Care Provider, the Board or its designee to discuss the Respondent's health care with the person who prescribed, dispensed, administered or ordered this medication. The terms of this paragraph shall not be deemed to modify or negate Respondent's obligations as set forth in this Order.

Department Monitor

5. The Department Monitor is the individual designated by the Board as its agent to coordinate compliance with the terms of this Order, including receiving and coordinating all reports and petitions, and requesting additional monitoring and surveillance. The Department Monitor may be reached as follows:

Department Monitor
Department of Regulation Division of Enforcement
P.O. Box 8935
Madison, WI 53708-8935
FAX (608) 266-2264
TEL. (608) 267-7139

Releases

6. Respondent shall provide and keep on file with the Supervising Health Care Provider, all treatment facilities and personnel, laboratories and collections sites current releases which comply with state and federal laws authorizing release of all urine, blood and hair specimen screen results and medical and treatment records and reports to, and permitting the Supervising Health Care Provider and all treating physicians and therapists to disclose and discuss the progress of respondent's treatment and rehabilitation with the Board or any member thereof, or with any employee of the Department of Regulation and Licensing acting under the authority of the Board. Copies of these releases shall be filed simultaneously with the Department Monitor.

Drug and Alcohol Screens

7. Respondent shall supply on at least a weekly basis, random monitored urine, blood or hair specimens as the Supervising Health Care Provider shall direct. The Supervising Health Care Provider (or designee) shall request the specimens from Respondent and these requests shall be random with respect to the hour of the day and the day of the week. In addition, the Board or its designee may at any time request a random monitored urine, blood or hair specimen from Respondent by directing the Department Monitor in the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Division of Enforcement to contact Respondent and request Respondent provide a specimen. To prevent the respondent's ability to predict that no further screens will be required for a given period (because the minimum frequency for that period has been met), the program of monitoring shall require respondent to provide in each quarter at least two (2) random screenings in excess of the minimums specified in this Order.
8. Respondent shall keep the Supervising Health Care Provider informed of Respondent's location and shall be available for contact by the Supervising Health Care Provider at all times.
9. All requested urine, blood or hair specimens shall be provided by Respondent within five (5) hours of the request for the specimen. All urine specimen collections shall be a split sample accomplished by dividing urine from a single void into two specimen bottles. The total volume of the split sample shall be at least 45 ml. of urine. All split sample urine specimens, blood specimens and hair specimens shall be collected, monitored and chain of custody maintained in conformity with the collection, monitoring and chain of custody procedures set forth in 49 CFR Part 40. Urine specimen collections shall be by direct observation if:
 - a. The Respondent must provide an additional specimen because Respondent's initial specimen was outside of the normal temperature range (32.5 - 37.7°C/90.5 - 99.8°F) and respondent refuses to have an oral body temperature measurement or respondent does provide an oral body temperature measurement and the reading varies by more than 1°C/1.8°F from the temperature of the urine specimen;
 - b. Respondent's last provided specimen was determined by the laboratory to have a specific gravity of less than 1.003 and creatinine concentration below 0.2 g/l;

- c. The collection site person observes Respondent acting in such a manner to provide reason to believe that Respondent may have attempted or may attempt to substitute or adulterate the specimen. The collection site person, if he or she believes that the initial urine specimen may have been adulterated or a substitution made, shall direct Respondent to provide an additional observed urine specimen;
- d. The last provided specimen resulted in a positive or suspected positive test result for the presence of controlled substances; or
- e. The Board (or any member of the Board), the Department Monitor, or Respondent's Supervising Health Care Provider directs that the urine specimen collection be by direct observation.

If either of the above conditions (a) or (c) requires collection of an additional observed urine specimen, the collection of the subsequent specimen shall be accomplished within the required five (5) hours of the request for the initial specimen; the collection of the initial specimen shall not satisfy the requirement that the urine specimen be collected within five (5) hours of the request for the initial specimen.

- 10. The drug and alcohol treatment program in which Respondent is enrolled shall at all times utilize a United States Department of Health and Human Services certified laboratory for the analysis of all specimens collected from Respondent.
- 11. The drug and alcohol treatment program in which Respondent is enrolled shall utilize only those urine, blood and hair specimen collection sites for collection of Respondent's urine, blood or hair specimens as comply with the United States Department of Transportation collection and chain of custody procedures set forth in 49 CFR Part 40.
- 12. The Supervising Health Care Provider, treatment facility, laboratory and collection site shall maintain a complete and fully documented chain of custody for each urine, blood or hair specimen collected from Respondent.
- 13. Every urine specimen collected from Respondent shall be analyzed at the time of collection for tampering by measurement of the temperature of the specimen and the oral temperature of Respondent. Every urine specimen collected from Respondent shall be further analyzed at the laboratory for tampering by measuring the creatinine concentration and the specific gravity of the specimen. The laboratory may at its discretion or at the direction of a Supervising Health Care Provider or the Board or any member thereof conduct additional tests to evaluate the urine specimen for tampering including, but not limited to, pH, color and odor.
- 14. Every urine, blood or hair specimen collected from Respondent shall be analyzed for alcohol, amphetamine, cocaine, opiates, phencyclidine, marijuana, methadone, propoxyphene, methaqualone, barbiturates, benzodiazepines or the metabolites thereof. The Board or its designated agent may at any time direct that screens for additional substances and their metabolites be conducted by scientific methods and instruments appropriate to detect the presence of these substances. The laboratory shall conduct confirmatory tests of positive or suspected positive test results by appropriate scientific methods and instruments including, but not limited to, gas chromatography and mass spectrometry.
- 15. All urine, blood or hair specimens remaining after testing shall be maintained in a manner necessary to preserve the integrity of the specimens for at least seven (7) days; and all positive or suspected positive urine, blood or hair specimens remaining after testing shall be so maintained for a period of at least one (1) year. The Supervising Health Care Provider or

the Board or any member thereof may direct that the urine, blood or hair specimens be maintained for a longer period of time.

16. For the purpose of further actions affecting Respondent's license under this Order, it shall be presumed that all confirmed positive reports are valid. Respondent shall have the burden of proof to establish that the positive report was erroneous and that the respondent's specimen sample did not contain alcohol or controlled substances or their metabolites.
17. If any urine, blood or hair specimen is positive or suspected positive for any controlled substances or alcohol, Respondent shall promptly submit to additional tests or examinations as the Supervising Health Care Provider shall determine to be appropriate to clarify or confirm the positive or suspected positive urine, blood or hair specimen test results.

Required Reporting by Supervising Health Care Provider, and laboratories

18. The Supervising Health Care Provider shall report immediately to the Department Monitor in the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Division of Enforcement by FAX or telephonic communication: any failure of Respondent to provide a urine, blood or hair specimen within five (5) hours from the time it was requested; or of any inability to locate Respondent to request a specimen. The laboratory shall immediately report all urine specimens suspected to have been tampered with and all urine, blood or hair specimens which are positive or suspected positive for controlled substances or alcohol to the Department Monitor, and to the Supervising Health Care Provider.
19. The laboratory shall within 48 hours of completion of each drug or alcohol analysis mail the report from **all** specimens requested of Respondent under this Order to the Department Monitor (regardless of whether the laboratory analysis of the specimen was positive or negative for controlled substances, their metabolites or alcohol). Each report shall state the date and time the specimen was requested; the date and time the specimen was collected; the results of the tests performed to detect tampering; and the results of the laboratory analysis for the presence of controlled substances and alcohol.
20. The Supervising Health Care Provider shall submit formal written reports to the Department Monitor in the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Division of Enforcement, P.O. Box 8935, Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8935 on a quarterly basis, as directed by the Department Monitor. These reports shall assess Respondent's progress in the drug and alcohol treatment program and summarize the results of the urine, blood or hair specimen analyses. The Supervising Health Care Provider shall report immediately to the Department Monitor [Division of Enforcement, P.O. Box 8935, Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8935, FAX (608)266-2264, telephone no. (608)267-7139] any violation or suspected violation of the Board's Final Decision and Order.

Required reporting by Respondent

21. Respondent is responsible for compliance with all of the terms and conditions of this Final Decision and Order. It is the responsibility of Respondent to promptly notify the Department Monitor, of any suspected violations of any of the terms and conditions of this Order, including any failures of the Supervising Health Care Provider, treatment facility, laboratory or collection sites to conform to the terms and conditions of this Order.

Facility approval

22. If the Board determines that the Supervising Health Care Provider, treatment facility, laboratory or collection sites have failed to satisfy the terms and conditions of this Final

Decision and Order, the Board may, at its sole discretion, direct that Respondent continue treatment and rehabilitation under the direction of another Supervising Health Care Provider, treatment facility, laboratory or collection site which will conform to the terms and conditions of this Final Decision and Order.

PETITIONS FOR MODIFICATION OF TERMS

23. Respondent may petition the Board for modification of the terms of this limited license . Any such petition shall be accompanied by a written recommendation from respondent's Supervising Health Care Provider expressly supporting the specific modifications sought. Denial of the petition in whole or in part shall not be considered a denial of a license within the meaning of Sec. 227.01(3)(a), Stats. and Respondent shall not have a right to any further hearings or proceedings on any denial in whole or in part of the petition for modification of the limited license.

After two years of continuous active professional practice under this Order and without relapse, and upon recommendation of the Supervising Health Care Provider , respondent may petition the Board for a termination of all limitations on the license, and restoration of an unlimited license. Such restoration shall be in the sole discretion of the Board, and denial of the petition in whole or in part shall not be considered a denial of a license within the meaning of Sec. 227.01(3)(a), Stats. and Respondent shall not have a right to any further hearings or proceedings on any denial in whole or in part of the petition for termination of the limitations and restoration of unlimited licensure.

EXPENSES OF TREATMENT AND MONITORING

24. Respondent shall be responsible for all costs and expenses incurred in conjunction with the monitoring, screening, supervision and any other expenses associated with compliance with the terms of this Order.

PRACTICE LIMITATIONS

Controlled substance Access

25. Respondent shall refrain from access to or the administration of controlled substances in her work setting until such time as access or administration is approved by the Board.
26. Respondent shall practice only under the general supervision of a licensed professional nurse or other licensed health care professional approved by the Board or in a work setting pre-approved by the Board or its designated agent.

Reporting Required

27. Respondent shall arrange for her employer to provide formal written reports to the Department Monitor in the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Division of Enforcement, P.O. Box 8935, Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8935 on a quarterly basis, as directed by the Department Monitor. These reports shall assess Respondent's work performance.

Change in Address or Work Status

28. Respondent shall report to the Board any change of employment status, residence, address or telephone number within five (5) days of the date of a change.
29. Respondent shall furnish a copy of this Order to all present employers immediately upon issuance of this Order, and to any prospective employer when respondent applies for employment as a health care provider.

Violation of any of the terms of this Order shall be construed as conduct imperiling public health, safety and welfare and may result in a summary suspension of Respondent's license; the Board in its discretion may in the alternative deny a stay of suspension of the license or impose additional conditions and limitations or other discipline.

This Order shall become effective upon the date of its signing.

WISCONSIN BOARD OF NURSING

by: Linda Burrows 11 July 1997
a member of the Board Date

jh
nurstp

TECH

STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE BOARD OF NURSING

IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY :
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST :

RHONDA L. STERN, R.N., :
RESPONDENT. :

STIPULATION
96 NUR 181

It is hereby stipulated between the above Respondent and the undersigned prosecuting attorney for the Division of Enforcement of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, as follows:

1. This Stipulation is entered into as a result of a pending investigation of licensure of Respondent by the Division of Enforcement. Respondent consents to the resolution of this investigation by agreement and without the issuance of a formal complaint.

2. Respondent understands that by signing this Stipulation, respondent waives the following rights with respect to disciplinary proceedings: the right to a statement of the allegations against respondent; a right to a hearing at which time the State has the burden of proving those allegations; the right to confront and cross-examine the witnesses against respondent; the right to call witnesses on respondent's behalf and to compel attendance of witnesses by subpoena; the right to testify personally; the right to file objections to any proposed decision and to present briefs or oral arguments to the officials who are to render the final decision; the right to petition for rehearing; and all other applicable rights afforded to respondent under the United States Constitution, the Wisconsin Constitution, the Wisconsin Statutes, and the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

3. Respondent is aware of respondent's right to seek legal representation and has been provided the opportunity to seek legal advice before signing this Stipulation.

4. Respondent agrees to the adoption of the attached Final Decision and Order by the Board. The parties consent to the entry of the attached Final Decision and Order without further notice, pleading, appearance or consent of the parties. Respondent waives all rights to any appeal of the Board's order, if adopted in the form as attached.

5. If the terms of this Stipulation are not acceptable to the Board, the parties shall not be bound by the contents of this Stipulation or the proposed Final Decision and Order, and the matter shall be returned to the Division of Enforcement for further proceedings. In the event that this Stipulation is not accepted by the Board, the parties agree not to contend that the Board has been prejudiced or biased in any manner by the consideration of this attempted resolution.

6. The parties agree that an attorney for the Division of Enforcement may appear before the Board, in open or closed session, without the presence of Respondent or Respondent's attorney, for the purposes of speaking in support of this agreement and answering questions that the members of the Board and its staff may have in connection with their deliberations on the case.

7. The Board Advisor in this matter may participate freely in any deliberations of the Board regarding acceptance of this Stipulation and the proposed Final Order, and may relate to the Board any knowledge and view of the case acquired during the investigation.

8. This stipulation is subject to approval by the Division of Enforcement's attorney-supervisor. If approved by the supervisor, the Division of Enforcement joins Respondent in recommending that the Board adopt this Stipulation and issue the attached Final Decision and Order.

9. Respondent is informed that should the Board adopt this stipulation, the Board's final decision and order is a public record and will be published in the monthly *Report of Decisions*

issued by the department. A summary of the order will be published in the *Wisconsin Regulatory Digest* issued semiannually by the Board. This is standard department procedure and in no way specially directed at Respondent.

Chonda A. Stern 6-25-97
Respondent Date

James Harris June 22, 1997
Prosecuting Attorney Date
Division of Enforcement

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF REGULATION AND LICENSING
BEFORE THE BOARD OF NURSING

In the Matter of the Disciplinary Proceedings Against

Rhonda L. Stern, R.N.,

AFFIDAVIT OF MAILING


Respondent.

STATE OF WISCONSIN)
)
COUNTY OF DANE)

I, Kate Rotenberg, having been duly sworn on oath, state the following to be true and correct based on my personal knowledge:

1. I am employed by the Wisconsin Department of Regulation and Licensing.
2. On July 15, 1997, I served the Final Decision and Order dated July 11, 1997, LS97071122NUR, upon the Respondent Rhonda L. Stern, R.N. by enclosing a true and accurate copy of the above-described document in an envelope properly stamped and addressed to the above-named Respondent and placing the envelope in the State of Wisconsin mail system to be mailed by the United States Post Office by certified mail. The certified mail receipt number on the envelope is P 221 157 348.
3. The address used for mailing the Decision is the address that appears in the records of the Department as the Respondent's last-known address and is:


Rhonda L. Stern, R.N.
2258 Glendalen Road N
Mosinee WI 54455



Kate Rotenberg
Department of Regulation and Licensing
Office of Legal Counsel

Subscribed and sworn to before me

this 15th day of July, 1997.



Notary Public, State of Wisconsin
My commission is permanent.

NOTICE OF APPEAL INFORMATION

Notice Of Rights For Rehearing Or Judicial Review, The Times Allowed For Each, And The Identification Of The Party To Be Named As Respondent.

Serve Petition for Rehearing or Judicial Review on:

STATE OF WISCONSIN BOARD OF NURSING

1400 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 8935
Madison, WI 53708.

The Date of Mailing this Decision is:

July 15, 1997

1. REHEARING

Any person aggrieved by this order may file a written petition for rehearing within 20 days after service of this order, as provided in sec. 227.49 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*, a copy of which is reprinted on side two of this sheet. The 20 day period commences the day of personal service or mailing of this decision. (The date of mailing this decision is shown above.)

A petition for rehearing should name as respondent and be filed with the party identified in the box above.

A petition for rehearing is not a prerequisite for appeal or review.

2. JUDICIAL REVIEW.

Any person aggrieved by this decision may petition for judicial review as specified in sec. 227.53, *Wisconsin Statutes* a copy of which is reprinted on side two of this sheet. By law, a petition for review must be filed in circuit court and should name as the respondent the party listed in the box above. A copy of the petition for judicial review should be served upon the party listed in the box above.

A petition must be filed within 30 days after service of this decision if there is no petition for rehearing, or within 30 days after service of the order finally disposing of a petition for rehearing, or within 30 days after the final disposition by operation of law of any petition for rehearing.

The 30-day period for serving and filing a petition commences on the day after personal service or mailing of the decision by the agency, or the day after the final disposition by operation of the law of any petition for rehearing. (The date of mailing this decision is shown above.)