

## WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



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STATE OF WISCONSIN  
BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY  
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST

REBECCA M. VENNERI,  
RESPONDENT.

:  
:  
:  
: FINAL DECISION AND ORDER  
:  
:  
: **0002668**

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Division of Legal Services and Compliance<sup>1</sup> Case No. 13 RSA 010

The parties to this action for the purpose of Wis. Stat. § 227.53 are:

Rebecca M. Venneri  
56 Richmond Dr.  
Winona, MN 55987

Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services  
P.O. Box 8935  
Madison, WI 53708-8935

Division of Legal Services and Compliance  
Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services  
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 disposition of this matter, subject to the approval of the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (Department). The Department has reviewed this Stipulation and considers it acceptable.

Accordingly, the Department adopts the attached Stipulation and makes the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent Rebecca M. Venneri (dob June 2, 1971) is certified in the State of Wisconsin as a clinical substance abuse counselor, having credential number 15657-132, first issued on March 13, 2012 and current through February 28, 2015. Respondent was also issued a temporary professional counselor license, number 4894-125, first issued on September 20, 2012, and which expired on June 20, 2013. Ms. Venneri's most recent address on file with the Department is 56 Richmond Drive, Winona, Minnesota 55987.

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<sup>1</sup> The Division of Legal Services and Compliance was formerly known as the Division of Enforcement.

2. On February 25, 2013, the State of Pennsylvania Certification Board (Pennsylvania Board) took disciplinary action against Respondent's Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CAADC) license. The Pennsylvania Board suspended Respondent's CAADC license for a period of one year from February 25, 2013 through February 25, 2014 and ordered Respondent to complete six hours of education in ethics. The Pennsylvania Board disciplined Respondent for developing and maintaining an exploitative relationship with a client and for engaging in conduct that did not meet the generally accepted standards of practice.

3. The facts underlying the Pennsylvania Board's discipline related to Respondent's conduct while working as a treatment coordinator at the Dauphin County Prison in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Respondent provided individual counseling and treatment to Client A while he was at the Dauphin County Prison from 1999 through 2000 and again from 2011 until Client A's transfer to Camp Hill Prison on March 13, 2012. Respondent resigned from her position at Dauphin County Prison on April 20, 2012. Respondent admitted to engaging in a personal friendship outside of a therapeutic setting with Client A that later became a romantic relationship. Respondent accepted collect phone calls from Client A on March 13, 2013, March 30, 2012, and April 3, 2012. Respondent says that she still keeps in contact with Client A, she speaks to him several times a week, and has visited Client A at Camp Hill Prison a total of 18 times from March 23, 2012 through October 22, 2012. Respondent admits that she and Client A have hugged, kissed, and held hands, but she denies any kind of sexual contact with Client A.

4. In resolution of this matter, Respondent consents to the entry of the following Conclusions of Law and Order.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services has jurisdiction to act in this matter pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 440.88, and is authorized to enter into the attached Stipulation pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 227.44(5).

2. By the conduct described in the Findings of Fact, Respondent Rebecca M. Venneri violated Wis. Admin. Code § SPS 164.01(2)(c) by having a license suspended for unprofessional conduct by another licensing agency.

3. By the conduct described in the Findings of Fact, Respondent Rebecca M. Venneri violated Wis. Admin. Code § SPS 164.01(2)(m) by engaging in inappropriate sexual contact, or other sexual behavior with a client.

4. As a result of the violations noted in the Conclusions of Law, Respondent Rebecca M. Venneri is subject to discipline pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 440.88(6).

#### ORDER

1. The attached Stipulation is accepted.

2. The clinical substance abuse counselor certificate issued to Rebecca M. Venneri (credential number 15657-132) is SUSPENDED for a period of one (1) year. The suspension shall commence on October 21, 2013.

3. The clinical substance abuse counselor certificate issued to Rebecca M. Venneri (credential number 15657-132) is LIMITED as follows:

Participation in psychotherapy

a. Within 30 days of the date of this Order, at her own expense, Respondent shall enter into and continue successful participation in psychotherapy, with a psychotherapist pre-approved by the Department or its designee. Psychotherapy shall address, at a minimum, Respondent's ability to meet personal needs outside of her professional role. Psychotherapy shall continue until such time as the Respondent petitions the Department and provides proof sufficient to convince the board that psychotherapy is no longer necessary to sustain Respondent's professional competence.

Education

b. No sooner than 90 days before the period of suspension is concluded, at her own expense, Respondent shall successfully complete 24 hours of education on the topic of ethics and professional boundaries. The course and the provider must be pre-approved by the Department's monitoring liaison. Successful completion shall include taking and passing any exam offered for the courses.

c. Satisfaction of the required remedial education may be achieved by providing proof, acceptable to the Department's designee, that Respondent has completed the remedial education requirements of the Professional Counselor Section of the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board, in Case No. 13 CPC 008.

d. Respondent shall submit proof of successful completion of the ordered education in the form of verification from the institution providing the education to the Department Monitor at the address stated below. None of the education completed pursuant to this requirement may be used to satisfy any continuing education requirements that have been or may be instituted by the Department, and also may not be used in future attempts to upgrade a credential in Wisconsin.

Practice limitation

e. Respondent shall not work as a sole practitioner without advance approval of the Department or its designee.

f. Respondent will be allowed to continue to work in a supervisory capacity without any restrictions or limitations during the period of this limitation provided that such supervision does not require Respondent to directly participate in client counseling.

Professional Mentor

g. At least 30 days before the period of suspension is completed, and before Respondent commences any employment as a clinical substance abuse counselor,

whether paid or unpaid, Respondent shall obtain a Professional Mentor, pre-approved by the Department or its designee.

h. The Professional Mentor shall be a professional counselor licensed without limitation to practice substance abuse counseling in the State of Wisconsin. The professional mentor shall not have been disciplined by the Department or the Professional Counselor Section of the Wisconsin Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling, and Social Work Examining Board.

i. The Professional Mentor may be the individual responsible for supervision of Respondent's practice of professional counseling.

j. The Professional Mentor shall meet with Respondent at least weekly, during which the professional mentor shall review charts selected by the professional mentor, shall discuss any boundary issues that may arise, and may conduct other actions deemed appropriate by the professional mentor to determine that Respondent is practicing in a professional and competent manner.

k. The Professional Mentor may designate another qualified health care provider acceptable to the Department to exercise the duties and responsibilities of the Professional Mentor in an absence of more than three weeks. In the event that the Professional Mentor is unable or unwilling to continue to serve as Respondent's Professional Mentor, the Department may in its sole discretion select a successor Professional Mentor.

l. The Professional Mentor shall have no duty or liability to Respondent, any of Respondent's clients or any third party; the Mentor's sole duty is to the Department.

m. The Professional Mentor shall:

(i.) Review Respondent's practice patterns to ensure that Respondent maintains competent and current professional standards in all areas of her practice, with particular attention to professional boundaries.

(ii.) Help Respondent select training opportunities to increase her knowledge of professional standards with regard to maintaining professional boundaries and avoiding dual relationships;

(iii.) Serve as a consultant about gray areas of professional standards and ethics, particularly as they pertain to boundaries and avoiding dual relationships.

(iv) Notify the Department monitor when there is reasonable cause to believe that Respondent has or may in the future violate any professional standard or rule of the Department.

Removal of limitations

n. The supervision by the Professional Mentor shall continue for at least one (1) year. After one (1) year from the date of this Order, and with pre-approval from the professional mentor, Respondent may petition the Department to remove the professional mentor requirement. The decision to remove the limitation requiring a professional mentor shall remain in the sole discretion of the Department.

o. The limitations shall be removed upon proof satisfactory to the Department or its designee that the terms of the limitations have been satisfied.

4. Within 90 days from the date of this Order, Rebecca M. Venneri shall pay COSTS of this matter in the amount of \$550.00.

5. Request of approval of courses, proof of successful course completion, petitions, reports, any other information required by this order, and payment of costs (made payable to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services) shall be sent by Respondent to the Department Monitor at the address below:


Department Monitor  
Division of Legal Services and Compliance  
Department of Safety and Professional Services  
P.O. Box 8935, Madison, WI 53708-8935  
Telephone (608) 267-3817; Fax (608) 266-2264  
[DSPSMonitoring@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DSPSMonitoring@wisconsin.gov)

6. Violation of any of the terms of this Order may be construed as conduct imperiling public health, safety and welfare and may result in a summary suspension of Respondent's certificate. The Department in its discretion may in the alternative impose additional conditions and limitations or other additional discipline for a violation of any of the terms of this Order. In the event Respondent fails to timely submit payment of the costs as ordered or fails to submit proof of successful completion of the ordered education as set forth above or violates any other terms or conditions of the Order, Respondent's certificate (no. 15657-132) may, in the discretion of the Department or its designee, be SUSPENDED, without further notice or hearing, until Respondent has complied with payment of the costs, completion of the education, and all the other terms and conditions of the Order.

7. This Order is effective on the date of its signing.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

By:

  
Michael J. Berndt, Chief Legal Counsel  
On Behalf of the Department

Date

10/10/13