

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



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STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE BOARD OF NURSING

IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY :
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST :
: FINAL DECISION AND ORDER
CARISSA L. STERWALD-FINCH, R.N., :
RESPONDENT. : **ORDER 00067 10**

Division of Legal Services and Compliance Case No. 17 NUR 524

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

Carissa L. Sterwald-Finch, R.N.
Watertown, WI 53098

Wisconsin Board of Nursing
P.O. Box 8366
Madison, WI 53708-8366

Division of Legal Services and Compliance
Department of Safety and Professional Services
P.O. Box 7190
Madison, WI 53707-7190

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 Board of Nursing (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, Conclusions of Law, and Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent Carissa L. Sterwald-Finch, R.N., (DOB XX-XX-1980) is licensed in the state of Wisconsin as a registered nurse, having license number 189945-30, first issued on July 19, 2012, and current through February 28, 2020.

2. At all times relevant to this proceeding, Respondent was employed as a registered nurse (R.N.) through a staffing service and assigned to a hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Hospital).

3. During the night shift on September 16-17, 2017, Respondent exhibited the following behavior:

- a. Respondent appeared dazed and confused and was observed falling asleep in patients' rooms and the nurses' station.
- b. Respondent exhibited slurred speech and a slow unsteady gait.
- c. Respondent made mistakes using the MedSelect machine, including forgetting her password and entering random numbers into the machine when the machine asked for her to input the quantity of medication left in the machine after she pulled a medication.
- d. Respondent was observed with a syringe of hydromorphone with a needle in her possession. The Hospital did not use syringes with needles for administration of hydromorphone.

4. Numerous discrepancies were found based on a review of Respondent's charting on September 16-17, 2017, including lack of documentation of administration, waste or return of oxycodone and hydromorphone on at least six (6) occasions.

5. Respondent submitted to a urine drug screen on September 18, 2017, which was positive for oxycodone and oxymorphone.

6. Respondent was not prescribed oxycodone or oxymorphone between September 1, 2016, and October 30, 2017.

7. During the course of its investigation, the Division of Legal Services and Compliance (DLSC) obtained Respondent's Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) and mental health treatment records which contain the following information:

- a. Between April 30, 2018, and July 2019, Respondent received AODA treatment from numerous providers. During that time, she was repeatedly discharged from treatment due to concerns about continued use of alcohol or controlled substances.
- b. In October 2018, Respondent reported drinking about 1.5 liters of vodka daily and that her longest period of sobriety the previous summer was four (4) days.
- c. In January 2019, Respondent admitted to a counselor that she diverted drugs as a nurse but did not get caught.
- d. During a psychological assessment on June 6, 2019, Respondent stated that in 2016, she diverted intravenous (IV) fentanyl a few times per month for a couple months while she worked as a nurse. Respondent was diagnosed with both Alcohol Use Disorder, Severe; and Opioid Use Disorder, Severe, in early remission.

8. On June 14, 2019, Respondent was convicted in Dodge County Circuit Court case number 2018CF141 of one (1) count of Operating While Intoxicated (3rd w/ Passenger < 16 Yrs Old), an unclassified felony, in violation of Wis. Stat. § 346.63(1)(a), with a modifier of Alcohol Fine Enhancer, in violation of Wis. Stat. § 346.65(2)(g)1. On July 18, 2019, Respondent was sentenced to 24 months of probation, license revocation for 48 months, ignition interlock for 48 months, and an alcohol assessment. Conditions included 120 days of jail time, fines, costs, psychiatric treatment, alcohol treatment court, and absolute sobriety.

9. On June 14, 2019, Respondent was convicted in Dodge County Circuit Court case number 2019CF43 of one (1) count of Bail Jumping-Felony, a class H felony, in violation of Wis. Stat. § 946.49(1)(b). The incident occurred on February 14, 2019, at which time Respondent had gotten intoxicated in violation of the terms of her bond.

10. Respondent did not report the above-referenced convictions to the Department.

11. Records from Dodge County Drug Treatment Court contain the following information:

- a. Respondent started alcohol and drug testing on June 27, 2019. Between July 1 and July 3, 2019, Respondent had several positive or missed tests.
- b. On July 3, 2019, Respondent reported to jail with Huber privileges.
- c. On August 31, 2019, Respondent violated Huber rules regarding smuggling contraband, possessing or using contraband, and failing to follow medical instructions. Respondent smuggled medications in vaginally using balloons. Medications found were hydroxyzine, clonidine, Vyvanse, tramadol, ibuprofen, Imitrex, and Topamax. A urinalysis was positive for amphetamines.
- d. On October 3, 2019, Respondent was released from jail, placed back on alcohol and drug testing, and started intensive outpatient treatment. A treater noted that Respondent "appears to not have her priorities in order."
- e. On October 17, 2019, Respondent took several pills at the beginning of treatment group and was observed to be nodding off and swerving while walking down the hallway. It was recommended that Respondent have a termination meeting due to her continued behavior.
- f. On October 18, 2019, Respondent submitted to a drug screen which detected dextromethorphan and dextrophan, both found in cold medicine, at levels higher than an average dose of cold medication. Respondent admitted to taking more medication than she should have.

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

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Board has jurisdiction to act in this matter pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 441.07, 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 violated Wis. Admin. Code § N 7.03(6)(e), by practicing nursing while under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs, or while impaired by the use of legitimately prescribed pharmacological agents or medications.

3. By the conduct described in the Findings of Fact, Respondent violated Wis. Admin. Code § N 7.03(6)(f), by being unable to practice safely by reason of alcohol or other substance use.

4. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 961.16(2)(a)11., oxycodone is a schedule II controlled substance for which, under the circumstances at issue, a prescription is required pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 961.38(2).

5. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 961.16(2)(a)12., oxymorphone is a schedule II controlled substance for which, under the circumstances at issue, a prescription is required pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 961.38(2).

6. By the conduct described in the Findings of Fact, Respondent violated Wis. Admin. Code § N 7.03(8)(e), by obtaining, possessing or attempting to obtain or possess a drug without lawful authority.

7. By the conduct described in the Findings of Fact, Respondent violated Wis. Admin. Code § N 7.03(6)(c), by departing from or failing to conform to the minimal standards of acceptable nursing practice that may create unnecessary risk or danger to a patient's life, health, or safety.

8. By the conduct described in the Findings of Fact, Respondent violated Wis. Admin. Code § N 7.03(1)(h), by failing to notify the board of a felony or misdemeanor in writing within 48 hours after the entry of the judgment of conviction, including the date, place, and nature of the conviction or finding.

9. As a result of the above conduct, Respondent is subject to discipline pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 441.07(1g)(b), (c), and (d).

ORDER

1. The attached Stipulation is accepted.

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

3. The registered nursing license issued to Respondent, (license number 189945-30) is **SUSPENDED** as follows:

SUSPENSION

- A.1. The license of Respondent, (license number 189945-30), to practice as a nurse in the state of Wisconsin is SUSPENDED for an indefinite period.
- A.2. The privilege of Respondent, to practice as a nurse in the state of Wisconsin under the authority of another state's license pursuant to the Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact is also SUSPENDED for an indefinite period.

STAY OF SUSPENSION

- B.1. The suspension shall not be stayed for the first three (3) months, but any time after three (3) months the suspension may be stayed upon Respondent providing proof, which is determined by the Board or its designee to be sufficient, that Respondent has been in compliance with the provisions of Sections C and D of this Order for the most recent three (3) consecutive months.
- B.2. The Board or its designee may, without hearing, remove the stay upon receipt of information that Respondent is in violation of any provision of this Order. The Board or its designee may, in conjunction with any removal of any stay, prohibit the Respondent for a specified period of time from seeking a reinstatement of the stay under paragraph B.4.
- B.3. This suspension becomes reinstated immediately upon notice of the removal of the stay being provided to Respondent either by:
 - (a) Mailing to Respondent's last-known address provided to the Department of Safety and Professional Services (Department) pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 440.11; or
 - (b) Actual notice to Respondent or Respondent's attorney.
- B.4. The Board or its designee may reinstate the stay, if provided with sufficient information that Respondent is in compliance with the Order and that it is appropriate for the stay to be reinstated. Whether to reinstate the stay shall be wholly in the discretion of the Board or its designee.

CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Treatment Required

- C.1. Respondent shall enter into, and shall continue, drug and alcohol treatment with a treater acceptable to the Board or its designee (Treater). Respondent shall participate in, cooperate with, and follow all treatment recommended by Treater.
- C.2. Respondent shall immediately provide Treater with a copy of this Final Decision and Order and all other subsequent orders.
- C.3. Treater shall be responsible for coordinating Respondent's rehabilitation and treatment as required under the terms of this Order, and shall immediately report any relapse, violation

of any of the terms and conditions of this Order, and any suspected unprofessional conduct, to the Department Monitor (See D.1., below). If Treater is unable or unwilling to serve as required by this Order, Respondent shall immediately seek approval of a successor Treater by the Board or its designee.

- C.4. The rehabilitation program shall include individual and/or group therapy sessions at a frequency to be determined by Treater. Therapy may end only with the approval of the Board or its designee, after receiving a petition for modification as required by D.5., below.
- C.5. Treater shall submit formal written reports to the Department Monitor on a quarterly basis, as directed by the Department Monitor. These reports shall assess Respondent's progress in drug and alcohol treatment.

Releases

- C.6. Respondent shall provide and keep on file with Treater, all treatment facilities and personnel, laboratories and collection sites, current releases complying with state and federal laws. The releases shall allow the Board, its designee, and any employee of the Department to: (a) obtain all specimen screen results and patient health care and treatment records and reports, and (b) discuss the progress of Respondent's treatment and rehabilitation with Treater, treatment facilities and personnel, laboratories and collection sites. Copies of these releases shall immediately be filed with the Department Monitor.

AA/NA Meetings

- C.7. Respondent shall attend Narcotics Anonymous and/or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings or an approved equivalent program for recovering professionals, at the frequency recommended by Treater, but no less than twice per week. Attendance of Respondent at such meetings shall be verified by the speaker or chair and reported quarterly to Treater and the Department Monitor.

Sobriety

- C.8. Respondent shall abstain from all personal use of alcohol.
- C.9. Respondent shall abstain from all personal use of controlled substances as defined in Wis. Stat. § 961.01(4), except when prescribed, dispensed or administered by a practitioner for a legitimate medical condition. Respondent shall disclose Respondent's drug and alcohol history and the existence and nature of this Order to the practitioner prior to the practitioner prescribing the controlled substance. Respondent shall, at the time the controlled substance is prescribed, immediately sign a release in compliance with state and federal laws authorizing the practitioner to discuss Respondent's treatment with, and provide copies of treatment records to, Treater and the Board or its designee. Copies of these releases shall immediately be filed with the Department Monitor. Respondent shall disclose the name and address of such practitioner to the Department Monitor within five (5) business days of receipt of a prescription for controlled substances.

- C.10. Respondent shall provide the Department Monitor with a list of over-the-counter medications and drugs that they may take from time to time. Respondent shall abstain from all use of over-the-counter medications, products, or other substances (including but not limited to natural substances, such as poppy seeds or any products containing alcohol) which may mask consumption of controlled substances or alcohol, create false positive screening results, or otherwise interfere with Respondent's test results, treatment or rehabilitation, unless ordered by a physician and approved by Treater, in which case the drug must be reported as described in paragraph C.11. It is Respondent's responsibility to educate herself about the medications and substances which may violate this paragraph, and to avoid those medications and substances.
- C.11. Respondent shall report to Treater and the Department Monitor all prescription medications and drugs taken by Respondent. Reports must be received within twenty-four (24) hours of administration, fill, or refill of the medication or drug, and shall identify the person or persons who prescribed, dispensed, administered, or ordered said medications or drugs. Each time the prescription is filled or refilled, Respondent shall immediately arrange for the prescriber or pharmacy to fax and mail copies of the prescription to the Department Monitor.

Drug and Alcohol Screens

- C.12. Respondent shall enroll and begin participation in a drug and alcohol monitoring program which is approved by the Department (Approved Program).
- C.13. At the time Respondent enrolls in the Approved Program, Respondent shall review all rules and procedures made available by the Approved Program. Failure to comply with all requirements for participation in drug and alcohol monitoring established by the Approved Program is a violation of this Order. The requirements shall include:
- (a) Contact with the Approved Program as directed on a daily basis, including vacations, weekends, and holidays.
 - (b) Production of a urine, blood, sweat, nail, hair, saliva, or other specimen at a collection site designated by the Approved Program within five (5) hours of notification of a test.
- C.14. The Approved Program shall require the testing of specimens at a frequency of not less than forty-nine (49) times per year (one of which must be a hair test), for at least the first year of this Order. Thereafter the board may adjust the frequency of testing on its own initiative at any time, and/or Respondent may petition for modification of testing frequency per paragraph D.5.
- C.15. If any urine, blood, sweat, nail, hair, saliva, or other specimen is positive or suspected positive for any controlled substances or alcohol, Respondent shall promptly submit to additional tests or examinations, as the Board or its designee shall determine to be appropriate, to clarify or confirm the positive or suspected positive test results.

- C.16. In addition to any requirement of the Approved Program, the Board or its designee may require Respondent to do any or all of the following: (a) submit additional specimens; (b) furnish any specimen in a directly witnessed manner; or (c) submit specimens on a more frequent basis.
- C.17. All confirmed positive test results shall be presumed valid. Respondent must prove, by a preponderance of the evidence, an error in collection, testing, fault in the chain of custody, or other valid defense.
- C.18. The Approved Program shall submit information and reports to the Department Monitor as directed.

Practice Limitations

- C.19. Respondent shall not work as a nurse or other health care provider in a setting in which Respondent has access to controlled substances.
- C.20. Respondent shall practice only under the direct supervision of a licensed nurse or other licensed health care professional, approved by the Board or its designee, who has received a copy of this Order.
- C.21. Respondent shall practice only in a work setting pre-approved by the Board or its designee. Requests for pre-approval must be accompanied by a current job description, name and contact information of the direct supervisor, and written acknowledgment from the employer that a copy of this Order has been received and that the restrictions will be accommodated.
- C.22. Respondent may not work in a home health care, hospice, pool nursing, assisted living, agency, or as a nurse in a correctional setting.
- C.23. Prior to commencing practice, Respondent shall provide a copy of this Order, and all other subsequent orders, immediately to supervisory personnel at all settings where Respondent works as a nurse or care giver or provides health care, currently or in the future.
- C.24. It is Respondent's responsibility to arrange for quarterly written reports to be submitted to the Department Monitor from his or her supervisor at each setting in which Respondent practiced nursing in the previous quarter. These reports shall be submitted as directed by the Department Monitor, and shall assess Respondent's work performance, and shall include the number of hours of active nursing practice worked during that quarter. If a report indicates poor performance, the Board may institute appropriate corrective limitations, or may revoke a stay of the suspension, in its discretion.
- C.25. 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. This report shall not be considered formal change of address notification pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 440.11.

MISCELLANEOUS

Department Monitor

- D.1. Any requests, petitions, reports, and other information required by this Order shall be mailed, e-mailed, faxed, or delivered to:

Department Monitor
Division of Legal Services and Compliance
Department of Safety and Professional Services
P.O. Box 7190, Madison, WI 53707-7190
Telephone (608) 267-3817; Fax (608) 266-2264
DSPSMonitoring@wisconsin.gov

You may also submit this information online via DSPS' Monitoring Case Management System, here:

www.dspsmonitoring.wi.gov

Required Reporting by Respondent

- D.2. Respondent is responsible for compliance with all terms and conditions of this Order, including the timely submission of reports by others. Respondent shall promptly notify the Department Monitor of any failures of the Treater, treatment facility, Approved Program, or collection sites to conform to the terms and conditions of this Order. Respondent shall promptly notify the Department Monitor of any violations of any of the terms and conditions of this Order by Respondent.
- D.3. Respondent shall submit self-reports to the Department Monitor on a quarterly basis, as directed by the Department Monitor. The reports shall include a summary of Respondent's compliance with the terms and conditions of the Order in the previous quarter, Respondent's current address, and home telephone number. The self-report shall not be considered formal change of address notification pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 440.11.

Change of Treater or Approved Program by Board

- D.4. If the Board, or its designee, determines the Treater or Approved Program has performed inadequately or has failed to satisfy the terms and conditions of this Order, the Board, or its designee, may direct that Respondent continue treatment and rehabilitation under the direction of another Treater or Approved Program.

Petitions for Modification of Limitations or Termination of Order

- D.5. Respondent may petition the Board on an annual basis for modification of the terms of this Order; however, no such petition for modification shall occur earlier than one (1) year from the date of the initial stay of the suspension. Any petition for modification shall be

accompanied by a written recommendation from Respondent's Treater expressly supporting the specific modifications sought. Denial of a petition in whole or in part shall not be considered a denial of a license within the meaning of Wis. Stat. § 227.01(3)(a), and Respondent shall not have a right to any further hearings or proceedings on the denial.

D.6. Respondent may petition the Board for termination of this Order after demonstrating five (5) years of successful compliance with all terms, including at least 600 hours of approved nursing practice each year. The Board may, on its own motion, grant full Wisconsin licensure at any time.

Costs of Compliance

D.7. 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. Being dropped from a program for non-payment is a violation of this Order.

Costs of Proceeding

D.8. Respondent shall pay costs of \$2,447.00 to the Department, within 120 days of this Order. Payment may be made online at www.dspsonline.wi.gov, or mailed to the attention of the Department Monitor at the address in paragraph D.1., above.

Additional Discipline

D.9. In addition to any other action authorized by this Order or law, the Board, in its discretion, may impose additional limitations or pursue separate disciplinary action for violation of any term of this Order.

WISCONSIN BOARD OF NURSING

By: 
A Member of the Board

3/20/2020
Date

STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE BOARD OF NURSING

IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST

CARISSA L. STERWALD-FINCH, R.N.,
RESPONDENT.

STIPULATION

ORDER 00067 10

Division of Legal Services and Compliance Case No. 17 NUR 524

Respondent Carissa L. Sterwald-Finch, R.N., and the Division of Legal Services and Compliance, Department of Safety and Professional Services, stipulate as follows:

1. This Stipulation is entered into as a result of a pending investigation by the Division of Legal Services and Compliance. Respondent consents to the resolution of this investigation by Stipulation.

2. Respondent understands that by signing this Stipulation, Respondent voluntarily and knowingly waives the following rights:

- the right to a hearing on the allegations against Respondent, at which time the State has the burden of proving those allegations by a preponderance of the evidence;
- the right to confront and cross-examine the witnesses against Respondent;
- the right to call witnesses on Respondent's behalf and to compel their attendance by subpoena;
- the right to testify on Respondent's own behalf;
- 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, the Wisconsin Administrative Code, and other provisions of state or federal law.

3. Respondent is aware of Respondent's right to seek legal representation and has been provided an opportunity to obtain legal counsel before signing this Stipulation.

4. Respondent agrees to the adoption of the attached Final Decision and Order by the Wisconsin Board of Nursing (Board). The parties to the Stipulation 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.

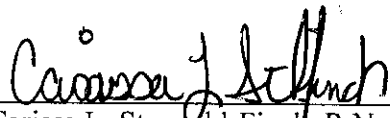
5. If the terms of this Stipulation are not acceptable to the Board, the parties shall not be bound by the contents of this Stipulation, and the matter shall then be returned to the Division

of Legal Services and Compliance for further proceedings. In the event that the 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 to this Stipulation agree that the attorney or other agent for the Division of Legal Services and Compliance and any member of the Board ever assigned as an advisor in this investigation may appear before the Board in open or closed session, without the presence of Respondent, for purposes of speaking in support of this agreement and answering questions that any member of the Board may have in connection with deliberations on the Stipulation. Additionally, any such advisor may vote on whether the Board should accept this Stipulation and issue the attached Final Decision and Order.


7. 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 accordance with standard Department procedure.

8. The Division of Legal Services and Compliance joins Respondent in recommending the Board adopt this Stipulation and issue the attached Final Decision and Order.



Carissa L. Sterwald-Finch, R.N., Respondent
Watertown, WI 53098
License No. 189945-30

2-3-20
Date



Carley J. Peich Kiesling, Prosecuting Attorney
Department of Safety and Professional Services
Division of Legal Services and Compliance
P.O. Box 7190
Madison WI 53707-7190

2/5/2020
Date