

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



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STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE SOCIAL WORKER SECTION OF THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
THERAPY, PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING AND SOCIAL WORK EXAMINING BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY :
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST :
 : FINAL DECISION AND ORDER
HOPE LAWLESS, S.W., :
RESPONDENT. :

ORDER 0008828

Division of Legal Services and Compliance Case No. 22 SOC 039

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

Hope Lawless, S.W.
La Crosse, WI 54603

Wisconsin Social Worker Section of the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional
Counseling and Social Work Examining Board
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 Social Worker Section of the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board (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, Conclusions of Law, and Order.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Hope Lawless, S.W. (Respondent), (Year of Birth 1972) is certified by the state of Wisconsin as a social worker, having certificate number 8609-120, first issued on March 1, 2005, and current through February 28, 2025. Respondent's most recent address on file with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (Department) is in La Crosse, Wisconsin 54603.

2. At all times relevant to this proceeding, Respondent worked as a social worker at a medical facility located in La Crosse, Wisconsin (Facility).

3. On January 12 and 21, 2022, Respondent utilized her position at the Facility to access the electronic health records of Patient A, a male born in 1972, and his spouse in order to obtain their contact information.

4. During the Facility's investigation, Respondent admitted to searching for Patient A and his spouse's confidential patient information without a business reason.

5. Respondent provided a statement to the Department in which she admitted she had accessed Patient A's telephone number to let Patient A, a childhood friend of Respondent, know that a mutual friend had passed away. Respondent said she believed if she did not open Patient A's chart or access his medical information, it was not a violation. Respondent admitted her mistake and expressed regret.

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

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Section has jurisdiction to act in this matter pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 457.26(2) 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 a law of any jurisdiction, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the practice under the credential, pursuant to Wis. Admin Code § MPSW 20.02(2).

3. As a result of the above conduct, Respondent is subject to discipline pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 457.26(2) and Wis. Admin. Code § MPSW 20.02(2).

ORDER

1. The attached Stipulation is accepted.

2. Respondent is REPRIMANDED.

3. Respondent's certificate to practice as a social worker in the state of Wisconsin (certificate number 8609-120), is LIMITED as follows:

- a. Within ninety (90) days of the date of this Order, Respondent shall at her own expense, successfully complete two (2) hours of education on the topic of patient privacy and patient records offered by a provider pre-approved by the Section monitoring liaison, including taking and passing any exam offered for the course(s).
- b. Respondent shall submit proof of successful completion of the 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 Section or Department, and also may not be used in future attempts to upgrade a credential in Wisconsin.

- c. The Section monitoring liaison may change the number of credit hours and/or education topics in response to a request from Respondent. The monitoring liaison may consider the topic availability and/or hours of education when determining if a change to the ordered education should occur.
- d. This limitation shall be removed from Respondent's license after satisfying the Section or its designee that Respondent has successfully completed all the ordered education.

4. Within ninety (90) days from the date of this Order, Respondent shall pay COSTS of this matter in the amount of \$824.00.

5. Any requests, petitions, payments of costs (made payable to Department of Safety and Professional Services), and other information required by this Order shall be submitted 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) 266-2112; Fax (608) 266-2264
DSPSMonitoring@wisconsin.gov

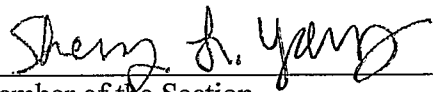
Respondent may also submit this information online at: <https://dpsmonitoring.wi.gov>.

6. In the event Respondent violates any term of this Order, Respondent's certificate (number 8609-120), or Respondent's right to renew her certificate, may, in the discretion of the Section or its designee, be SUSPENDED, without further notice or hearing, until Respondent has complied with the terms of the Order. The Section may, in addition and/or in the alternative refer any violation of this Order to the Division of Legal Services and Compliance for further investigation and action.

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

WISCONSIN SOCIAL WORKER SECTION OF THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
THERAPY, PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING AND SOCIAL WORK EXAMINING
BOARD

By:


A Member of the Section

10/17/23

Date

STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE SOCIAL WORKER SECTION OF THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
THERAPY, PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING AND SOCIAL WORK EXAMINING BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF DISCIPLINARY
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST

HOPE LAWLESS, S.W.,
RESPONDENT.

STIPULATION

ORDER 0008828

Division of Legal Services and Compliance Case No. 22 SOC 039

Hope Lawless, S.W. (Respondent), 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 Social Worker Section of the Marriage and Family Therapy, Professional Counseling and Social Work Examining Board (Section). 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 Section's order, if adopted in the form as attached.

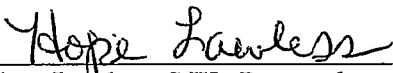
5. If the terms of this Stipulation are not acceptable to the Section, the parties shall not be bound by the contents of this Stipulation, and the matter shall then be returned to the Division of Legal Services and Compliance for further proceedings. In the event that the Stipulation is not accepted by the Section, the parties agree not to contend that the Section 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 Section ever assigned as an advisor in this investigation may appear before the Section 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 Section may have in connection with deliberations on the Stipulation. Additionally, any such advisor may vote on whether the Section should accept this Stipulation and issue the attached Final Decision and Order.

7. Respondent is informed that should the Section adopt this Stipulation, the Section's Final Decision and Order is a public record and will be published in accordance with standard Department procedure.


8. Respondent is further informed that should the Section adopt this Stipulation, the Section's Final Decision and Order will be reported as required by the National Practitioner Databank (NPDB) Guidebook and as otherwise required by any licensure compact or any other state or federal law.

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



Hope Lawless, S.W., Respondent
La Crosse, WI 54603
Certificate No. 8609-120

7-24-23
Date



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

August 10, 2023
Date