

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF LICENSED CLINICAL
MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS

IN THE MATTER OF:)
)
Tonja Price, LCMHC) **CONSENT ORDER**
Respondent)
No. 5137)

THIS CAUSE, coming on to be heard and being heard before the North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors [“the Board”], regarding pending complaint number 2261; and

IT APPEARING to the Board that the Respondent has stipulated to certain facts and to the entry of a Consent Order in conformity therewith;

IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED by the undersigned Respondent and the Board for the purposes of this disciplinary proceeding that:

1. Respondent was at all times relevant to this cause a licensed clinical mental health counselor [“LCMHC”] and is subject to the Board’s jurisdiction pursuant to the North Carolina Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors Act, Chapter 90, Article 24 of the North Carolina General Statutes.
2. The Board issued a license to Respondent on December 2, 2005, which clinical mental health counselor license she renewed through June 30, 2027.
3. The Board’s Ethics Review Committee found probable cause that Respondent engaged in the following conduct while licensed by the Board:
 - a. Respondent began providing telehealth counseling to Complainant via the BetterHelp platform in November 2023.
 - b. Beginning in May 2024 through January 2025, Respondent provided counseling to Complainant via Zoom because Complainant could not continue sessions through the platform due to her financial issues. Respondent reports that she did not charge for these sessions and that her intent was to provide “check-ins” until Complainant could financially afford to transfer to other services.
 - c. Respondent also provided Complainant with her cell phone number at that time initially to coordinate and schedule future sessions.
 - d. Respondent and Complainant began texting extensively in between sessions and engaged in a voluminous number of text exchanges, which were not sent using a HIPAA-compliant medium.
 - e. During these text conversations, Respondent began sharing personal issues with the Complainant, including health, family, and financial issues.

- f. Respondent also provided her home address to Complainant who then sent Respondent a gift package when she was ill.
 - g. Because of these ongoing and extensive communications on personal issues, Complainant viewed the additional relationship as friendship.
 - h. As a result, Respondent's counseling relationship ended, which was detrimental to the Complainant.
 - i. Respondent failed to create documentation of these extensive communications and boundary extensions with Complainant.
 - j. Respondent admitted to the Board Investigator that this situation involved repeated boundary extensions, was a lapse in professional judgment, and she regretted not establishing clear boundaries with texting Complainant.
4. The Committee concluded that Respondent's conduct, as set forth in Paragraph 3 above, violated Sections A.5.e, A.6.b, A.6.c, B.3.e, B.6.a, and H.4.b of the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014) ["ACA Ethics Code"] and N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 90-340 (a)(9) of the North Carolina Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors Act.
5. In determining the appropriate action for the violations set forth in Paragraph 4 above, the Committee noted that Respondent has been licensed for almost twenty years, had no prior disciplinary action, and submitted strong letters of support concerning her counseling abilities from a former employer and supervisor.
6. Counselors must create, safeguard, and maintain adequate records for clients and past clients pursuant to the ACA Ethics Code Sections A.1.b. and B.6.a., regardless of what medium or vendor they utilize. Respondent and other counselors may only participate in or utilize electronic record systems or platforms that comply with the counselor's obligations, including the secure storage of and access to records of clients and former clients.
7. The Board and Respondent wish to avoid the time and the costs associated with full litigation of this matter and, *in lieu* of any proceedings, enter into this Consent Order.
8. This Consent Order contains the entire agreement between the undersigned, there being no agreement of any kind, verbal or otherwise, which varies, alters, or adds to this Consent Order.
9. Respondent understands and agrees that this Consent Order must be presented to the Board for review and potential approval and shall be effective only after approval by the full Board and entered by signature of its Chairperson.
10. Respondent further agrees that presentation of this Consent Order to the Board for review and potential approval shall not constitute improper *ex parte* communication between the Board and its counsel, or the Board and its staff, nor require the recusal of the members of the Board from consideration of this matter before the full Board if the Board rejects the Consent Order and a contested case hearing is required in this case.

11. Respondent has read this entire Consent Order, assents to its terms and conditions, and agrees not to contest the findings, conclusions, or order in any future potential proceedings by, against, or involving the Board.

12. Respondent expressly waives notice of hearing, a hearing, the making of findings of fact and conclusions of law, and all further proceedings before the Board to which Respondent may be entitled by law.

13. Respondent waives the right to seek judicial review or to otherwise challenge the validity of this Consent Order in any court or before the Board in the future.

14. Upon entry of the Consent Order, Respondent forever releases the State of North Carolina, the North Carolina Board of Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors, and all its members, officials, agents, counsel, representatives, and employees, both past and present, in their individual or official capacities, from any and all liability, suits, claims, and causes of action arising prior to or as a result of the execution of this Consent Order.

15. This Consent Order shall constitute disciplinary action against the license of Respondent, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §90-340(a) and (b).

16. The Board shall maintain this Consent Order as a public record pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §§132-1 and 90-340(f), shall submit a report to the National Practitioner Databank, and shall provide copies to the American Counseling Association and the National Board of Certified Counselors, and to other agencies or individuals as required by law.

17. Respondent understands that entry of this Consent Order as a public record, mandatory reporting, and its distribution may have adverse consequences in other contexts, which shall not be the basis for reconsideration of its terms in the future.

18. Respondent was represented by Vicki Goldstein in connection with the execution of this Consent Order. The Board was represented in this Consent Order by Douglas Brocker of The Brocker Law Firm, P.A.

19. Respondent agrees to service of the fully executed Consent Order via email to her counsel and waives service by any other method.

Based upon the record and the foregoing stipulations,

NOW, THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

I. Respondent's license number 5137 is placed on PROBATION, provided she complies with all the following conditions:

- a. Respondent shall complete a minimum of 2,000 hours of supervised clinical mental health practice under these conditions:

- i. The supervisor shall be approved by the Board, pursuant to Administrative Rules 21 NCAC 53 .0702 and 21 NCAC 53 .0801, to supervise Respondent's professional practice ["Supervisor"], prior to the beginning of supervision;
 - ii. The supervision contract shall be filed with the Board office no later than 60 days from the date the Consent Order is entered by the Board;
 - iii. Respondent shall provide a copy of the Consent Order to her Supervisor. The Supervisor(s) shall confirm the receipt of the Consent Order in the first supervision report;
 - iv. Of the required 2,000 hours of supervised clinical mental health practice, 1,320 hours shall be direct service to clients;
 - v. The supervised experience shall be completed at a rate of no more than 40 hours per week (one hour of supervision per 40 hours of professional practice);
 - vi. The Supervisor shall file quarterly reports and a final report with the Board. Respondent is responsible for ensuring the Supervisor submits the quarterly reports to the Board no later than January 30, April 30, July 30, and October 30 for the previous quarter; and
 - vii. Respondent shall bear any costs and associated expenses of the supervision.
- b. Within 90 days from the date the Consent Order is entered by the Board, Respondent shall complete the following additional 15 CE hours approved in advance by the Board consisting of five hours each on: (i) appropriate professional boundaries and boundary extensions; (ii) creating and maintaining adequate client records and documentation, including any boundary extensions; and (iii) appropriate and secure use of digital counseling and communications with clients. This coursework requirement shall be in addition to the continuing education coursework required for all licensees under the Board's Administrative Rules. All costs associated with this continuing education requirement shall be borne by Respondent. Upon successful completion of this continuing education coursework, Respondent shall submit to the Board a certificate of completion provided by the continuing education sponsor.
- c. Respondent shall not violate any provision of the Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors Act and the Board's rules and regulations, including the ACA Code of Ethics.
- d. Respondent shall submit to interviews by the Board or its authorized agent and arrange for the Board or its agent to interview her employer, employees, and co-workers during regular office hours or at such other times as are mutually convenient.
- e. Respondent shall comply with all requirements for renewal of licensure, including continuing education and payment of fees.

- f. Respondent shall keep the Board apprised of her current address, phone number, and email and notify the Board of any change to that contact information no later than ten days after it becomes effective.

II. Respondent may petition the Board to be released from Probation once she has completed the requirements set forth in Paragraph I above and provides supporting documentation or evidence that she has satisfied all conditions. Respondent shall remain on Probation until the Board grants such a Petition.

III. The Board recognizes that the conditions, limitations, or requirements set forth in this Consent Order may present Respondent with certain practical difficulties. The Board concludes that each one is necessary to ensure public protection, and it does not intend to modify or eliminate any of the conditions, limitations, or requirements set forth herein based on such potential difficulties, except as noted in Paragraph II.

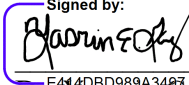
IV. The Board shall retain jurisdiction of this matter and Respondent to enforce the provisions herein or enter orders as necessary in the future.

V. If Respondent fails to comply with any provision of this Consent Order or breaches any term or condition thereof, the Board shall promptly schedule a public Show Cause Hearing to allow Respondent an opportunity to show cause as to why Respondent's license shall not be suspended for violating a valid order of the Board. If after the Show Cause Hearing, the Board is satisfied by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent failed to comply with or breached any term or condition of this Consent Order, the Board shall suspend her license and also may enter such other discipline or conditions as the evidence warrants for proven violations of the Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselors Act or of the Board's Rules occurring after entry of this Consent Order.

VI. This Order is effective as of the date it is signed by the Chair and served on Respondent's counsel to her email address.

CONSENTED TO BY:

NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF LICENSED
CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS

BY:  10/20/25
Signed by:
E414DBD989A3407
 Dr. Yasmin Gay, LCMHCS Date
 Board Chairperson

RESPONDENT:

 10 / 14 / 2025
 Tonja Price Date

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