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FILED BY THE BOARD OF
SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

11/16/01

By: Kathy Stroh Mendoza,
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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
STATE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS

IN THE MATTER OF THE SUSPENSION:
OR REVOCATION OF THE LICENSE OF:

KATHERINE COOPER, L.C.S.W.

:
: Administrative Action
:

TO PRACTICE SOCIAL WORK IN THE
STATE OF NEW JERSEY

:
: **CONSENT ORDER**
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This matter was opened to the New Jersey State Board of Social Work Examiners (hereinafter "the Board") upon receipt of a complaint from W.T. who alleges that Katherine A. Cooper (hereinafter "Respondent"), Licensed Clinical Social Worker (hereinafter "LCSW") violated the Social Workers' Licensing Act while providing therapy to W.T. for approximately one year. Specifically, W.T. alleges that while providing therapy, Respondent crossed professional boundaries and engaged in sex with W.T.

On March 31, 2000, Katherine A. Cooper was served with a Verified Complaint and an Order to Show Cause to the Board as to why her license should not be temporarily suspended, and a penalty and costs of investigation and prosecution assessed. The complaint recited alleged violations of N.J.S.A. 45:15B-1, et seq., N.J.S.A. 45:1-14, et seq., N.J.A.C. 13:44G-1.1, et seq. and N.J.A.C. 13:45C-1.1, et seq.

On April 5, 2000, Respondent appeared with former counsel Christopher Cona, Esq. for a hearing on the Attorney General's application for temporary suspension. Respondent admitted to having authored a journal, letters, cards, and other correspondence to W.T. She admitted to having traveled to his home and to spending an evening at home with him alone on his patio. She denied all allegations of engaging in a sexual relationship with W.T. or encouraging W.T. to have sex with a minor male child who was also her client.

The Board reviewed the entire record, including the report by the Enforcement Bureau, and the testimony of Respondent, the statement of W.T. to the Glassboro Police Department and the Complaint of W.T. to the Washington Township Police Department. It appeared to the Board that Respondent's relationship with W.T. significantly crossed the professional boundaries between therapist and client, thereby limiting Respondent's objectivity, impairing her professional judgment, and exploiting W.T., in violation of N.J.A.C. 13:44G-10.4, providing a basis for discipline pursuant to N.J.S.A. 45:1-21(c) (d) (e) and (h). In an Order of Temporary Suspension filed on April 14, 2000, the Board concluded that the evidence palpably demonstrated a clear and imminent danger to the public were Respondent to continue to practice pending adjudication of the charges in the Verified Complaint.

Effective April 5, 2000, Respondent's license to practice social work in the State of New Jersey was temporarily suspended pending disposition of a plenary hearing. Pursuant to a Board Order filed April 14, 2000, Respondent was to cooperate with mental health professionals at her place of employment to facilitate the referral of her clients to other therapists, return her New Jersey license to the Board, and refrain from holding herself out as a social worker or practicing social work in the State of New Jersey.

Respondent filed a general denial on April 5, 2000. The Board deemed the matter a contested case and transmitted it to the Office of Administrative Law where it was filed on July 13, 2000.

It now appearing that Respondent desires to resolve this matter without recourse to formal proceedings and for good cause shown:

IT IS on this 14th day of *November* 2001;

HEREBY ORDERED AND AGREED THAT:

1. Respondent's license to practice social work in the State of New Jersey is hereby suspended for a period of five years retroactive to April 5, 2000. The first two years of the suspension shall be active and the remaining three years shall be stayed and shall serve as a period of probation conditioned upon full compliance with the terms of the within Consent Order.

2. Respondent is hereby also reprimanded for her unprofessional conduct with her client W.T.

3. Commencing upon the entry of the within Consent Order, Respondent shall engage in weekly psychotherapy for a minimum of twelve months with a therapist approved by the Board, and Respondent shall provide the therapist with a copy of this Consent Order. After the completion of the twelve months, the frequency of the therapy, if any, shall be determined by the therapist. Respondent shall cause the therapist to provide quarterly reports directly to the Board with respect to her attendance and progress in therapy.

4. The active suspension of Respondent's license to practice social work means that Respondent shall not hold herself out as a social worker or practice social work in this State or any other state, including, but not limited to, exempt settings as defined in N.J.S.A. 45:15BB-5.

5. During the period of active suspension, Respondent shall enroll in and successfully complete twenty (20) hours of continuing education coursework in ethics and boundary violations approved by the Board. This

coursework is in addition to the requisite continuing education that routinely accompanies licensure and certification renewal pursuant to N.J.A.C. 13:44G-6.1, et seq.

6. Prior to resumption of practice and close in time to the end of active suspension, or immediately thereafter, Respondent shall submit to a comprehensive psychological evaluation performed by a Board approved therapist. Respondent shall pay all costs of said evaluation, arrange for the therapist to provide the Board with a copy of the evaluation, and agree to the release of any and all records relating to the evaluation.

7. Upon completion of the active period of suspension and before resumption of her professional practice, Respondent shall appear before the Board to demonstrate her ability and fitness to practice social work and her plans for supervised practice. The Board reserves the right to extend the active period of suspension to impose such restrictions or limitations as it may deem necessary.

8. During the stayed term of the suspension, Respondent shall practice only under the supervision of a Board approved supervisor who shall be provided by Respondent with a copy of the Consent Order and who Respondent shall cause to provide quarterly reports directly to the Board regarding the supervision. Respondent's client base shall be limited in number, as determined by the Board. The terms of supervision and the choice of supervisor shall be subject to the Board's approval. Clinical supervision shall take place in accordance with N.J.A.C. 13:44G-8.1. The supervisor shall address issues of boundary violations in each case. Respondent shall not resume practice until an agreement identifying the supervisor and terms of supervision has been executed by all parties and filed with the Board.

9. Upon completion of the stayed period of suspension, Respondent shall appear before the Board to demonstrate her ability and fitness to practice social work. The Board reserves the right to extend the stayed

period of suspension or to impose such restrictions or limitations as it may deem necessary.

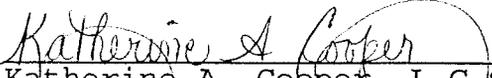
10. Respondent shall pay the costs of the investigation of this matter in the amount of twenty five thousand nine hundred nine and eight cents (\$25,909.08) in sixty (60) monthly installments, with each installment being in the amount of four hundred thirty one dollars and eighty-one cents (\$431.81). Respondent shall also pay simple interest on installments #13-60 at the rate of 5.5%, pursuant to R.4:42-11.

The first payment shall be due by the first day of the month following Respondent's signing of the within Consent Order, and all subsequent payments are due every month on or before the first day of the month by check or money order, payable to the State of New Jersey, and sent to Leslie Aronson, Executive Director, State Board of Social Work Examiners, 124 Halsey Street, Sixth Floor, Newark, New Jersey 07101. If any payment is not timely, the full amount shall become immediately due and payable.

11. Upon proof of any violations of the within Consent Order or any violations of the laws of New Jersey, the Board in its discretion may activate any remaining periods of the stayed suspension or the suspension in its entirety, or impose any other appropriate sanction authorized by law.


Mariagnes Lattimer, MSW, LCSW

I have read the within Consent Order and understand its terms. I hereby consent to its entry and to be bound by the Consent Order's terms.


Katherine A. Cooper, L.C.S.W.

This Consent Order is approved as form and entry:


Teri Lodge, Esquire

Attorney for Respondent: