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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
BOARD OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY
EXAMINERS

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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
THE STATE BOARD OF
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY EXAMINERS

IN THE MATTER OF THE LICENSE OF : Administrative Action
: CONSENT ORDER OF
WILLIE POWELL, LMFT : VOLUNTARY SURRENDER
License No. 37100055600 :
:
TO PRACTICE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY :
THERAPY IN THE STATE OF :
NEW JERSEY :
:
:

This matter was opened before the New Jersey Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners (the "Board") following review of a complaint filed by A.G., who participated with her family in therapy sessions conducted by Willie Powell ("Respondent"). A.G. alleged in her complaint that Respondent engaged in professional misconduct by speaking aggressively, using obscenities and yelling during therapy sessions. She

claimed that, in the midst of a tense exchange between her parents during a therapy session, Respondent stormed out of the room and stated that the parents were crazy and could "figure this shit out themselves." She asserted that Respondent told her he would no longer serve as her family's therapist and then returned to the room where her family was waiting and stated that the family was too far gone to benefit from counseling. He then rescinded his threat to terminate therapy and stated that he would stop cursing. A.G. reported that the next day, Respondent left her a voicemail thanking her for the "supervision" she provided. A.G. stated that Respondent placed her in the role of a clinician who was supervising him rather than occupying the role as her clinician.

Respondent appeared at an investigative inquiry before the Board on January 9, 2014. The Board questioned Respondent about discrepancies between certain billing dates and session notes. Respondent testified that he was not sure all of the records were submitted to the Board and did not carefully review the documents prior to submission. He stated that he does not provide billing statements to clients but does provide patients with receipts for co-pays and is not careful about maintaining complete records of payments or the type of service rendered.

Respondent testified that he had no formal training in family therapy but has a lot of experience dealing with

difficult families. He stated that he has had little training in treatment planning and that he does not consider it to be a priority. He further testified that, when a patient discontinues treatment, he does not follow up with the patient and send a termination letter or write a treatment summary or discharge summary.

The Board also questioned Respondent about his training in the specialties he advertised in his brochure which are: individual, marriage and family therapy, multicultural and gay and lesbian issues, parenting skills, behavioral interventions, anger management and advocacy. Respondent testified that his training resulted largely from working with clients and that he has no formal training.

In his response to the complaint and at the investigative inquiry, Respondent admitted that during the sessions with A.G. and her family, he repeatedly used derogatory and profane language, had an aggressive tone and raised his voice but he denied yelling. He testified that he learned to use profanity, or street language, growing up in the inner city and that it enables him to engage with clients. He admitted to having transference and countertransference toward A.G. He stated that he viewed A.G. as "a colleague rather than a client" and that he thanked her for her "supervision." Respondent testified that, in light of the fact that A.G. has a Masters of Social Work and

did not like his abrasive approach and use of profane language, he should have changed his therapeutic approach and he apologized for not having done so.

Subsequent to the investigative inquiry the Board reviewed Respondent's license renewal applications and found that, although Respondent certified in his 2008-2010 renewal application that he had satisfied his continuing education requirements, he was missing twenty-three credits including five ethics credits. Additionally, Respondent certified that he satisfied the continuing education requirements for the renewal period 2010-2012 but all of the credits he provided were completed after the renewal period ended and therefore do not count for the 2010-2012 renewal period.

Having reviewed the entire record, the Board finds that Respondent's behavior during therapy sessions and interactions with A.G., both as described above, constitute professional misconduct within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 45:1-21(e); Respondent's failure to satisfy the continuing education requirements for the renewals of his license violates N.J.A.C. 13:34-9 and Respondent's certifications in both renewal applications that he had satisfied the continuing education requirements constitute misrepresentations within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 45:1-21(b). Respondent's violations of the regulations and statutes governing the practice of marriage and family

therapy are bases for the suspension or revocation of his license under N.J.S.A. 45:1-21. The parties desiring to resolve this matter without further proceedings, and the Board finding this Consent Order to be adequately protective of the public interest, and other good cause appearing;

IT IS ON THIS 12 DAY OF February, 2015,

HEREBY ORDERED AND AGREED THAT:

1. This Consent Order binds the Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners only. The entry of the within Order is without prejudice to the further investigation and/or prosecution of any violations by Respondent of any statutes or regulations governing any other practice in the State or any violations of law, by any other licensing board, the Attorney General, or any other regulatory or law enforcement agency, including but not limited to any pending matters under investigation.

2. Respondent is hereby granted leave and shall immediately and permanently surrender his license to practice as a marriage and family therapist, to be deemed a permanent retirement of his license to practice as a marriage and family therapist in the State of New Jersey with prejudice. Respondent shall never hereafter apply for reinstatement of his license and shall never apply to be a licensed marriage and family therapist in the State of New Jersey in the future.

3. Contemporaneously with the signing of this Consent Order, Respondent shall mail his license to practice as a marriage and family therapist to Executive Director Milagros Collazo, Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners, 124 Halsey Street, 6th Floor, Newark, New Jersey, 07101.

4. Upon the filing of this Consent Order, Respondent shall cease and desist providing any marriage and family therapy, counseling, coaching, life training or other service related to the practice of marriage and therapy in this State and any practice in this State shall constitute grounds for a charge of unlicensed practice and subject Respondent to disciplinary action.

5. Respondent shall promptly following the filing of this Consent Order, notify his clients that he is terminating services and provide for the transfer or referral of his clients, in compliance with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:34-6.3.

6. A civil penalty in the amount of one thousand and eight hundred dollars (\$1800) is imposed upon Respondent for the above described violations to be stayed and imposed only if Respondent violates any term of this Consent Order. In the event that Respondent is required to pay the civil penalty, payment shall be made by certified check, bank cashier check, or money order payable to "State of New Jersey," or by wire

transfer, direct deposit, or credit card payment delivered or mailed to Milagros Collazo, Executive Director, State of Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners, 124 Halsey Street, 6th Floor, Newark, New Jersey 07101. Any other form of payment will be rejected and will be returned to the party making the payment. Payment shall be made no later than fifteen (15) days after the date of filing of this Order. In the event Respondent fails to make a timely payment, a certificate of debt shall be filed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:1-24 and the Board may bring such other proceedings as authorized by law.

STATE BOARD OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY EXAMINERS

By Ben Beitin
Ben K. Beitin, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Board Chair

I have read and understand the provisions of this order and agree to be bound by them.

Willie Powell
Willie Powell, Respondent
Date: 1/8/2015