

From:

JOHN J. HOFFMAN
 ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY
 Division of Law
 124 Halsey Street - 5th Floor
 P.O. Box 45029
 Newark, New Jersey 07101
 Attorney for the Professional Counselors Examiners
 Committee of the Board of Marriage and Family Therapists

FILED
1 September 2016
 STATE OF NEW JERSEY
 BOARD OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY EXAMINERS
 PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR EXAMINERS COMMITTEE
Shirley P. Dickstein

By: Shirley P. Dickstein
 Deputy Attorney General
 Telephone (973) 648-7093

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

IN THE MATTER OF

Administrative Action

CONSENT ORDER

MICHAEL J. PETERSON
 LICENSE NO. 37AC00173800

TO PRACTICE AS A LICENSED
 ASSOCIATE COUNSELOR

This matter was opened to the Professional Counselor Examiners Committee of the New Jersey State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners ("Committee") upon receipt of information indicating that Michael J. Peterson, Licensed Associate Counselor ("Respondent") was arrested on February 2, 2014 by the Long Branch

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Police Department for one (1) count of N.J.S.A. 2C:14-2C(3)C, Sexual Assault by Foster Parent, one (1) count of N.J.S.A. 2C:24-9, Employing Juvenile in the Commission of Crime, one (1) count of N.J.S.A. 2C:35-10A(4), Possession of Marijuana/Hash, one (1) count of N.J.S.A. 2C:35-10C, Failed to Give Controlled Dangerous Substance to Police, one (1) count of N.J.S.A. 2C:36-2, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and one (1) count of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1, Child Abuse. Specifically, Respondent was arrested at his home with the seventeen year-old past crisis patient whom he had treated within the last six months. In a video recording of Respondent's police interview, Respondent admitted to engaging in a sexual relationship with the client while she was under his care and to using a controlled dangerous substance and possessing drug paraphernalia at the time of his arrest.

Respondent entered an Interim Consent Order following his arrest which required Respondent to (1) surrender his license to practice as an associate counselor in the State of New Jersey pending disposition of the criminal charges, and until further Order of the Committee and (2) cease and desist from holding himself out as a licensed associate counselor and/or practicing as a licensed associate counselor.

Subsequently, Respondent appeared before the Committee at an investigative inquiry and testified that his admissions in the police interview were false and that he made the admissions

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because, prior to the interview, the police encouraged him to make the admissions in order to gain a favorable disposition of the charges against him.

Respondent was not indicted for the above criminal charges and the matter was returned to the Long Branch Municipal Court for disposition of the charges. The court downgraded the charges to a disorderly person offense which resulted in a conditional discharge after one (1) year.

Having reviewed the entire record, it appears to the Committee that Respondent's admissions in the police interview were credible. Respondent's admission to engaging in a sexual relationship with a client constitutes sexual misconduct, in violation of N.J.A.C. 13:34-19.3, subjecting Respondent to disciplinary action under of N.J.S.A. 45:1-21(e). Respondent's admission to using a controlled dangerous substance and possession of drug paraphernalia demonstrates that Respondent engaged in professional misconduct, subjecting Respondent to disciplinary action under of N.J.S.A. 45:1-21(e). Respondent's admitted conduct is also in violation of N.J.S.A. 45:1-21(f) in that Respondent has engaged in conduct constituting crimes relating adversely to the activity regulated by the Committee.

The parties desiring to resolve this matter without further proceedings, Respondent waiving any right to a hearing, and the Committee finding this Consent Order to be adequately protective of

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the public interest, and other good cause appearing;

THEREFORE, IT IS ON THIS 1 DAY OF September, 2016,
ORDERED AND AGREED:

1. Respondent's license is hereby revoked with prejudice. Respondent shall never hereafter seek reinstatement of his license. Respondent shall immediately cease and desist from holding himself out as an associate counselor in New Jersey or providing any counseling, therapy, coaching, life training or other service related to the mental health profession in this State and any practice in this State shall constitute grounds for a charge of unlicensed practice and subject Respondent to disciplinary action.

2. Within five (5) days of the service of this Order, Respondent shall mail his license to: Milagros Collazo, Executive Director, Professional Counselor Examiners Committee, State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners, Newark, New Jersey 07101.

3. A penalty in the amount of \$2500.00 is hereby imposed on Respondent but stayed in full on condition that Respondent complies with all terms of this Order. Upon receipt of information that the Board in its sole discretion deems reliable that Respondent is not in compliance with any provision of this Consent Order, the stayed penalty shall be activated and be immediately due and payable. In that event, payment shall be made by certified check, bank cashier check, or money order payable to the State of New Jersey, or by wire transfer, direct deposit, or credit card payment delivered or

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mailed to Milagros Collazo, Executive Director, Professional Counselor Examiners Committee, State Board of Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners, Newark, New Jersey 07101. Any other form of payment will be rejected and will be returned to the party making the payment. 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.

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR EXAMINERS COMMITTEE
 OF THE STATE BOARD OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
 THERAPY EXDAMINERS

By: William Green LRC
 William Green, L.R.C.
 Committee Chair

I have read and understood the within Consent Order and I agree to be bound by its terms. Consent is hereby given to the Board to enter this Order.

Michael Peterson
 Michael Peterson

Dated: 8/26/2016

This Order is agreed to as to form and entry.

Alton D. Kenney, Esq.
 Alton D. Kenney, Esq.
 Attorney for Michael Peterson

Dated: 8/24/2016