
In the Matter of

* LOUISIANA PHYSICAL THERAPY BOARD

CARRIE SIGNAL

*

PTA License No. A6877

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Respondent

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Case Number 2008 123

CONSENT ORDER

A complaint received by the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board (Board) from her supervisor in May, 2008 indicated that a home health patient had complained that he had not been treated according to his treatment schedule by Carrie Signal, a physical therapist assistant licensed by the Board. The patient indicated that he had seen Respondent once recently, but only for about 15 minutes and had been presented two treatment records for signature, one of which was blank of usual writing describing treatment received, dates and times.

Respondent was confronted regarding the patient complaint by her supervisor and denied patient version of treatment visit. Her supervisor contacted two other home health patients who had been treated by Respondent and got reports from them of short treatment sessions and inconsistent therapy. Respondent's contract to provide PRN physical therapy services to employer's patients was terminated and her conduct was promptly reported to the Board.

After unsuccessful efforts to reach Respondent by telephone, Respondent was notified in writing of the complaint and requested to attend an Informal Conference at the Board office in Lafayette on May 21, 2008. Respondent called Board counsel in response to that letter, indicating that she was moving to Germany to follow her husband's assignment there by the U.S. Air Force and that she could not attend the scheduled Informal Conference. She indicated that she would not be practicing physical therapy and was requested to surrender her license to the Board and confirm in writing that she would not attempt to practice as a physical therapist assistant until she resolved the pending complaint with the Board. This was not done, and mail sent to her last known address was returned unclaimed. Board counsel confronted Respondent regarding her failure to follow through on her commitments by email in December and received a response to that message, and subsequently received her returned license.

Respondent returned to Louisiana in August, 2010 and in mid-September contacted the Board to resolve the pending matter and obtain her license. She met with investigating Board member Dan Wood, Board Executive Director Cheryl Gaudin and General Counsel Glenn Ducote in Alexandria in an abbreviated Informal Conference in Alexandria on November 2, 2010 and subsequently met with the same team at the Board office on February 24, 2011 when the terms of this Consent Order were agreed upon with Board Member Dan Wood for presentation to the Board.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Respondent falsely documented treatment provided to a home health patient in May, 2008 and made substantive misrepresentations to her employer regarding treatment for the patient in question.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Respondent's conduct described above and otherwise reviewed in this action is subject to and/or in violation of the following provisions of law regarding her practice of physical therapy:

1. The Board has the authority to suspend or revoke a license which it has issued, or place probationary conditions upon such license, upon proof that the licensee has been guilty of unprofessional conduct or has violated the Practice Act of Rules of the Board. La. R. S. 37:2420A and Board Rule 325.

2. As used in the Physical Therapy Practice Act, "unprofessional conduct" includes: departure from, or failure to conform to the standards of acceptable and prevailing physical therapy practice in the State of Louisiana, regardless of whether actual injury to a patient results therefrom. Rule 327E.

3. Board Rules incorporate the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Ethical Conduct for Physical Therapist Assistants* of the American Physical Therapy Association. Rules 305B and 331.

4. Respondent's false documentation of patient treatment violates La. R.S. 37:2420A(1) and (7) as such conduct constitutes "unprofessional conduct" and is in violation of Board rules.

5. Respondent's false documentation of patient treatment violates Rules 323 and 327E(1) and (6).

6. Respondent's false documentation violates APTA *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Physical Therapist Assistants* 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

DECISION

Pursuant to the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and in order to avoid further administrative and judicial proceedings, Respondent and the Board, by vote of quorum, agree as follows:

A. Respondent's license as a physical therapist assistant is placed on probation for three years, beginning March 15, 2011, during which period her employment records, place of employment, patient treatment and billing records will be subject to random inspection and review for full legal compliance by a designated Board representative. Respondent and her employers are required to cooperate fully with these monitoring visits. During this three year probationary period, Respondent shall remit to the Board \$150 as reimbursement for the expenses of each such monitoring visit to her practice.

B. The three-year probationary period shall be extended for any period of time in which Respondent is not employed as a physical therapist assistant within the State of Louisiana and regularly working at least twenty hours per week as such. If Respondent ceases to be regularly

employed as a physical therapist assistant in Louisiana, she shall notify the Executive Director in writing within ten days of the last date Respondent has practiced physical therapy in Louisiana. Likewise, if Respondent returns to work as a physical therapist assistant within the State of Louisiana, she shall notify the Executive Director in writing within ten days of her return to practice.

C. During each of the three years of license probation, Respondent shall successfully complete continuing education courses on professional ethics (4 hours minimum) which have been approved in advance by the Board Executive Director and which shall be in addition to the usual continuing education required to maintain licensure. At least once during her probationary period, Respondent shall attend the Jurisprudence Course presented by the Board.

D. Respondent shall write an essay of no less than 750 words explaining how her conduct violated the Practice Act and Board rules and what she may have learned as a result of this disciplinary process. This essay shall be submitted to the Board Executive Director no later than June 30, 2011.

E. Respondent shall notify the Executive Director in writing of all employment and/or contractual service arrangements which she has to work as a physical therapist assistant and shall update the Executive Director in writing within five days of any and all changes in such arrangements.

F. Respondent shall provide a copy of this Consent Order to her employer(s) before providing services to that employer and shall have the employer(s) notify the Executive Director in writing that she/he has received and reviewed a copy of this Consent Order; Respondent shall do this also with any new or subsequent employer(s) during her probationary period.

G. Respondent declares that, before signing this Consent Order, she has carefully read this document, that she waives the participation of legal counsel, that she understands the contents, and freely consents to it as valid and binding upon her. Recognizing her right to have notice of allegations or charges asserted against her, to administrative adjudication of such allegations or charges, pursuant to La. R.S. 49:955-958, and to a subsequent final decision rendered upon written findings of fact and conclusions of law, Carrie Signal nonetheless waives these rights and proceedings and, pursuant to La. R.S. 49:955D and Board Rule 335, agrees to entry of this Consent Order.

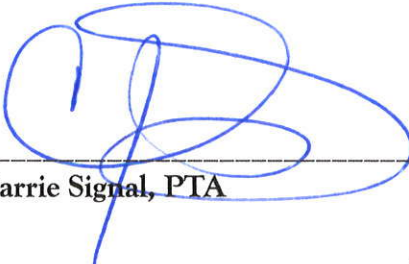
H. Respondent authorizes the Investigating Board Member, Dan Wood, and legal counsel assisting the Investigating Board Member, to present this Consent Order to the full Board for its consideration and to fully disclose to, and discuss with, the Board the nature and results of the investigation. Respondent waives any objection to such disclosures under La. R.S. 49:960 and expressly acknowledges that the disclosure of such information to the Board shall be without prejudice to the Investigating Board Member's authority to file a formal Administrative Complaint against her, or to the Board's capacity to adjudicate such Complaint should the Board decline to approve this Consent Order. Should the Board decline to approve this Consent Order, Respondent retains all rights to due process including, but not limited to, his right to have notice of any allegations or charges asserted against her, to administrative adjudication of such allegations or charges, and to a subsequent final decision rendered upon written findings of fact and conclusions of law.

I. Respondent acknowledges that this Consent Order becomes effective only upon signature by the Board Chair and recognizes that her failure to comply with any term of this

Consent Order is a basis for further disciplinary action by the Board.

K. All communication regarding compliance with and/or fulfillment of the requirements of this Consent Order shall be in writing between Respondent and the Board Executive Director. No verbal communication shall be considered as proof of compliance or commitment.

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED on this 14th day of March, 2011.



Carrie Signal, PTA

AGREED AND ACCEPTED by official action of the Board, the 17th day of March, 2011, at Lafayette, Louisiana.

LOUISIANA PHYSICAL THERAPY BOARD



Jerry Jones, PT, Chairman