

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS**

**IN THE MATTER OF:  
MARY ANN BETTENCOURT, LCSW  
License Number CSW01438  
Complaint Numbers C12-839**

**SUMMARY SUSPENSION**

Mary Ann Bettencourt, LCSW (hereinafter "Respondent") is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Rhode Island. The Division of Professional Regulation (hereinafter the "Division") investigated a complaint made by a former client and now institutes civil charges as specified below, and pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws §§ 5-39.1-10(5) and (13), and 42-35-14(c). finds that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the Respondent has committed the acts enumerated below. The Division made the following:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Respondent is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has been licensed in Rhode Island since August 15, 2011.
2. Client A alleged that Respondent and she began an improper relationship while Respondent was her social worker at a private agency. Respondent provided a written response to the Board of Social Work Examiners in which she denied "unprofessional conduct, as I have performed my role as a clinician within my

scope of practice and with the appropriate level of clinical supervision[.]” but does not deny an improper personal relationship outside of the social worker-client relationship. Respondent’s reply suggested that the possibility of “issues of transference and counter-transference to arise is always present.” Respondent admits that she worked with Client A from May 2010 to March 2012, including the period during which Respondent was not yet a licensed clinical social worker.

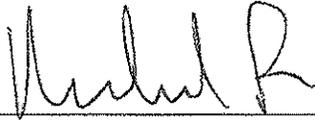
3. Client A has recently provided to the Board numerous letters and cards from Respondent to Client A that are beyond the scope of a professional relationship, and they reference Respondent’s and the client’s first names, and their customary nicknames for each other. Respondent’s handwriting in the personal correspondence matches the handwriting of her professional reports. The Respondent’s personal cards sent to Client A began as early as July 15, 2011, one written in Respondent’s hand and using her first and last names. The correspondence ended in April 2012.
4. Respondent’s written response to the Board indicated that Respondent was providing to Client A and her children “intensive home-based counseling around maternal mental health, recovery from substance abuse[.]”
5. Client A alleges that Respondent and she went to a specific bar and were asked to leave, even though the client was in alcohol recovery; and Respondent refers in an April 2012 writing to the time they were thrown out of that same bar named by Client A in her complaint.

6. Client A provided photographs allegedly of Respondent and the client hugging one another, and the photograph matches Respondent's image from her social work license application.
7. According to an incident report in records recently subpoenaed from the private agency at which Respondent worked, Respondent resigned from her job after admitting to "an improper relationship with a former client of the agency."
8. Respondent is in civil violation of R.I. Gen. Laws § 5-39.1-10(13) by violating the provisions of the code of ethics adopted by the Board of Examiners in Social Work, sections 1.06 (Conflicts of Interest), and 1.10 (Physical Contact).

**Based on the foregoing, the parties agree as follows:**

1. The Department of Health finds that public health, safety and welfare imperatively requires emergency action, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-35-14(c), and Respondent's license as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker is immediately suspended until further hearing in this matter.
2. Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 5-39.1-12 and 42-35-14(c), Respondent shall be given notice and shall have the right to request an administrative hearing within twenty (20) days of this suspension. After hearing, the Administrative Hearing Officer may suspend or revoke Respondent's license, or impose further discipline, for the remainder of Respondent's licensure period if the alleged violation is proven by a preponderance of evidence.

Ordered this 4 day of June 4, 2013:



Michael Fine, M.D.  
Director of Health

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that a copy of the within Summary Suspension has been delivered and mailed on this <sup>5</sup>~~4~~th day of June, 2013 to the home address of Mary Ann Bettencourt, LCSW, listed on her license application.

6/5/13



Louis J. Capizano  
Constable State of R.I.  
License #6040