

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
THREE CAPITOL HILL
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02908

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Department of Health :
Health Services Regulation :
Board of Nursing Assistants, : DOH Case No.: C15-272
v. :
Cheryl Ann Major, : 91 7199 9991 7032 8200 5304
Respondent. :
:

NA 31734

DECISION

I. INTRODUCTION

This matter arose pursuant to a Notice of Hearing and Time of Hearing and Particular of Charges (“Notice”) issued to Cheryl Ann Major (“Respondent”) by the Department of Health (“Department”) on July 29, 2015. At the time of the incident, the Respondent held a license (“License”) as a certified nursing assistant (“CNA”) pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.*¹ A hearing was scheduled for August 27, 2015 at which time the Respondent did not appear at hearing. Pursuant to Section 5.6 of the *Rules and Regulations of the Department of Health Regarding Practices and Procedures Before the Department of Health* (“Hearing Regulation”), service may be made by hand-delivery or first class mail and service is complete upon mailing, even if unclaimed or returned, when sent to the last known address of the party. In this matter, the

¹ According to Department’s Exhibit Six (6), the Respondent’s CNA license expired on June 30, 2015. Administrative notice is taken that as of the date of this decision the Respondent’s license is still listed as expired in Department of Health records: <http://209.222.157.144/RIDOH_Verification/Details.aspx?agency_id=1&license_id=243671&>.

Pursuant to Section 5.4 of the *Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Rhode Island Certificates of Registration for Nursing Assistants, Medication Aides, and the Approval of Nursing Assistant and Medication Aides Training Programs*, a nursing assistant whose license has expired and not renewed may reinstate the license within two (2) years of the expiration. As the Respondent was licensed at the time of the incident, the Department has jurisdiction over this matter and a decision is being issued as related to this incident.

Notice was sent to the Respondent's last known address by first class and certified mail.² Since the Respondent was adequately noticed of hearing, a hearing was held before the undersigned on August 27, 2015.³ Additionally, Section 12.9 of the Hearing Regulation provides that a judgment may be entered based on pleadings and/or evidence submitted at hearing by a non-defaulting party. The Department was represented by counsel who rested on the record.

II. JURISDICTION

The administrative hearing was held pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-18-1 *et seq.*, R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.*, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-35-1 *et seq.*, and the Hearing Regulation.

III. ISSUE

Whether the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8 and the *Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Rhode Island Certificates of Registration for Nursing Assistants, Medication Aides, and the Approval of Nursing Assistant and Medication Aide Training Program* ("Licensing Regulation") and if so, what is the appropriate sanction.

IV. TESTIMONY AND MATERIAL FACTS

Donna Valletta, Nursing Board Administrator, testified on behalf of the Department. She testified that she received a copy of the investigation regarding the Respondent that was performed by the nursing home where the Respondent worked as a CNA. See Department's Exhibit Five (5). Said investigation showed that the Respondent was verbally and physically abusive to a patient. Said investigation further showed that on at least one (1) occasion, Respondent yelled at a patient and pushed a patient onto patient's bed, forcing patient to sit in feces and refusing to allow patient to use the bathroom or change patient's clothing. The investigation also showed

² See Department's Exhibits Three (3) and Four (4) (Notice sent by first class and certified mail and United States Post Office online tracking sheet respectively).

³ Pursuant to a delegation of authority by the Director of the Department of Health.

Respondent ignored requests for assistance from patient, and that said acts were witnessed by another patient who requested that the Respondent help the first patient to no avail. During the course of the investigation, Respondent indicated that “she [Respondent] should not have returned to the field of nursing assistance,” but disputed the account of the incident given by the patient and the patient’s roommate.

V. DISCUSSION

A. **Legislative Intent**

The Rhode Island Supreme Court has consistently held that it effectuates legislative intent by examining a statute in its entirety and giving words their plain and ordinary meaning. *In re Falstaff Brewing Corp.*, 637 A.2d 1047 (R.I. 1994). If a statute is clear and unambiguous, “the Court must interpret the statute literally and must give the words of the statute their plain and ordinary meanings.” *Oliveira v. Lombardi*, 794 A.2d 453, 457 (R.I. 2002) (citation omitted). The Supreme Court has also established that it will not interpret legislative enactments in a manner that renders them nugatory or that would produce an unreasonable result. See *Defenders of Animals v. DEM*, 553 A.2d 541 (R.I. 1989) (citation omitted). In cases where a statute may contain ambiguous language, the Rhode Island Supreme Court has consistently held that the legislative intent must be considered. *Providence Journal Co. v. Rodgers*, 711 A.2d 1131, 1134 (R.I. 1998). The statutory provisions must be examined in their entirety and the meaning most consistent with the policies and purposes of the legislature must be effectuated. *Id.*

B. **Standard of Review for an Administrative Hearing**

It is well settled that in formal or informal adjudications modeled on the Federal Administrative Procedures Act, the initial burdens of production and persuasion rest with the moving party. 2 Richard J. Pierce, *Administrative Law Treatise* § 10.7 (2002). Unless otherwise

specified, a preponderance of the evidence is generally required in order to prevail. *Id.* See *Lyons v. Rhode Island Pub. Employees Council 94*, 559 A.2d 130, 134 (R.I. 1989) (preponderance standard is the “normal” standard in civil cases). This means that for each element to be proven, the fact-finder must believe that the facts asserted by the proponent are more probably true than false. *Id.* When there is no direct evidence on a particular issue, a fair preponderance of the evidence may be supported by circumstantial evidence. *Narragansett Electric Co. v. Carbone*, 898 A.2d 87 (R.I. 2006).

C. Statute

R.I. Gen Laws § 23-17.9-8 provides as follows:

Disciplinary proceedings. – The department may suspend or revoke any certificate of registration issued under this chapter or may reprimand, censure, or otherwise discipline or may deny an application for registration in accordance with the provisions of this section upon decision and after a hearing as provided by chapter 35 of title 42, as amended, in any of the following cases:

(1) Upon proof that the nursing assistant is unfit or incompetent by reason of negligence, habits, or other causes;

(2) Upon proof that the nursing assistant has violated any of the provisions of this chapter or the rules enacted in accordance with this chapter; or acted in a manner inconsistent with the health and safety of the patients of the home in which he or she is providing nursing assistant services

(5) Has engaged in conduct detrimental to the health, welfare and safety of patients/residents in his or her care.

(6) Any other causes that may be set forth in regulations promulgated under this chapter.

Section 6 of the License Regulation provides as follows:

Pursuant to the statutory provisions of sections 23-17.9-8 and 23-17.9-9 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, the Department may deny, suspend or revoke any registration issued hereunder or may reprimand, censure or otherwise discipline an individual who has been found guilty of violations of the Act or the rules and regulations herein, in accordance with section 23-17.9-8 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, and upon decision and after hearing as provided pursuant to section 11.0 herein in any of the following cases:

a) upon proof that such nursing assistant and/or medication aide is unfit or incompetent by reason of negligence, habits or other causes;

b) upon proof that such nursing assistant and/or medication aide has violated any of the provisions of the Act or the rules and regulations herein; or acted in a manner inconsistent with the health and safety of the patients of the agency/home in which he or she is providing nursing assistant and/or medication aide services

e) has engaged in conduct detrimental to the health, welfare, and safety of patients/residents in his/her care.

f) has engaged in unprofessional conduct including, but not limited to, departure from, or failure to conform to, the standards of acceptable and prevailing practice.

D. Whether the Respondent Violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8

The Department argued that the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8 and sought a reprimand against Respondent.

The evidence entered at hearing was undisputed by the Respondent as she did not appear at hearing. Based on the testimony, the exhibits, and the pleadings, the evidence showed that the Respondent was physically abusive and verbally abusive to a patient in her care. Such actions included at least one (1) occasion of striking patient, refusing to assist patient, and screaming at patient.

The Respondent's actions violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8(1) (unfit by reason of habits (abusive behavior)); (2) (inconsistent with the health and safety of a patient); (5) (detrimental to the health and safety of a patient in her care); and (6) (violates Section 6.1(f) of Licensing Regulation). The Respondent's action also violated Section 6.1(a) (unfit by reason of habits (abusive behavior)); (b) (inconsistent with the health and safety of a patient); (e) (detrimental to the health and safety of a patient in her care); and (f) (fails to conform to the standards of acceptable and prevailing practice) of the Licensing Regulation.

VI. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At the time of the incident, the Respondent was licensed as a certified nursing assistant pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.*
2. A Notice was sent by the Department to the Respondent on July 29, 2015 to the Respondent's most recent address on record with the Department.
3. A hearing was scheduled for August 27, 2015 at which time the Respondent did not appear. As the Respondent had adequate notice of hearing, the undersigned held the hearing that day.
4. The facts contained in Section IV and V are reincorporated by reference herein.

VII. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the forgoing, the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8(1), (2), (5), and (6) and violated Sections 6.1(a), (b), (e), and (f) of the Licensing Regulation and pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8, the undersigned recommends that Respondent be reprimanded.⁴

Entered this day 1st October, 2015.

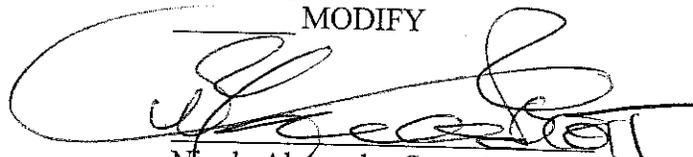

Catherine R. Warren, Esquire
Hearing Officer

ORDER

I have read the Hearing Officer's Decision and Recommendation in this matter, and I hereby take the following action with regard to the Decision and Recommendation:

ADOPT
 REJECT
 MODIFY

Dated: 10/15/2015


Nicole Alexander-Scott, M.D.
Director

⁴ Needless to say, there is no guarantee that a license would issue after application.

NOTICE OF APPELLATE RIGHTS

THIS DECISION CONSTITUTES A FINAL ORDER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PURSUANT TO R.I. GEN. LAWS § 42-35-12. PURSUANT TO R.I. GEN. LAWS § 42-35-15, THIS ORDER MAY BE APPEALED TO THE SUPERIOR COURT SITTING IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF PROVIDENCE WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS OF THE MAILING DATE OF THIS DECISION. SUCH APPEAL, IF TAKEN, MUST BE COMPLETED BY FILING A PETITION FOR REVIEW IN SUPERIOR COURT. THE FILING OF THE COMPLAINT DOES NOT ITSELF STAY ENFORCEMENT OF THIS ORDER. THE AGENCY MAY GRANT, OR THE REVIEWING COURT MAY ORDER, A STAY UPON THE APPROPRIATE TERMS.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify on this 21 day of October, 2015 that a copy of the within Decision and Notice of Appellate Rights was sent by first class mail and certified mail, return receipt requested to Ms. Cheryl Ann Major, 212 Summit Street, Fl. 1, East Providence, RI 02914 and by hand-delivery to Amy Coleman, Esquire, Thomas Corrigan, Esquire, and Donna Valletta, Board Manager, Department of Health, Three Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908.

