

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

Department of Health
Health Services Regulation
Board of Nursing Assistants,

DOH Case No.: C15-0382

v.

91 7199 9991 7032 8168 4326

Michael Gadreault,
Respondent.

DECISION

I. INTRODUCTION

This matter arose pursuant to an Administrative Hearing Notice (“Notice”) issued to Michael Gadreault (“Respondent”) by the Department of Health (“Department”) on January 8, 2016. The Respondent holds a license (“License”) as a certified nursing assistant (“CNA”) pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.* A hearing was scheduled for February 4, 2016 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 Notice was sent to the Respondent’s last known address by first class and certified mail.¹ Since the Respondent was adequately

¹ Arlene Hartwell, manager for Board Certified Nursing Assistants (“Board”), testified that the Notice was sent to the Respondent’s last known address with the Department and that it was delivered. She testified that licensees are obligated to keep their addresses current with the Department. See Department’s Exhibits Four (4) and Five (5) (Notice sent by first class and certified mail and United States Post Office online tracking sheet respectively).

noticed of hearing, a hearing was held before the undersigned on December 22, 2015.² 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

Sergeant Anthony Bettencourt, West Warwick Police Department, testified on behalf of the Department. He testified that he received a complaint about stolen jewelry from a patient of the Respondent and the patient described several rings, pins, and jewelry that were missing. He testified that he located some of the items on the precious metals database and ascertained they had been pawned. He testified that he went to the pawn shop and the Respondent had signed for the items representing that he (Respondent) owned them and received money from the pawnshop for the items. He testified that he was able to seize some of the items. He testified that the Respondent was brought in for questioning and while at the police department, the Respondent called the patient’s wife in his (Bettencourt’s) presence and apologized to her

² Pursuant to a delegation of authority by the Director of the Department of Health.

and told her he had taken the jewelry without permission. He testified that he asked the Respondent to make a written confession but the Respondent declined as he had just spoken to the patient's wife. He testified that the patient's wife identified the jewelry seized from the pawn shop as their jewelry. He testified that the Respondent was arrested for felony larceny and a misdemeanor for obtaining money under false pretenses. He testified that both the patient and his wife are over 60 and the Respondent was acting as a CNA and assigned by an agency to assist them. See Department's Exhibits One (1) (police report); Two (2) (precious metals database printout) and Three (3) (witness statement).

Robert O'Donnell testified on behalf of the Department. He testified that he is an investigator for the Department and obtained the Respondent's criminal history from the Attorney General's office which indicated his arrest and showed that he pled *nolo contendere* to a larceny in amount over \$1,500 in connection with these thefts. See Department's Exhibit Six (6) and Seven (7).

Arlene Hartwell, Board manager, testified on behalf of the Department. She testified that the Board and Department recommended revocation of License for at least five (5) years.

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

In closing, the Department argued that the Respondent's actions of stealing jewelry from a patient in his care violated R.I. Gen. Laws 27-17.9-8 and Section 6.1 of the Licensing Regulation.

The undisputed evidence shows that the Respondent stole jewelry from a patient in his care. The Respondent's actions of stealing jewelry from a patient in his care violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8(1) (unfit by reason of habits (theft)); (2) (inconsistent with the health and

safety of a patient); (5) (detrimental to the health and safety of a patient in his care); and (6) (violates Section 6.1(f) of Licensing Regulation). The Respondent's actions also violated Section 6.1(a) (unfit by reason of habits (theft)); (b) (inconsistent with the health and safety of a patient); (e) (detrimental to the health and safety of a patient in his care); and (f) (fails to conform to the standards of acceptable and prevailing practice) of the Licensing Regulation.

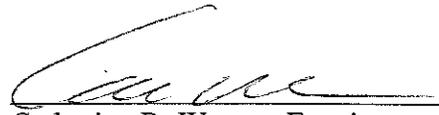
VI. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Respondent is 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 January 8, 2016 to the Respondent's most recent address on record with the Department.
3. A hearing was scheduled for February 4, 2016 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 the Respondent's License be revoked for at least five (5) years.³

Entered this 12th day of February, 2016.


Catherine R. Warren, Esquire
Hearing Officer

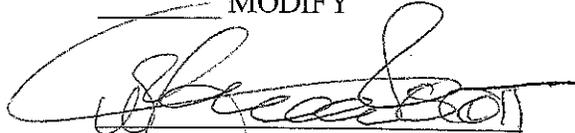
³ The Respondent may apply for a license after five (5) years, but there is no guarantee that such an application would be approved.

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: 2/18/16


Nicole Alexander-Scott, M.D.
Director

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 19 day of February, 2016 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 Mr. Michael Gadreault, 1440 Maple Valley Road, Greene, RI 02827 and by hand-delivery to Colleen McCarthy, Esquire, and Arlene Hartwell, Board Manager, Department of Health, Three Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908.

