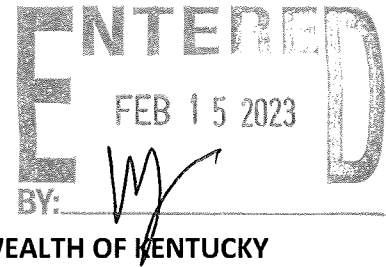


COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
KENTUCKY BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK
CASE NO. 22-32



IN RE: THE LICENSE TO PRACTICE SOCIAL WORK IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
HELD BY LEAH SEARS, LCSW LICENSE NO. 252462

AGREED ORDER

Come the parties, the Kentucky Board of Social Work (the "Board") and Leah Sears ("Licensee"), by and through the undersigned counsel, and both having been fully informed regarding the matters set forth herein and desiring to settle this matter without the necessity of a hearing on the merits, do hereby agree as follows:

STIPULATION OF FACTS

The parties stipulate the following facts, which serve as the factual bases for this Agreed Order:

1. At all relevant times, Leah Sears, LCSW, was licensed by the Board to practice clinical social work within the Commonwealth of Kentucky on January 24, 2017 and was subject to the laws and rules of Kentucky regulating the practice of social work as established in Kentucky Revised Statutes Chapter 335 and Kentucky Administrative Regulations 201 Chapter 23.
2. On or about June 14, 2022, the board received a written complaint filed by April Ramsey (hereinafter "Ms. Ramsey"), stating that she had been a client of the Licensee in 2021 while Licensee was employed at the Veteran's Administration, prior to her current employment with Lighthouse Counseling. Ms. Ramsey stated that, following the conclusion of therapeutic services, Licensee initiated a friendship with her, that she had gone to lunch with Licensee and

had been invited to her apartment. She stated that she felt that the experience was odd and that she had not continued the friendship. Ms. Ramsey stated that she had recently found out that Licensee was providing services to a co-worker and mentioned the experience to her current therapist, who informed her that she should report it to the Board as a dual relationship.

3. On or about September 9, 2022, the Board received a response from Licensee in which she stated that Ms. Ramsey had approached her in a public place, that they had shared a meal, but that it was not a prohibited dual relationship, as it would have furthered the goal of reintegrating a veteran into civilian life. She further referenced that her preschooler and teenager were present, as was her neighbor, at the dinner at her home, and reports that she was acting out of compassion and kindness.

1. On September 13, 2022, the board's complaint committee reviewed the case file and recommended an agreed order to resolve this matter, in lieu of the issuance of a formal complaint and notice of evidentiary hearing. The board approved the terms of the agreed order by unanimous vote.

STIPULATED CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The parties stipulate the following Conclusions of Law, which serve as the legal bases for this Agreed Order:

1. During the period from January 24, 2017, to the present Kentucky social work license was active and subject to regulation and discipline by the board.

2. Pursuant to 201 KAR 23:080 Sections 1, 2, 3 and 11, Licensee has participated in a dual relationship that could have impaired her professional judgment, incurred the risk of

exploitation to the client, or otherwise violated a provision of the administrative regulations related to the practice of social work.

3. Based upon the Stipulation of Facts, the licensee has engaged in conduct that violates the provisions of KRS 335.150(g) and 201 KAR 23:080 Sections 1, 2, 3 and 11. Accordingly, there are legal grounds for the parties to enter into this Agreed Order.

4. Pursuant to KRS 335.150(4), the parties may fully and finally resolve this pending matter without the filing of a formal complaint and an evidentiary hearing by entering into informal resolution such as this Agreed Order.

AGREED ORDER

Based upon the foregoing Stipulation of Facts and Stipulated Conclusions of Law, and based upon their mutual desire to fully and finally resolve this pending matter without an evidentiary hearing, the parties ENTER INTO the following AGREED ORDER:

1. The licensee agrees to a three (3) year probated suspension of her license to practice social work from the date of entry of this Order. During that probated suspension, she shall cease providing supervision to any certified social workers pursuant to KRS 335.100(3) and shall immediately notify and transfer any current supervisees that she is supervising under a Board approved supervision contract to another supervisor within thirty (30) days of entry of this Order.

2. Licensee shall complete six (6) hours of continuing education specifically on the topic of dual relationships in the next twelve (12) months, in addition to her regularly required continuing education credits.

3. Licensee SHALL NOT further violate any provision of KRS 335.010 – 335.160 and 201 KAR 23:080.

4. Any violations of the terms of this Order shall be considered a violation of the terms thereof and will be subject to further disciplinary action and application of the full term of the suspension of the Licensee's license to practice social work as outlined hereinabove.

5. Licensee freely and voluntarily enters into this Agreed Order, motivated by a desire to resolve the issues addressed herein, and has executed this Agreed Order only after a careful reading of it, and consultation with an attorney of her choosing should she so desire, and a full understanding of all of its terms; that she is fully aware of and expressly waives the right to contest charges in a formal hearing pursuant to KRS 335.155, the right to obtain judicial review of the board's decision, and the right to appeal any final order of the board to the Franklin Circuit Court as otherwise allowed by KRS 335.155(3).

6. Licensee acknowledges the board has jurisdiction over the licensee and the conduct that precipitated this Agreed Order; that the board has the legal power to take disciplinary action up to and including revocation of the licensee's license to practice social work in Kentucky; and the licensee further acknowledges the board shall retain jurisdiction over this matter until all terms and conditions set forth in this Agreed Order have been met to the satisfaction of the board.

7. This Agreed Order is considered a public document, available for inspection at any time by any member of the public under the Kentucky Open Records Act.

8. This matter shall constitute disciplinary action that may be reportable under state or federal law.

9. Licensee expressly understands that any violation of the terms of this Agreed Order shall provide the legal basis for additional disciplinary action and shall constitute failure to comply with an order of the board under KRS 335.150(1)(f), and for which the board may impose additional penalties available under law after notice and an opportunity to be heard.

10. This Agreed Order shall be governed in all respects, whether as to validity, construction, capacity, performance or otherwise, in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Furthermore:

a. Any dispute arising hereunder shall be settled by a state court of appropriate jurisdiction in Franklin County, Kentucky. The parties irrevocably consent to the personal jurisdiction and venue of such court.

b. This Agreed Order may not be modified except by a written agreement signed by the parties.

11. In consideration of execution of this Agreed Order, Licensee, her executors, administrators, successors and assigns, hereby release and forever discharge the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the Board of Social Work, and each of its members, agents, and employees in their individual and representative capacities, from any and all manner of actions, causes of action, suits, debts, judgments, executions, claims and demands whatsoever, known and unknown, the licensee ever had, now has, may have or claim to have against any or all of the persons or entities named in this paragraph arising out of or by reason of this investigation, this disciplinary action, this Agreed Order, or its administration.

Upon consideration of this Agreed Order, it is hereby ORDERED that the terms of this Agreed Order are approved and adopted.

SO ORDERED on this 27th day of January 2023.

LICENSEE:

Leah J. Sears

Leah J. Sears (Jan 27, 2023 11:18 EST)

LEAH SEARS leah.j.sears@gmail.com

Date Jan 27, 2023

Brian Schuette

HON. BRIAN SCHUETTE -brian@slg.legal
Counsel for Licensee

Date Jan 27, 2023

FOR THE BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK:

Whitney Cassity-Caywood

WHITNEY CASSITY-CAYWOOD, PhD, CSW
CHAIR, KENTUCKY BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK

MLB

COUNSEL, BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the Agreed Order were mailed by regular first-class mail
on this 15th day of February 2023, to:

Hon. Brian Schuette
Schuette Law Group
719 Dishman Lane Ext
Bowling Green, Ky 42104
Counsel for Licensee

Ms. Leah Sears
1152 Ellison Bend Road
Williamsburg, KY 40769

[Signature]
Board Administrator