

Application for Consent Revocation

Member: Ryanne Rhodenizer

Hearing date: January 15, 2021

Decision date: January 15, 2021

Ryanne Rhodenizer, Registration # 2173, of Nova Scotia, was initially registered as a social worker with the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (the predecessor to the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers) in December 2006.

In October 2019, the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW) received two complaints regarding Ms. Rhodenizer's practice and conduct as a social worker at a community organization in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia from 2015 to 2016 involving Client A. The complaints also concerned Ms. Rhodenizer's conduct with Client A outside of the client/social worker relationship and following the termination of the client/social worker relationship.

During the investigative process, Ms. Rhodenizer signed a voluntary undertaking in December 2019, where she agreed to refrain from providing any one-on-one, in-person social work services and to refrain from meeting with clients one-on-one, in person.

Pursuant to section 31 of the Social Work Regulations, Ms. Rhodenizer applied for the revocation of her social work registration. NSCSW and the Complaints Committee consented to Ms. Rhodenizer's application for revocation.

Ms. Rhodenizer admitted the following allegations with respect to Client A:

That being registered under the *Social Workers Act*, and being a social worker in Nova Scotia, it is alleged that with respect to the care provided to Client A in or around 2015 - 2016, Ms. Rhodenizer:

1. engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship, including sexual intercourse, with Client A, a recently discharged client for whom she had provided supportive counselling services;
2. following Client A's discharge, failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with Client A by: engaging in a personal relationship; meeting socially outside of the workplace; exchanging personal text messages for non-therapeutic reasons; discussing details of her personal life; attending Client A's residence; and exchanging gifts;
3. asked Client A not to discuss their personal encounters with anyone;
4. failed to consult colleagues when appropriate; and
5. failed to document appropriately, including the fact that Client A asked her out on a date and the termination of the therapeutic relationship.

Ms. Rhodenizer admitted that the above allegations amounted to professional misconduct, conduct unbecoming the profession, a breach of the Standards of Practice, and a breach of the Code of Ethics.

Disposition

The Application for Consent Revocation was presented to the College's Discipline Committee for consideration on January 15, 2021. The Committee heard submissions from legal counsel for the College, Ryan Baxter, and legal counsel for Ms. Rhodenizer, Scott Campbell.

The Committee noted that consenting to the Application for Consent Revocation was consistent with the objects of the College set out at section 5 of the *Social Workers Act*. The Committee stated that the Application served the public interest, preserved the integrity of the social work profession, and maintained public confidence in the profession.

The Committee highlighted the presence of mitigating factors, including Ms. Rhodenizer's diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder during material times, her prompt willingness to admit fault, and her ongoing treatment-related supports.

The Discipline Committee consented to the following disposition:

1. Ms. Rhodenizer's registration as a registered social worker registration with NSCSW pursuant to the Social Workers Act, SNS 1993, c 12, as amended, is revoked;
2. Ms. Rhodenizer will no longer refer to herself as a social worker;
3. Ms. Rhodenizer will not be eligible to apply for reinstatement of her social worker registration until one year from January 15, 2021;
4. Ms. Rhodenizer shall complete remedial education in the areas of professional boundaries and ethics, at her own cost, prior to applying for re-instatement of her social worker registration;
5. Ms. Rhodenizer shall pay a contribution toward the costs incurred by NSCSW in this matter in the amount of \$7,500.00, on terms agreed upon by the parties; and
6. Any information regarding Client A remains strictly confidential and shall not be disclosed in any way without the express written consent of Client A.