



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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Board of Allied Mental Health and Human Services Professions
Public Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2024

Board Members Present:

Kathleen Tucker, Public Member
Kristen Woodbury, Member
Amy Vercillo, Member (left the meeting at 11:23 a.m., returned to the meeting at 11:54 a.m.)
Kathryn Stevens, Member
Alayna McGarty, Member (left the meeting at 12:20 p.m., returned to the meeting at 12:21 p.m.)
Frank Gomez, Member
Cynthia Belhumeur, Public Member

Staff Members Present:

Brian Bialas, Executive Director
Heather Engman, Chief Board Counsel
Lauren McShane, Investigative Supervisor
Doris Lugo, Investigator

All board members and staff appeared by videoconference.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

Roll Call for Attendance

Mr. Bialas called the roll of board members. Kathleen Tucker, Kristen Woodbury, Amy Vercillo, Kathryn Stevens, Alayna McGarty, Frank Gomez, and Cynthia Belhumeur all present by videoconference.

Board Business

- **Public Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2024:** After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Woodbury, seconded by Ms. McGarty, to approve the Public Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2024 as drafted. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

- **Executive Session Minutes of September 20, 2024:** After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Woodbury, seconded by Ms. Stevens, to approve the Executive Session Minutes of September 20, 2024 as drafted. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
- **Ratification of Decisions by Board Staff to Approve Applications:** The Board considered whether to approve the decisions made by staff on applications processed since the last meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Tucker, seconded by Dr. Vercillo, to approve the decisions made by staff on applications processed since the last Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
- **Application Processing Under Application Review Policy:** Mr. Bialas presented application review data and stated that application reviews have been going well.
- **Update on Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) Conference and Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) Conference:** Mr. Gomez reported on his participation in these conferences. In particular, he noted discussions at the conferences about the use of artificial intelligence, licensing compacts, and licensing for teletherapy.
- **Harm Reduction Services in Healthcare Settings for People Who Use Drugs (PWUD):** The Board read and reviewed a memorandum from DPH explaining the agency's position that licensees should not be disciplined solely for the provision of harm reduction supplies or services to people who use drugs.

Monitoring Interview

- **Jessica Soto Sierra, 2021-000229-IT-ENF, Petition to Terminate Stayed Suspension**
 - **Interview of Jessica Soto Sierra and Supervisor Suzann Heron:** Ms. Soto Sierra appeared with her attorney Susan Devlin. Ms. Devlin stated that Ms. Heron is unavailable for an interview for the foreseeable future, but Ms. Soto Sierra has complied with the terms of her agreement. Ms. Soto Sierra explained that she has taken many continuing education courses and has changed the way she practices because her billing is completed through "Simple Practice" software. Although she works alone, she is "overseen" by others. She will not supervise anyone and may join a group practice that offers supervision.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Woodbury, seconded by Mr. Gomez, to accept Ms. Soto Sierra's petition to terminate her stayed suspension. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

LMHC Application Reviews – Reciprocity

- **Hopeton Shaw:** The Board reviewed Mr. Shaw's education. After a brief discussion, the Board directed Mr. Bialas to ask Mr. Shaw for syllabi for the courses he claims cover the

Human Growth and Development and Social and Cultural Foundations required course content areas.

- **Brandy Goins:** The Board reviewed Ms. Goins' education. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Ms. McGarty, seconded by Dr. Vercillo, to deny Ms. Goins' application because, as presented, her master's degree in forensic psychology is not in a Related Field. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
- **Lucy McLellan:** The Board reviewed Ms. McLellan's education. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Woodbury, seconded by Ms. McGarty, to direct Mr. Bialas to inform Ms. McLellan that she must complete qualifying coursework in the following courses:
 - Counseling Theory
 - Social and Cultural Foundations
 - Clinical Skills
 - Appraisal
 - Professional Orientation
 - Human Development

The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

LMHC Application Review

- **Maria Florencia Lopez Allende:** The Board reviewed Ms. Allende's application, including a question Mr. Bialas posed about whether the Board can accept foreign education reviews from review services that review education documents provided directly from the applicant and not from the school. After a brief discussion, the Board directed Mr. Bialas only to accept foreign education reviews from review services that require education documents to be provided directly from schools.

NCMHCE ESL Accommodation Requests

- **NCMHCE ESL Accommodation Requests:** The Board reviewed several requests. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Dr. Vercillo, seconded by Ms. Woodbury, to allow the following candidates 50% extra time and the use of a word-for-word translation dictionary.
 - Ivan O'Farrell
 - Johan Kim
 - Laura Melendez Diaz

The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Monitoring

- **Alyson Marcell, Conditional Licensure Agreement, Approval of Proposed Supervisor:** The Board reviewed Ms. Marcell's proposal that Melissa Koen serve as her supervisor. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Dr. Vercillo, seconded by Ms. McGarty, to approve Ms. Koen. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
- **Jacqueline Dupont, 2021-000408-IT-ENF, Revised 3rd Quarterly Monitoring Report:** The Board reviewed Ms. Dupont's revised report. After a brief discussion, the Board directed Mr. Bialas to inform Ms. Dupont's supervisor that she must revise the report again to include information about the supervision process, Ms. Dupont's counseling issues, her boundaries with students, and how Ms. Dupont has handled issues with students, including examples.

LMFT Application Review

- **Graciela Gutierrez:** The Board reviewed Ms. Gutierrez's education and experience. After a brief discussion, the Board directed Mr. Bialas to inform Ms. Gutierrez that she has completed the required coursework but only her post-master's degree experience hours that she earned after she completed her second master's degree may be applied toward licensure.

Comments from Professional Associations

Midge Williams from the Massachusetts Mental Health Counselors Association (MaMHCA) discussed education issues, monitoring instructions, and a consumer fact sheet on the Board's website.

Jami Osborne from MaMHCA stated that she likes the new LMHC application and will tell applicants to complete the more detailed experience forms in case they get audited.

Miranda Crouteau from the New England Association for Family and Systemic Therapy (NEAFast) asked about the appointment of someone to the vacant LMFT seat on the Board.

Executive Session (closed under G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(1) and under G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to comply with G.L. c. 4, § 7, ¶ 26(c) and G.L. c. 214, § 1B; specifically, the Board will discuss and evaluate the good moral character of an applicant as required for licensure and a petition and examination accommodation requests that involve medical records and information of patients)

At 11:23 a.m., a motion was made by Mr. Gomez, seconded by Dr. Vercillo, to exit the public meeting and (1) enter into a closed executive session under G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(1) and under G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to comply with G.L. c. 4, § 7, ¶ 26(c) and G.L. c. 214, § 1B; specifically, the Board will discuss and evaluate the good moral character of an applicant as required for licensure and a petition and examination accommodation requests that involve medical records and information of patients; then (2) enter into investigative conference under G.L. c. 112, § 65C

to review new cases; and then, after the conclusion of investigative conference, (3) not return to the public meeting and adjourn. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

The Board entered executive session at 11:23 a.m.

Dr. Vercillo left the meeting at 11:23 a.m.

Dr. Vercillo returned to the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

Ms. McGarty left the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

Ms. McGarty returned to the meeting at 12:21 p.m.

Board maintains separate minutes of executive session.

Investigative Conference (closed session under G.L. c. 112, § 65C)

The Board entered investigative conference at 12:21 p.m.

During the investigative conference, the Board took the following actions:

Summary Suspension

AMH-2024-0017 (AD) and AMH-2024-0039 (AD):	Consolidate cases and refer to the Office of Prosecutions
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Inaccurate Application

KV:	No action taken
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Cases

INV9574 (RE):	Dismiss
INV9670 (BC):	Open formal complaint; refer to the Office of Investigations
2021-000285-IT-ENF (Flexible Fundamentals):	Review case next month
AMH-2023-0036 (GC):	Review case next month

Adjournment

At 12:53 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Gomez, seconded by Ms. Woodbury, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

The meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

Approval

The above minutes were approved at the public meeting held on November 15, 2024.



Brian Bialas, Executive Director

List of Documents Used by the Board at the Public Meeting:

- Agenda for Meeting of October 18, 2024
- Public Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2024
- Executive Session Minutes of September 20, 2024
- Applications Reviewed Under Application Review Policy: January 1, 2024 through October 17, 2024 and September 1, 2024 through September 30, 2024
- 9.24.24 Memorandum from DPH re: Harm Reduction Services in Healthcare Settings for People Who Use Drugs (PWUD)
- Jessica Soto Sierra, 2021-000229-IT-ENF, Petition to Terminate Stayed Suspension
- Documents from LMHC Application of Hopeton Shaw
- Documents from LMHC Application of Brandy Goins
- Documents from LMHC Application of Lucy McLellan
- Documents from LMHC Application of Maria Florencia Lopez Allende
- NCMHCE ESL Accommodation Request of Ivan O'Farrell
- NCMHCE ESL Accommodation Request of Johan Kim
- NCMHCE ESL Accommodation Request of Laura Melendez Diaz
- Alyson Marcell, Conditional Licensure Agreement, Submission of Proposed Supervisor
- Jacqueline Dupont, 2021-000408-IT-ENF, Revised 3rd Quarterly Monitoring Report
- Documents from LMFT Application of Graciela Gutierrez