

NOTICE OF CENSURE

of Réjeanne Dorge

PURPOSE

By publishing this censure, the College endeavors to:

- Illustrate for Social Workers and members of the public, what does or does not constitute unprofessional conduct
- Provide Social Workers with direction about the College's standards of practice, ethics and professional conduct

SUMMARY

Réjeanne Dorge was registered with the Manitoba College of Social Workers (the College) or the former Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers as a Registered Social Worker in the Practicing Category from January 2013 to March 2016. From April 2016 to March 2019, Ms. Dorge was registered in the Non-Practicing Category. Ms. Dorge did not choose to renew her membership after March 2019.

On August 15, 2018, the College received a complaint regarding Ms. Dorge (the former Member), who had provided social work services to the Complainant and her family. The Complainant alleged that the former Member maintained an inappropriate personal relationship with two or more members of the client family system after her social work services concluded in 2014.

Upon investigation, it was confirmed that the former Member did maintain a personal relationship with three family members for varying lengths of time and degrees of intensity. It was determined that the former Member failed to establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries by providing social work advice outside of her professional role. Further, the former Member used information provided by a family member during a counselling session while providing social work services to participate in a personal dispute with the Complainant after social work services had ended. In addition, the former Member derived a personal benefit in the form of a discount for a personal purchase from her non-professional relationship with a member of her former client system. The impact of the former Member's breach of professional boundaries included the client's loss of trust in the helping profession.

APPLICABLE PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The Complaints Committee considered the following sections of the College's Standards of Practice, General Operating By-Law and *The Social Work Profession Act*, and, in view of the available information, concluded the former Member failed to adhere to the following:

Code of Ethics

Value 5 – Confidentiality in Professional Practice

Principles

- Social Workers respect the importance of the trust and confidence placed in the professional relationship by clients and members of the public.

2.1 Appropriate Professional Boundaries

2.1.1 Social Workers maintain appropriate professional boundaries throughout the course of the professional relationship and after the professional relationship.

2.2.1 Social Workers do not exploit professional relationships for personal benefit, gain or gratification.

2.2.2 Social Workers do not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political or business interests.

2.4.1 Social Workers take care to evaluate the nature of the dual or multiple relationships to ensure that the needs and welfare of their clients are protected.

Standards of Practice

Standard 3 - Relationship with Clients

Social Workers are in a position of power and influence with respect to clients. The nature of the professional relationship is based on trust. Considerable care must be taken to ensure that clients are protected from the misuse of power during and after the provision of professional services.

Social Workers have the obligation to establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries in their professional relationships. Boundary violations are understood as any behaviour that

3.1 Social Workers will declare and avoid conflicts of interest in forming relationships with clients or former clients, clients' family members, with students, employees and persons being supervised, that might present the risk of compromising the members professional judgement or of increasing the risk of harm or exploitation to clients.

3.2 Social Workers will not use information obtained in the course of a professional relationship to coerce, influence, harass, abuse or exploit either a client or a former client.

3.7 If personal or intimate relationship develops between a Social Worker and a former client, it is the Social Worker and not the client who assumes full responsibility for demonstrating that the former client has not been directly or indirectly exploited, coerced, or manipulated into forming or maintaining the relationship.

8.3 The Social Worker will demonstrate respect for the Social Work profession, Social Workers and their professional regulatory body in the way they carry out their professional obligations and practice.

DECISION

The College is the regulatory body for Social Workers in Manitoba. Self-regulation is a privilege granted through legislation and each Member has a responsibility to adhere to recognized and approved standards of practice and ethical guidelines established by the profession.

The Complaints Committee formally records its disapproval of the lack of professionalism exhibited by the former Member in failing to adhere to the College's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. Social Workers must conduct their professional practice with integrity. The failure to maintain professional boundaries is contrary to the high standard of trust which the public expects of Social Workers. Therefore, the former Member's actions were harmful to the public interest and the interest of the profession as a whole.

The Member was censured by the Complaints Committee on October 4, 2019, in accordance with paragraph 31(1)(d) and Subsection 33(1) of *The Social Work Profession Act* (the SWPA). Pursuant to that paragraph of the SWPA, the former Member agreed to accept the censure and the Complaints Committee determined that no other action is to be taken against the former Member in respect of these matters. The Complaints Committee further determined that the interest in educating the public and deterring similar activity in the future weighed in favour of publishing this censure, pursuant to Subsection 33(2) of the SWPA.

In accordance with Subsection 33(3) the Complaints Committee endeavors to minimize costs to the membership by considering the repayment of complaints investigation costs by the censured Member/former Member. As such, the former Member has agreed to repay \$2345 of the costs of the investigation into this matter.