

State of Vermont
Vermont Board of Nursing

In re: Bridget A. Coburn
License Number: 026.0095064
Docket Number: D-2018-123

Order to Remove Conditions

On March 19, 2020, Bridget A. Coburn requested removal of conditions imposed pursuant to a Board of Nursing Order effective June 3, 2019, under Docket Number 2018-123. Bridget A. Coburn has met the conditions. After review of the compliance file, the State does not object to removal of all conditions.

Order:

The Board hereby removes all conditions from Bridget A. Coburn's Registered Nurse license.

Vermont Board of Nursing



Ellen Watson, RN, APRN, Chair

Date: 6/22/2020

Date of Entry: 6 / 24 / 20

There being a declared state of emergency, the Director of Professional Regulation finds that the Board cannot reasonably, safely, and expeditiously convene a quorum to transact business. By her signature, the Director enters the above Order on behalf of the Board.

Act 91 (2020), Sec. 20(a) (eff. March 30, 2020)

**STATE OF VERMONT
SECRETARY OF STATE
OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL REGULATION
VERMONT BOARD OF NURSING**

In re: BRIDGET A COBURN	}	
License No. 026.0095064	}	Docket No. 2018-123 (RN)
	}	

FINDINGS AND ORDER

Participating Board Members:

Jennifer Laurent, APRN, Acting Chair
Deborah Swartz, RN
Luana Tredwell, LPN
Douglas Sutton, RN
Krystal Bernier, LPN
William G. White, Jr., Public Member

Appearances:

Prosecuting the case: Jennifer B. Colin, Esq.
Respondent: was present and was represented by Edward G. Adrian, Esq.

Presiding Officer:

George K. Belcher

Exhibits:

State Exhibit 2: CVMC Employee Corrective/Disciplinary Action Report
State Exhibit 7: Log of Cortext Communications October 21, 2016-January 17, 2017

**FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW,
AND ORDER**

This matter came before the Board of Nursing on Specification of Charges alleging unprofessional conduct. The hearing was held on May 13, 2019, at the Office of Professional Regulation in Montpelier, Vermont.

Findings of Fact

Based on the evidence presented the Board finds as follows:

1. Respondent is licensed as a Registered Nurse in the State of Vermont. The Respondent is subject to the regulatory authority of this Board. 3 V.S.A. §§ 129, 129a, 26 V.S.A. Chapter 28, the Administrative Rules of the Board of Nursing, and the Rules of the Office of Professional Regulation.
2. The prosecutor filed Specification of Charges on November 19, 2018 concerning the Respondent's nursing license.
3. The Respondent worked as a Registered Nurse at Central Vermont Medical Center. She worked on a "med-surg" floor and in the "resource pool". At times she was a floor nurse and at times she was the acting "charge nurse" on the med-surg floor.
4. In November of 2016 the Respondent applied to become the Clinical Nurse Coordinator. This is a leadership position which often fills the position of "charge nurse". This position also has responsibilities of coaching, mentoring and evaluating other nurses.
5. In the later stages of the application process the Director of Nursing, Sarah Magdon, RN, was informed by a staff member that she should review the Respondent's use of the hospital messaging system which is called CORTEXT. After reviewing the Respondent's communications (which were not private and were accessible on the hospital system) the Director of Nursing conducted a more detailed investigation of the Respondent's performance.
6. In December of 2016 while on duty, the Respondent spoke to a dementia patient in a gross, obscene and profane manner.¹ It was reported, and the Board so finds, that the Respondent spoke to this patient in a manner which escalated his agitation and did not de-escalate his behavior.
7. The Respondent testified that she only spoke to the patient in an effort to protect her co-workers, or to agree with the patient in order to calm him, or that she may have lost her temper. Her testimony was inconsistent with a staff-member who overheard her statements to the patient and who testified that the Respondent was "chuckling" after addressing him.
8. The Respondent has made particular disparaging remarks to patients who have drug or alcohol addiction. She also made comments to other staff members about patients who were admitted who had a suicide history. She stated that it was unnecessary to remove from the patient's room items which could be used for self-harm (such as power cords), joking that the patients should be allowed to harm themselves.
9. On another occasion, a patient in the hospital had the same name as a famous celebrity personality. The Respondent taped photos of the celebrity in the patient's telemetry records, the medical record, and on the patient's name badge.
10. In her communication with other employees on the Cortext system, the Respondent showed similar unprofessional, sexually inappropriate, and foul language with other staff. Her comments included demeaning and derisive statements about other staff.
11. In the course of the evaluation, multiple staff members described the Respondent as unprofessional, inappropriate, aggressive and negative.
12. The communication from the Cortext system showed that the Respondent was a primary

¹ The patient on 12/11/16 asked the Respondent if she "liked the cock" and she replied, "yes, I like the cock, do you like the cock?". This same patient had called the Respondent a "bitch" to which the Respondent replied, "well, you're a fucker" and "you pickled your brain, that's why you're like this", and "no one wants you". State Exhibit 2

participant in a “Snub club” in which a group of nurses were bullying another nurse.² Such behavior has the likely effect of significantly limiting the ability of all members of the nursing team to communicate freely in order to properly perform their jobs. She also made statements on the Cortext system that threatened physical harm to patients.

State Exhibit 2

13. The Respondent testified that her behavior was “wrong” and that she had been, at times, joking. She agreed that she had become “jaded” and her attitude showed “too much familiarity”.

Conclusions of Law and Discussion

1. The burden of proof in a disciplinary matter is upon the State to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the person engaged in unprofessional conduct. 3 VSA Sec. 129a(c).
2. The Board concludes that the Respondent committed unprofessional conduct. The evidence established that the Respondent violated 3 VSA Sec. 129a(b)(1) [failure to practice competently by the performance of unsafe or unacceptable patient care]; 3 VSA Sec. 129a(b)(2) [failure to conform to the essential standards of acceptable and prevailing practice]; and 3 VSA Sec. 129a(a)(15) [failure to exercise independent professional judgment in the performance of licensed activities when that judgment is necessary to avoid action repugnant to the obligations of the profession].
3. It is a basic principle of nursing that patients are entitled to respectful treatment. A patient has the right to “... considerate and respectful care at all times and under all circumstances with recognition of his or her personal dignity” 18 VSA Sec. 1852(a)(1). This a professional standard which the Respondent breached on numerous occasions. Her inter-professional communications displayed an attitude which would have the effect of lowering professional morale, lowering group respect for patients, and lowering the standards of communication between staff members for the safety of patients.
4. The State prosecutor recommended that the license of the Respondent be Reprimanded and that the Board impose a conditions: (1) that she complete rehabilitative coursework and (2) that she complete a period of supervised practice.

Based on the above, it is **ORDERED AND ADJUDGED** as follows:

- A. The Board of Nursing hereby **REPRIMANDS** the license of the Respondent.
- B. The Board of Nursing hereby **CONDITIONS** the Respondent's license to practice nursing for a minimum of one (1) year. The conditions and order terms are as follows:

(1) Terms of Conditions: Upon the imposition of these conditions, Respondent shall be issued a license labeled "conditioned." Respondent shall be subject to the conditions until Respondent completes a minimum of one (1) year of supervised nursing practice in which she works at least forty (40) hours every two (2) weeks as a nursing assistant. Part time hours of less than forty (40) hours every two (2) weeks

² Communication on 11/25/16 from Respondent. “I set up a group message so that we can all snub together.” On January 10, 2017 she was referred to as “snub prez”. State Exhibit 7

shall be credited on a prorated basis. The Respondent shall be prohibited from working more than forty (40) hours per week during the conditioned period.

(2) Required Course Work: Respondent must successfully complete (i.e., receive a passing grade, if applicable) three courses; one concerning caring for patients with Dementia; one course in "Righting a Wrong/ Professionalism"; and a course in Dealing with Difficult Patients; each course shall have prior approval by the Board or its designee, and then submit written documentation of completion. These courses must be completed within one hundred and eighty (180) days of the date of entry of this Order.

(3) Notification to Employers: Within ten (10) days of the date of entry of this Order, Respondent shall provide a copy of this Order to all employers in any current employment or in the event of future practice, within ten (10) days, and inform them of Respondent's conditional license status. Respondent's immediate supervisor shall submit to the Board an employer agreement on the Board approved form. If the Respondent is in a nursing program that has a clinical portion involving patient care, Respondent shall give a copy of this Order to the Program Director. The Director shall submit to the Board a nursing program agreement on a Board approved form. Within one (1) month of receipt of the agreement form every nursing employer or program director shall submit to the Board an evaluation of Respondent's work performance and attendance on a monthly basis. These reports shall be submitted in writing on forms issued by the Board. All reports shall be satisfactory.

(4) Practice Under Supervision: Respondent shall practice nursing only in a setting where Respondent has direct supervision for the entire shift by a registered nurse that is licensed and in good standing with the Board.

(5) Types of Employment Prohibited: Respondent shall not work in a supervisory role. Respondent shall not work for a nurse registry, traveling nurse agency, float-pool, home health care, temporary nursing employment agency, or as a private duty nurse or personal care provider requiring a nursing license during the effective period of this Order.

(6) Out-of-State Practice and Licensing: Before any out-of-state practice can be credited toward fulfillment of these terms and conditions, Respondent shall first obtain approval from the Board. Failure to seek approval shall result in out-of-state practice not being credited toward the fulfillment of the terms and conditions of this Order. If the Respondent receives discipline on a nursing license held in another state during the conditioned period, the Respondent must inform the Board of such, in writing, within ten (10) days of receiving such discipline.

(7) Notification of Employment/Personal Address/Telephone Number: Within ten (10) days of the date of entry of this Order, Respondent shall notify the Board, in

writing, of her current place of employment, personal address, and telephone number. Respondent shall further notify the Board, in writing, within forty-eight (48) hours of any change in employment (including resignation or termination), personal address, or telephone number.

(8) Notification to Other States: In the event that the Respondent is licensed in nursing in any other state(s), she must inform the other nursing licensing boards of the conditional status of her Vermont nursing license, within thirty (30) days of the date of entry.

(9) License Renewal and Costs: If the Respondent's license expires while this Order is still in effect, this Order does not automatically extend the license. Respondent must timely apply for renewal and pay the applicable fee. The Respondent shall bear all costs of complying with this Consent Order.

(10) Violation of this Order: If the Respondent violates the terms of this Order in any respect, the Board, after giving the Respondent notice and an opportunity to be heard, may rescind or modify this Order and impose additional appropriate disciplinary actions. If a complaint of unprofessional conduct is made against the Respondent during the term of this Order, this Order shall be automatically extended until the unprofessional conduct matter is concluded.

(11) Completion of Conditional License Period: After the conditional license period, the Respondent may petition the Board to remove any and all conditions on her license. Respondent shall have the burden of proof.

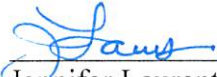
(12) Continuing License Obligations: Notwithstanding any provision above, the Respondent must continue to meet all Nursing Board requirements for maintaining a license, license renewal and license reinstatement.

(13) Public Record: Order is a matter of public record and may be reported to other licensing authorities as provided in 3 V.S.A. § 129(a). This Order will remain part of Respondent's licensing file and may be used for purposes of determining sanctions in any future disciplinary matter.

- C. This Order will remain part of Respondent's licensing file and may be used for purposes of determining sanctions in any future disciplinary matter.

SO ORDERED.

Vermont Board of Nursing



Jennifer Laurent, APRN, Acting Chair

5.28.19

Date

6.3.19

Date of Entry

APPEAL RIGHTS

This is a final administrative determination by the Vermont Board of Nursing. A party aggrieved by a final decision of a board may appeal this decision by filing a written Notice of Appeal with the Director of the Office of Professional Regulation, Vermont Secretary of State, 89 Main Street, Fl. 3, Montpelier, VT 05620-3402 within 30 days of the entry of this order. If an appeal is filed, the Director of the Office of Professional Regulation shall assign the case to an appellate officer. The review shall be conducted on the basis of the record created before the board. In cases of alleged irregularities in procedure before the board, not shown in the record, proof on that issue may be taken by the appellate officer. 3 V.S.A. §§ 129(d) and 130a.



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