

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
THREE CAPITOL HILL
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02908**

Department of Health	:	
Health Services Regulation	:	
Board of Nursing Assistants,	:	
	:	DOH Case No.: C16-1291
v.	:	
	:	
Elisabeth Carroll,	:	
Respondent.	:	

DECISION

I. INTRODUCTION

This matter arose pursuant to an Administrative Hearing Notice (“Notice”) issued to Elisabeth Carroll (“Respondent”) by the Department of Health (“Department”) on April 27, 2017. The Respondent holds a license as a certified nursing assistant (“CNA”) pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.* A hearing was scheduled for May 30, 2017 at which time the Respondent did not appear at the hearing. Pursuant to Section 5.6 of the *Rules and Regulations of the Department of Health Regarding Practices and Procedures Before the Department of Health* (“Hearing Regulation”), service may be made by hand-delivery or first class mail and service is complete upon mailing, even if unclaimed or returned, when sent to the last known address of the party. In this matter, the Notice was delivered to Respondent’s last known address by first class and certified mail.¹ Since the Respondent was adequately noticed of hearing, a hearing was held before the undersigned on May 30, 2017.² Additionally, Section 12.9 of the Hearing Regulation

¹ See testimony below.

² Pursuant to a delegation of authority by the Director of the Department of Health.

provides that a judgement may be entered based on pleadings and/or evidence submitted at hearing by a non-defaulting party. The Department was represented by counsel who rested on the record.

II. JURISDICTION

The administrative hearing was held pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-18-1 *et seq.*, R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.*, R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-35-1 *et seq.*, and the Hearing Regulation.

III. ISSUE

Whether the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-7.9-8 and the *Rules and Regulations pertaining to Rhode Island Certificates of Registration for Nursing Assistants, Medication Aides, and the Approval of Nursing Assistant and Medication Aide Training Program* (“Licensing Regulation”) and if so, what is the appropriate sanction.

IV. TESTIMONY AND MATERIAL FACTS

Robert O’Donnell, investigator, testified on behalf of the Department. He testified that on October 12, 2016 he received a complaint from the Director of Nursing at the nursing home where the Respondent had been employed. He testified that the complaint was that the Respondent was working the second shift on October 11, 2016 and had walked off her shift, leaving a patient in a bed that was covered with urine awaiting a shower at 6:00 pm and at approximately 8:45 p.m., Respondent was still nowhere to be found. He testified that the complaint stated that the Respondent did not notify anybody including her supervisors that she had left the building and the facility did not hear from Respondent again. See Department’s Exhibits One (1) (complaint to the Department); Two (2) (follow-up faculty report); Three (3) (statement from Registered Nurse (RN) working on the night in question); and Four (4) (Statement from RN supervisor).

Arlene Hartwell, CNA Board Manager, testified on behalf of the Department. She testified that the Notice was sent by regular class and certified mail to the Respondent’s most recent address on the record. She testified that licensees are required to maintain their current address with the

Department. She testified that prior to the Notice being forwarded, the Department tried several times to contact the Respondent without success. She testified that the CNA Board (“Board”) recommended a suspension of Respondent’s License for six (6) months as well as mandatory retraining on patients’ rights, patient abuse, and duties of a CNA, as well as appearance in front of the Board before reinstatement. See Department’s Exhibits Five (5) (Notice); Six (6) (November 2, 2016 letter from Board to Respondent); and Seven (7) (January 9, 2017 email from Board to Respondent).

V. DISCUSSION

A. **Legislative Intent**

The Rhode Island Supreme Court has consistently held that it effectuates legislative intent by examining a statute in its entirety and giving words their plain and ordinary meaning. *In re Falstaff Brewing Corp.*, 637 A.2d 1047 (R.I. 1994). IF a statute is clear and unambiguous, “the Court must interpret the statute and must give the words of the statute their plain and ordinary meanings.” *Oliveira v. Lombardi*, 794 A.2d 435, 457 (R.I. 2002) (citation omitted). The Supreme Court has also established that it will not interpret legislative enactments in a manner that renders them nugatory or that would produce an unreasonable result. See *Defenders of Animals v. DEM*, 553 A.2d 541 (R.I. 1989) (citation omitted). In cases where a statute may contain ambiguous language, the Rhode Island Supreme Court has consistently held that the legislative intent must be considered. *Providence Journal Co. v. Rodgers*, 711 A.2d 1131, 1134 (R.I. 1998). The statutory provisions must be examined in their entirety and the meaning most consistent with the policies and purposes of the legislature must be effectuated. *Id.*

B. **Standard of Review for an Administrative Hearing**

It is well settled that in formal or informal adjudication modeled on the Federal Administrative Procedures Act, the initial burdens of production and persuasion rest with the

moving party. 2 Richard J. Pierce, *Administrative Law Treatise* § 10.7 (2002). Unless otherwise specified, a preponderance of the evidence is generally required in order to prevail. *Id.* See *Lyons v. Rhode Island Pub. Employees Counsel* 94, 559 A.2d 130, 34 (R.I. 1989) (preponderance standard is the “normal” standard in civil cases). This means that for each element to be proven, the fact-finder must believe that the facts asserted by the proponent are more probably true than false. *Id.* When there is no direct evidence on a particular issue, fair preponderance of the evidence may be supported by circumstantial evidence. *Narragansett Electric Co. v. Carbone*, 898 A.2d 87 (R.I. 2006).

C. Statute

R.I. Gen Laws § 23-17.9-8 provides as follows:

Disciplinary proceedings. – The department may suspend or revoke any certificate of registration issued under this chapter or may reprimand, censure, or otherwise discipline or may deny an application for registration in accordance with the provisions of this section upon decision and after a hearing as provided by chapter 35 of title 42, as amended, in any of the following cases:

(2) Upon proof that the nursing assistant has violated any of the provisions of this chapter or the rules enacted in accordance with this chapter; or acted in a manner inconsistent with the health and safety of the patients of the home in which he or she is providing nursing assistant services;

(5) Has engaged in conduct detrimental to the health, welfare and safety of patients/residents in his or her care.

(6) Any other causes that may be set forth in regulations promulgated under this chapter.

Section 6 of the License Regulation provides as follows:

Pursuant to the statutory provisions of sections 23-17.9-8 and 23-17.9-9 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, the Department may deny, suspend or revoke any registration issued hereunder or may reprimand, censure or otherwise discipline an individual who has been found guilty of violations of the Act or the rules and regulations herein, in accordance with section 23-17.9-8 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, and upon decision and after hearing as provided pursuant to section 11.0 herein in any of the following cases:

b) upon proof that such nursing assistant and/or medication aide has violated

any of the provisions of the Act or the rules and regulations herein; or acted in a manner inconsistent with the health and safety of the patients of the agency/home in which he or she is providing nursing assistant and/or medication aide services;

e) has engaged in conduct detrimental to the health, welfare, and safety of patients/residents in his/her care;

f) has engaged in unprofessional conduct including, but not limited to, departure from, or failure to conform to, the standards of acceptable and prevailing practice.

D. Whether Respondent Violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8

The Department argued that the Respondent abandoned her shift and duties as a CNA, leaving a patient in her care laying in urine for several hours and by those actions, the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8. The Department sought suspension of the Respondent's License for six (6) months, mandatory retraining on patients' rights, patient abuse, and the duties of a CNA, as well as appearance in front of the Board before reinstatement.

Based on the pleadings and the undisputed evidence, the Respondent abandoned her shift and duties as a CNA, leaving a patient in her care laying in urine for hours. The Respondent's actions violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8(2) (inconsistent with the health and safety of the patients); (5) (detrimental to the health and safety of patients in her care); and (6) (violates Section 6.1(f) of Licensing Regulation). The Respondent's actions also violated Section 6.1(b) (inconsistent with the health and safety of patients); (e) (detrimental to the health and safety of patients in her care); and (f) (fails to conform to the standards of acceptable and prevailing practice) of the Licensing Regulation.

VI. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Respondent is a licensed nursing assistant pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.*

2. A Notice was sent by the Department to Respondent on April 27, 2017 to the Respondent's most recent address on record with the Department.


3. A hearing was scheduled for May 30, 2017 at which time the Respondent did not appear. As the Respondent had adequate notice of hearing, the undersigned held the hearing that day.

4. The facts contained in Section IV and V are reincorporated by reference herein.

VII. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the forgoing, the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-7.9-8(2), (5), and (6) and violated Sections 6.1(b), (e), and (f) of the Licensing Regulation and pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8, the undersigned recommends that Respondent's License be suspended for six (6) months, the Respondent complete mandatory retraining on patients' rights, patient abuse, and duties of a CNA, and must appear before the Board before being reinstated.

Entered this day 13th June, 2017.

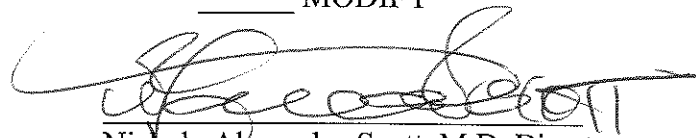

Catherine R. Warren, Esquire
Hearing Officer

ORDER

I have read the Hearing Officer's Decision and Recommendation in this matter, and I hereby take the following action with regard to the Decision and Recommendation:

ADOPT
 REJECT
 MODIFY

Dated: 6/22/17

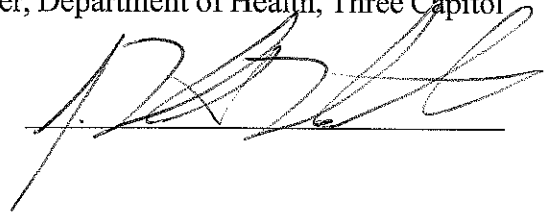

Nichole Alexander-Scott, M.D. Director

NOTICE OF APPELLATE RIGHTS

THIS DECISION CONSITUTES A FINAL ORDER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PURSUANT TO R.I. GEN. LAWS § 42-35-12. PURSUANT TO R.I. GEN. LAWS § 42-15-15, THIS ORDER MAY BE APPEALED TO THE SUPERIOR COURTSITTING IN FOR THEE COUNTY OF PROVIDENCEWITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS OF THE MAILING DATE OF THIS DECISION. SUCH APPEAL, IF TAKEN, MUST BE COMPLETED BY FILING A PETITION FOR REVIEW IN SUPERIOR COURT. THE FILING OF THE COMPLAINT DOES NOT ITSELF STAY ENFORCEMENT OF THIS ORDER. THE AGENCY MAY GRANT, OR THE REVIEWING COURT MAY ORDER, A STAY UPON THE APPROPRIATE TERMS.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that on this 23 day of June, 2017 that a copy of the within Decision and Notice of Appellate Rights was sent by first class mail and certified mail, return receipt request to Ms. Elisabeth Carroll, 238 Magnolia Street, Providence, RI 02909 and by hand-delivery to Colleen McCarthy, Esquire, and Michael Martineau, Board Manager, Department of Health, Three Capitol Hill, Providence, RI, 02908.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. A. H.", written over a horizontal line.