

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

In the Matter of:	:	
	:	
	:	Case No.: 22-1444A
Joy Onadehin,	:	Board of Nursing Assistants
Respondent.	:	
	:	

DECISION

I. INTRODUCTION

This matter arose pursuant to a Notice of Hearing and Specification of Charges (“Notice”) issued to Joy Onadehin (“Respondent”) by the Department of Health (“Department”) on May 25, 2023. The Respondent holds a registration as a nursing assistant pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-1 *et seq.* A prehearing conference was held on July 12, 2023, at which time the Respondent appeared. The parties chose to engage in settlement discussions. As the matter was unable to be settled, a hearing was scheduled for September 14, 2023 at which time the Respondent did not appear. At that time, the Department’s counsel represented that she had heard from the Respondent who while not requesting a continuance had indicated that she was sick. Therefore, the hearing was rescheduled for October 18, 2023 at which time the Respondent did not appear. Pursuant to Section 4.6.1 of 216-RICR-10-05-4 *Practices and Procedures Before the Rhode Island Department of Health* Regulation (“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 Respondent had notice of the date of

October 18, 2023 hearing by first class mail and by email.¹ Since the Respondent was adequately noticed of hearing, a hearing was held before the undersigned on October 18, 2023.² Additionally, Section 4.13.2 of the Hearing Regulation provides that a judgment 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 § 23-17.9-8 and 216-RICR-40-05-22 *Nursing Assistants, Medication Aides, and the Approval of Nursing Assistant and Medication Aide Training Programs* (“Licensing Regulation”) and if so, what is the appropriate sanction.

IV. MATERIAL FACTS

Based on the pleadings and the exhibits, the Respondent was working at a health facility when in November, 2022, she used the credentials of a colleague to access the health facility to provide care to a patient without the consent or knowledge of the facility. Department’s Exhibits One (1) (Notice); Four (4) (complaint from staffing agency to Department stating that the Respondent’s nursing assistant colleague indicated to her that he was ill so she used his credentials to access the facility and worked in his place without the knowledge of the facility and provided

¹ The initial notice of hearing was sent to the Respondent’s last known address. The Respondent appeared for the prehearing conference. Department’s Exhibits One (1) (Notice indicating mailing by regular mail and certified mail to address on record with the Department). The Department forwarded a letter by first class mail dated September 22, 2023 to the Respondent scheduling the hearing for October 18, 2023. That letter was also sent by email on September 22, 2023 to the Respondent. Department’s Exhibits 10 (email with letter sent by Department to Respondent); and 11 (letter sent by first class mail). The undersigned also notes that she sent an email as well to the parties dated September 15, 2023 scheduling the hearing for October 18, 2023. The email address for the Respondent was provided by her when she appeared for the prehearing conference on July 12, 2023.

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

hands on care to vulnerable patients); Five (5) (letter from Respondent to facility explaining how her colleague was ill so she took his place and thought she was helping the facility by filling in so the facility would not be short staffed, and she was sorry); Six (6) (facility interview with Respondent where she said it was a last minute decision to use colleague's credential to cover his shift); Seven (7) (interview with Respondent's colleague stating they thought Respondent covering his shift would help the facility not be short-staffed); and Nine (9) (letter from Respondent to Department explaining how they did not have time to contact staffing agency, and she thought she was helping the facility by covering colleague's shift so facility would not be short staffed).

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.2s 453, 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.2s 541 (R.I. 1989) (citation omitted).

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

It is well settled that in formal or informal adjudications 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 Council 94, 559 A.2d 130m 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, a fair preponderance of the evidence may be supported by circumstantial evidence. *Narragansett Electric Co. v. Carbone*, 898 A.2d 87 (R.I. 2006).

C. Relevant Statute and Regulation

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:

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

Section 22.6 of the Licensing Regulation provides as follows:

A. Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 23-17.9-8 and 23-17.9-9, and upon a decision after a hearing as provided in accordance with the Rhode Island Administrative Procedures Act and the Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Practices and Procedures Before the Rhode Island Department of Health (Part 10-05-4 of this Title), the Department may deny, suspend, or revoke a license issued under this Part, or may reprimand, censure, or otherwise discipline an individual who has been found guilty of violations of the Act or this Part in any of the following cases:

2. Upon proof that the nursing assistant or medication aide 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 and/or Licensing Regulation

Based on the pleadings and the undisputed evidence, the Respondent accessed the health care facility using her nursing assistant’s colleague’s credentials and provided care to patients without knowledge or consent of the facility. The Respondent’s actions violated R.I. Gen. Laws

§ 23-17.9-8(6) (violation of the regulation) in that she violated Section 22.6.1(A)(2) (unprofessional conduct) of the Licensing Regulation. For this violation, the Department seeks a reprimand be imposed on the Respondent's registration as a nursing assistant.

VI. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Respondent is registered as a 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 May 25, 2023 to the Respondent's most recent address on record with the Department. A further notice was sent on September 22, 2023 to the Respondent's most recent address on record with the Department.
3. A hearing was scheduled for October 18, 2023, 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 foregoing, the Respondent violated R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-7.9-8 (6) and violated Section 22.6(A)(2) of the Licensing Regulation. Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 23-17.9-8, the undersigned recommends that a reprimand be imposed on the Respondent's nursing assistant registration.

Entered this day 31st October, 2023.


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:

 x ADOPT
 REJECT
 MODIFY

Dated: 11/1/2023

 Utpala Bandy, MD, MH
Utpala Bandy, MD, MPH
Interim Director

NOTICE OF APPELLATE RIGHTS

THIS DECISION CONSTITUTES 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 COURT SITTING IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF PROVIDENCE WITHIN 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 on this 1st day of November, 2023 that a copy of the within Decision and Notice of Appellate Rights was sent by first class mail and certified mail to Ms. Joy Onadehin, 6423 Landover Road, Cheverly, MD 20875 and by electronic delivery to the Respondent at jonadehin@gmail.com and by electronic delivery to Anita Flax, Esquire, and Linda Esposito, Board Manager, Department of Health, Three Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908.

 Pamela Lopes