

IN THE MATTER OF
DEBORAH ANN WALL

Respondent

License Number: N/A

* BEFORE THE MARYLAND STATE
* BOARD OF EXAMINERS
* OF PSYCHOLOGISTS
* Case Number: 2013-020

* * * * *

CONSENT ORDER

On or about May 9, 2014 ,the Maryland Board of Examiners of Psychologists (the "Board") charged **DEBORAH ANN WALL**, ("the Respondent"), **Unlicensed**, under the Maryland Psychologists Act (the "Act"), Md. Health Occ. Code Ann. ("H .O.") §§ 18-101 *et seq.* (2009 Repl. Vol.).

Specifically, the Board charged the Respondent with violations of the following provisions of the Act:

§18-101. Practice Psychology

(f)(1) "Practice psychology" means to provide to any person:

(i) Any service for compensation involving the application of psychological principles, psychological methods, or psychological procedures for understanding, predicting, or influencing behavior, including the principles that relate to learning, perception, motivation, emotions, organizational relationships, and interpersonal relationships;

(ii) Any service for compensation involving the application of psychological methods or psychological procedures for interviewing, counseling, psychotherapy, behavior modification, or hypnosis; or

(iii) Any service for compensation involving the application of psychological methods or psychological procedures for constructing, administering, or interpreting tests of mental abilities, neuropsychological functioning, aptitudes, interests, attitudes, personality characteristics, emotions, or motivations.

(2) "Practice psychology" includes:

(i) The application of psychological principles and psychological methods in the diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and amelioration of psychological problems, emotional conditions, or mental conditions of individuals or groups;

(ii) The use of psychological methods to assist an individual in acquiring greater human effectiveness or to modify feelings, conditions, attitudes, or behavior that is emotionally, intellectually, or socially ineffectual or maladjusted; and

(iii) The use of biofeedback instruments that do not pierce or cut the skin to measure physical and mental functioning.

(3) In this subsection, "psychological methods", "psychological principles", and "psychological procedures" include the body of information that can be derived from a graduate program in psychology, and other education or training recognized by the Board as prerequisites for a license under this title, and that does not amount to the practice of medicine

§18-301. License required

(a) *In general.* -- Except as otherwise provided in this section, an individual shall be licensed by the Board before the individual may practice psychology in this State.

§18-401. Practicing without a license.

(a) *In general.* -- Except as otherwise provided in this title, a person may not practice, attempt to practice, or offer to practice psychology in this State unless licensed by the Board.

(b) Multiple violations. -- Each violation of this section is a separate offense.

§18-402. Misrepresentations as psychologist.

(a) *In general.* -- Unless authorized to practice psychology under this title, a person may not represent to the public by title, by description of services, methods, or procedures, or otherwise, that the person is authorized to practice psychology in this State.

(b) Title, description of services. -- Unless authorized or permitted to do so by this title, a person may not use as a title or describe the services

the person provides by use of the words “psychological”, “psychologist”, or “psychology”.

§18-404. Penalties.

(b) *Violation of § 18-401.*—(1) A person who violates §18-401 of this subtitle is subject to a civil fine of not more than \$50,000 to be assessed by the Board in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board.

On or about October 26, 2014, a Case Resolution Conference was convened in this matter. Based upon negotiations with the State and the recommendation of the CRC Committee of the Board, the Respondent agreed to enter into this Consent Order as a full and final resolution of the pending Charges.

FINDINGS OF FACT

I. BACKGROUND

1. At all times relevant, Respondent maintained a private practice offering religious-based mental health services located in Elkton, MD.
2. Respondent has never been licensed to practice psychology in the State of Maryland or any other state.

II. COMPLAINT

3. On April 5, 2013, a police detective (“Detective A”) of the Elkton Police Department in Elkton, Maryland was assigned to investigate a child abuse report filed by the Respondent. The investigation revealed that the report had no merit.
4. On April 8, 2013, Detective A conducted a telephonic interview of the Respondent during which he became suspicious that the Respondent may be practicing psychology without a license.
5. Detective A noted that during the interview, Respondent did not reference descriptive terms typically utilized by mental health professionals with expertise in

psychology and further observed the Respondent's behavior to be inconsistent with a doctorate level of education.

6. On April 11, 2013, Detective A contacted the Board and discovered that that Respondent was not licensed to practice psychology in the State of Maryland.

7. On April 15, 2013, Detective A filed a complaint with the Board alleging that Respondent had misrepresented herself as a psychologist and had engaged in the unauthorized and unlicensed practice of psychology. Detective A provided the Board with his initial investigative findings but indicated that he was continuing his investigation and would supplement his complaint accordingly.

8. Following his filing of the complaint, Detective A conducted a criminal background check on Respondent and discovered that Respondent had a prior criminal history. Based on the above information, Detective A sought and obtained a warrant to search Respondent's residence and to seize any evidence relevant to her unlicensed practice as a mental health care provider. During the execution of the warrant, limited patient records were found. Detective A confirmed that Respondent administered a personality profile to at least 44 patients but that the vast majority of patients terminated treatment after receiving the results of the profile. Pursuant to the warrant, several boxes of patient files, business documents, a laptop, and a flash drive, were seized and removed from Respondent's residence.

Interview of Respondent

9. On May 17, 2013, Detective A conducted an in-person interview of the Respondent. She confirmed much of the information that she provided in her telephonic interview conducted on April 8, 2013. In addition, Respondent stated that she was unaware that she needed a Maryland license, and instead believed that she was

licensed by a national association for Christian counseling, to practice as a clinical pastoral counselor.

10. Respondent admitted that she administered a temperament analysis profile called the Arno Profile System (A.P.S.) to each one of her patients. The A.P.S. test could “identify what causes relationship conflicts and how to resolve them.

11. Respondent charged \$85.00 each time she administered the A.P.S. test and completed a profile for each patient. In cases in which Respondent diagnosed her patient(s) with multiple personality disorder, she administered a profile to each “alter personality” and charged each personality \$85.00.

12. The Respondent stated that she did understand that the A.P.S. was a type of psychological testing.

Patient A

13. Patient A was treated by Respondent beginning in or around early-March 2013 until late April 2013. Patient A initially contacted Respondent for marriage counseling services. Respondent was retained for five (5) sessions, but continued to treat Patient A and her husband for additional sessions.

14. Patient A informed Respondent that she had insurance that covered “counseling” services. Respondent told Patient A that she had spoken with Patient A’s insurance company and was advised that services would only be covered after the \$1,000 co-pay had been paid by Patient A. Patient A paid Respondent out of pocket for each session. After treatment was terminated by Patient A, Respondent billed Patient A \$215 as the balance owed to Respondent.

Patient B

15. Patient B is an adult male friend of the Respondent who was treated on five (5) separate occasions. Respondent diagnosed Patient B with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder ("PTSD"), dissociative identity disorder and psychosis. Respondent noted in Patient B's chart:

[Patient B] has psychoses a several (sic) mental disorder of the personality involving a disorganization of total personality with the organic disease. He has blackouts, epileptic seizures also is an alcoholic. [Personality #1] is recovering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, [Personality #2] has a compulsive fear of rejection, compulsive perfectionist, [Personality #2] has a compulsive fear of abandonment, [Patient B] does not believe in God.

Thanks to the APS reports, the individual temperament of the alter personalities were determined and the strongest in control is not determined and the strongest in control will quickly identified (sic).

16. By invoice dated August 19, 2011, Respondent submitted a bill to a third party insurer for \$1,085 for administering the A.P.S profile (\$85.00) and conducting five (5) therapy sessions (\$1,000). By invoice dated August 24, 2011, Respondent submitted a bill to the same third party insurer for administering another A.P.S. profile (\$85.00), three (3) therapy sessions (\$600.00), two (2) tickets to a local amusement park for Respondent and a 10 year old alter personality of Patient B (\$120.00), hotel charges for the Respondent and Patient B's stay near the amusement park (\$60.00), three (3) meals for Patient B's alter personality (\$180.00) and three (3) meals for the Respondent, as "therapist and surrogate mother".

Patient C

17. The Respondent treated Patient C on a monthly basis from August 21, 2011- July 23, 2012. Patient C, a 56 year old male, presented with an alleged history of depression, anger and post-traumatic stress disorder. Respondent diagnosed him as

suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder, with 3 alter personalities.

18. In an undated report, Respondent opined to the Talbot County Circuit Court, that Patient C had 3 alter personalities, one of which was “violent” and required “much more healing of [t]raumatic memories”.

19. Respondent’s report was written on professional letterhead indicating that she held a Ph. D. and was a licensed clinical professional counselor. Respondent also submitted with her report an “invoice” dated December 5, 2012 requesting payment of \$768.00 for her professional evaluation of Patient C. Respondent billed \$85.00 for administering the A.P.S. test, \$421.00 for travel time from Elkton to Baltimore, \$85.00 for preparing a one (1) paragraph letter to the Court, and \$177.00 for her court appearance on January 7, 2012.

Patient D

20. Respondent treated Patient D in 2011-2012 for an undetermined number of sessions. Although Patient D was billed \$1,460.00 for eight (8) counseling sessions, Respondent’s records note that she treated him for 24 sessions.

21. Patient D is a family member of the Respondent. Respondent noted in Patient D’s chart that as part of his therapy, she administered the A.P.S. profile on other closely related family members and friends of the Respondent.

22. On or about December 4, 2011, Respondent wrote to the Social Security Administration on behalf of Patient D, recommending disability benefits based upon her multiple diagnoses:

“Here is my findings of [Patient D] (sic). I am still awaiting the results of the alter-personality [Personality #1] to see who is the strongest in control. I will let you know. This is my professional

opinion through much counseling and testing with APS. Glory to God.”

Respondent signed the letter, “Dr. Debbie Walls” on letterhead that listed her as both an “L.C.P.C. and Ph.D.”

23. The Board’s investigation revealed that Respondent misrepresented her credentials, training and education, and misled prospective and active patients, to believe that she was authorized to practice psychology in the State of Maryland. Respondent provided to each prospective patient, a treatment profile labeled, “*Our Plan: Affordable & Effective Counseling and You.*” In it, Respondent described her treatment sessions and claimed that she held a Ph.D. She stated, “[a]s a Christian counselor, I am not limited to psychological techniques or to my own human efforts and wisdom.” (emphasis added). Respondent created the misperception that in addition to psychological techniques, she was able to employ other methodologies.

24. Respondent also provided to prospective patients a “*Notice of Privacy Practices*” wherein she defined the word “treatment” as “providing, coordinating or managing health care and related services by one or more health care providers. An example of this would include physical or psychological examination.” (emphasis added)

25. The Board’s investigation further revealed that the advertising practices of Respondent were misleading to the public. Respondent advertised her practice on the internet claiming that she was “Licensed” and that, “[w]ith great sensitivity and understanding, we help our clients to find solutions to a wide range of life challenges and psychological issues.” Respondent also identified specific areas of expertise:

Hypnobirthing[;]
Hypnotherapy[;]
Neuro-Psychological Assessments[;]
Neuropsychology[;]

**Psychiatric Services[;]
Psychoanalysis[;]
Psychological Testing[; and]
Psychotherapy[.]” (emphasis added)**

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concludes as a matter of law, that the Respondent violated the following provisions of the Act: H.O. § 18-401 (a) Except as otherwise provided in this title, a person may not practice, attempt to practice, or offer to practice psychology in this State unless licensed by the Board; H.O. § 18-402 (a) Unless authorized to practice psychology under this title, a person may not represent to the public by title, by description of services, methods, or procedures, or otherwise, that the person is authorized to practice psychology in this State; and (b) Unless authorized or permitted to do so by this title, a person may not use as a title or describe the services the person provides by use of the words “psychological”, “psychologist”, or “psychology”.

The Board further concludes as a matter of law that H.O. § 18-404 provides that the Respondent is subject to a civil fine of not more than \$50,000 to be assessed by the Board in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board.

ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is this 10th day of January 2015, by a majority of a quorum of the Board considering this case:

ORDERED that the Respondent pay a civil fine of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to the Board, within two (2) years of the execution of this Consent Order; and it is further

ORDERED that the Respondent cease and desist from practicing psychology, including but not limited to :1) holding herself out as a psychologist to the public or any prospective client; 2) administering, offering or advertising psychological services; 3) administering, offering or advertising psychological testing or screening including the Arno Profile System (A.P.S.) and;4) offering, documenting or recommending psychological diagnoses and/or treatment or in any other way, engaging in the unauthorized or unlicensed practice of psychology; and it is further

ORDERED that if the Respondent fails to comply with this Consent Order including but not limited to timely and full payment of the fine of \$5,000 within two (2) years, the Board may, in its discretion, after notice, impose an additional monetary fine if said violation is proven by a preponderance of the evidence; and it is further

ORDERED that this Consent Order is considered a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** pursuant to Md. State Gov't. Code Ann. § 10-611 et seq. (2014 Repl. Vol.); and it is further

ORDERED that, for purposes of public disclosure, as permitted by Md. State Gov't. Code Ann. §10-617(h) (2014 Repl. Vol.), this document consists of the contents of the foregoing Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order, and that the Board may also disclose same to any national reporting data bank that it is mandated to report to.

2/4/15
Date

Steven Sobleman, Ph.D, Chair
Board of Examiners of Psychologists

CONSENT OF DEBORAH ANN WALL, UNLICENSED

I, **DEBORAH ANN WALL** acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to consult with legal counsel before signing this document. I have chosen to waive my right to counsel. By this Consent, I agree and accept to be bound by the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions and restrictions. I waive any rights I may have had to contest the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

I acknowledge the validity of this Consent Order as if entered into after the conclusion of a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have had the right to counsel, confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections as provided by law. I acknowledge the legal authority and jurisdiction of the Board to initiate these proceedings and to issue and enforce the Consent Order. I also affirm that I am waiving my right to appeal any adverse ruling of the Board that might have followed any such hearing.

I sign this Consent Order after having had an opportunity to consult with counsel, without reservation, and I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning and terms of this Consent Order. I voluntarily sign this Order, and understand its meaning and effect.

1/31/2015
Date

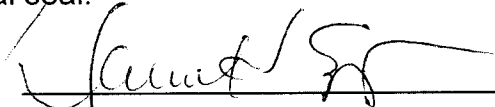
Deborah Ann Wall

NOTARY

STATE OF MARYLAND
CITY/COUNTY OF Cecil :

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 31st day of Jan, 2015,
before me, a Notary Public of the foregoing State personally appeared Deborah Ann
Wall, and made oath in due form of law that signing the foregoing Consent Order was
her voluntary act and deed, and the statements made herein are true and correct.

AS WITNESSETH my hand and notarial seal.



Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 9-1-15