



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

4201 Patterson Avenue • Baltimore, Maryland 21215-2299

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor – Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor – Nelson J. Sabatini, Secretary

December 1, 2003

Britta Hugoson-Burnet, Esquire
Law Office of Britta Hugoson-Burnet
110 E. Lexington Street
Suite 400
Baltimore, MD 21074

Sherrai V. Hamm, Esquire
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
300 West Preston Street
Suite 207
Baltimore, MD 21201

RE: Joseph Strovel, LCADC
License #LCA161

Dear Counsel:

Enclosed please find the consent order approved and signed by the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists on November 21, 2003 in the above-referenced case.

Sincerely,

Aileen Taylor
Administrator
Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists

410-764-4732 • Fax 410-358-1610 • TDD 800-542-4964

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RE: Joseph Strovel

Enclosure

cc: Joanne Faber, LCPC
Noreen M. Rubin, Board Counsel
Timothy J. Paulus, Assistant Attorney General, Deputy Counsel
Joseph Strovel, CAC-AD, Respondent

IN THE MATTER OF

* BEFORE THE STATE

JOSEPH STROVEL, LCADC

* BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Respondent

* OF PROFESSIONAL

LICENSE NUMBER: LCA161

* COUNSELORS

* * * * *

CONSENT ORDER

The Maryland Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors (the "Board") voted to revoke the license of **Joseph Strovel, LCADC, License Number LCA161** (the "Respondent"), due to violating certain provisions of the Maryland Professional Counselors (the "Act"), Md. Health Occ. Code Ann. ("H.O.") §§ 17-101 et seq. (2000 Repl. Vol. and 2002 Supp.). Specifically, the Board charged the Respondent with violating the following:

H.O. § 17-3A-02. Qualifications.

- (a) *In general.* – To qualify for licensing, an applicant shall be an individual who meets the applicable requirements of this section;
- (b) *Character.* – The applicant shall be of good moral character; and

H.O. § 17-3A-03 provides:

- (a) *Waiver.* – The Board shall waive the requirements for licensing of any person under § 17-3A-02 of this subtitle for any person who has filed a letter of intent with the Board by October 1, 1999 and who by October 1, 2001:
 - (1) Has been certified by the Board as a certified professional counselor, certified personal counselor-marriage and family therapist, or a certified professional counselor-alcohol and drug or is a person with a master's degree or doctoral degree who is designated by the Board as eligible for a license as a licensed clinical professional counselor, licensed clinical marriage and family therapist, or licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor;

H. O. § 17-3A-13 provides:

(a) *In general.* - The Board, on an affirmative vote of a majority of its members then serving, may deny a license to an applicant, suspend or revoke a license of a licensee, reprimand a licensee, or place a licensee on probation, if the applicant or licensee has committed any of the acts proscribed in § 17-313 of this title, subject to the provision in §§ 17-314 and 17-315 of this title.

H. O. § 17-313 further provides:

Subject to the hearing provisions of § 17-314 of this subtitle, the Board, on the affirmative vote of a majority of its members then serving, may deny a certificate to any applicant, place any certificate holder on probation, reprimand any certificate holder, or suspend or revoke a certificate of any certificate holder if the applicant or certificate holder:

(1) Fraudulently or deceptively obtains or attempt to obtain a certificate for the applicant or certificate holder or for another;

(4) Violates the code of ethics adopted by the Board; and

In addition, the Respondent is in violation of the following regulation:

Code of Md. Regs. tit. ("COMAR") 10, § 58.03.04 (Ethical Responsibility).

B. A Counselor may not:

(2) Participate in dishonest, fraudulent, or deceitful activity in the capacity of a counselor.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board finds:

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was issued a license to practice as a clinical alcohol and drug counselor in the State Of Maryland. The Respondent was originally issued a license to practice as a clinical alcohol and drug counselor on April 5, 2001.

2. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was and is employed as the director of substance abuse for the Harford County Health Department located in Bel Air, Maryland.

3. On or about February, 2001, the Board received an application for certification as a certified professional counselor-alcohol and drug ("CPC-AD").¹

4. On his application for licensure the Respondent indicated in the "Academic History and Credentials" section that he attended Columbia State University from June 5, 1995 to August 16, 1997, obtained one hundred and seventy nine (179) credits while attending the university, and received a "masters" degree in human communications. The Respondent's application also included an "official transcript" and a diploma issued by Columbia State University.²

5. The Respondent was issued a license to practice as a clinical alcohol and drug counselor because the Board believed that the Respondent had provided the Board with documentation that he had a valid master's degree.

6. On or about November 4, 2002, the Board received a complaint, from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration, Office of Education & Training ("OETAS"). In their complaint, the director and the training manager of OETAS indicated that while verifying the Respondent's educational background for the position of Alcohol

¹ The Respondent filed a Waiver of Requirements (Grandparenting) Application that was permissible under the Board's grandparenting regulations. The application was signed by the Respondent on October 26, 2000.

² The diploma indicated that the Respondent was conferred the degree of "Master of Science in Communication" on August 18, 1997.

and Drug Professional Counselor/Supervisor, they discovered that the Respondent did not have a valid master's degree.³

7. A subsequent investigation by the Board revealed the following:

8. On or about October 13, 1998, the Respondent filed a complaint with the Attorney General's office for the State of Louisiana, Consumer Protection Section (the "Louisiana AG").

9. In his complaint to the Louisiana AG, the Respondent sought reimbursement of the money that he had paid Columbia State University. The Respondent learned after reading a report in the September 28, 1998 issue of U.S. News and World Report that Columbia State University was a sham with phony accreditation and a mail drop for a campus address.⁴

10. During an interview with the Board investigator, the Respondent acknowledged that he submitted his application for CPC-AD certification, dated October 26, 2000, to the Board knowing that the accreditation of Columbia State University was questionable and that the legitimacy of his Master's degree from the institution was problematic.

11. The Respondent deceptively obtained a license to practice clinical alcohol and drug counseling and deceptively attempted to obtain certification as a certified professional counselor-alcohol and drug, in violation of H.O. § 17-131(1) and (4), and COMAR 10.58.03.04B(2).

³ OETAS evaluates and verifies the training and educational records of individuals employed by or seeking employment with the State Of Maryland in the Alcohol and Drug Counselor jobs series.

⁴ The school's "administrative office" was a P.O. Box in Metairie Louisiana. In August 1998, the Louisiana AG won a court order to shut down Columbia State University.

12. The Respondent's conduct shows a lack of good moral character as required under H.O. §§ 17-3A-02(b) and 17-302.3(b).

13. The Respondent does not meet the educational requirements of H.O. §§ 17-3A-03(a)(1) and 17-306(c)(ii).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Board concludes that the Applicant violated Md. Health Occ. Code Ann. §§ 17-3A-02(a) and (b), 17-3A-03(a)(1), and 17-306(c)(iii), 17-313(1) and (4) and Code Md. Regs. tit. 10, § 58.03.04.B(2).

ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is this 21st day of November, 2003, by a majority of the full-authorized membership of the Board considering this case:

ORDERED that the Respondent's certification shall be **SUSPENDED** for **eighteen (18) months**, but said suspension shall be immediately **STAYED**; and be it further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall be placed on **PROBATION** for that same period of **eighteen (18) months**, subject to the following terms and conditions:

- a. The Respondent shall return his license to practice clinical alcohol and drug counseling ("LCADC") to the Board. Effective the date of this Order, the Respondent will no longer be licensed to practice clinical alcohol and drug counseling. Upon receipt of the Respondent's license, the Board will issue to the Respondent certification as a certified associate counselor – alcohol and drug ("CAC-AD").
- b. The Respondent shall enroll in and successfully complete a three (3) credit graduate level Board approved course from an accredited college or university in professional, legal and ethical responsibility.

The Respondent shall enroll in this required course within **six (6) months** of the date of this Consent Order. The Respondent shall submit to the Board written documentation regarding the particular course he proposes as fulfillment of this condition. The Board reserves the right to require the Respondent to provide further information regarding the course he proposes, and further reserves the right to reject his proposed course and require submission of an alternative proposal. The Board will approve a course only if it deems the curriculum and the duration of the course adequate to fulfill the need. The Respondent shall be responsible for all costs incurred in fulfilling this course requirement and for submitting to the Board proof of classroom attendance and written documentation of his successful completion of the course.

- c. The Respondent shall perform one hundred and twenty (120) hours community service at a Board-approved agency or institution in Maryland.
- d. There shall be no early termination of probation.
- e. If the Respondent fails to complete the terms and conditions of this Consent Order in a timely manner as set out above, the Respondent will be deemed in violation of probation. The Board shall lift the stay of the Respondent's suspension and an active eighteen (18) month suspension shall commence immediately from the date of the Respondent's violation.
- f. At the end of the eighteen (18) month probationary period, the Respondent can file a written petition to the Board for termination of his probationary status, and the terms of this Consent Order, provided he has fulfilled all the terms and conditions of probation as set forth in this Consent Order, is not in violation of this Consent Order, and there are no outstanding complaints or charges against the Respondent.
- g. The Respondent shall be responsible for all costs incurred in this meeting terms and conditions of this Consent Order; and be it further

ORDERED that the Respondent shall practice alcohol and drug counseling in accordance with the Maryland Professional Counselors Act, and in a competent manner; and be it further

ORDERED that in the event the Board finds for any reason in good faith that the Respondent has violated any provision of Md. Health Occ. Code Ann. §§ 17-101, *et seq.* or the regulations thereunder, the Board, after notification to the Respondent, and an opportunity for a hearing, may take immediate action and may impose any lawful disciplinary sanctions it deems appropriate, including but not limited to revocation or suspension of the Respondent's license to practice alcohol and drug counseling; and be it further


ORDERED that the Respondent shall be responsible for all costs incurred under this Consent Order; and be it further

ORDERED that for purposes of public disclosure, as permitted by Md. State Gov't. Code Ann. § 10-617(h) (1999 Repl. Vol. and 2002 Supp.), this document consists of the contents of the foregoing Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order, and that the Board may also disclose to any national reporting bank or other to whom the Board is mandated to report; and be it further

ORDERED that the conditions of this Consent Order be, and the same is hereby, effective as of the date of this Order;

ORDERED that this is a **FINAL ORDER** and as such is a public document pursuant to Md. State Gov't. Code Ann. §§ 10-611 et seq. (1999 Repl. Vol. and 2002 Supp.).

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 21st DAY OF November, 2003.



Joanne Faber, MED, CAS, LCPC, Chair
Maryland Board of Professional Counselors

CONSENT OF JOSEPH STROVEL, LCADC

I, **Joseph Strovel, License Number LCA161**, by affixing my signature hereto, acknowledge that:

1. I have had the opportunity to consult with counsel before signing this document.

2. I am aware that I am entitled to a formal evidentiary hearing before the Board, pursuant to Md. Health Occ. Code Ann. § 17-205 (2000 Repl. Vol. and 2002 Supp.) and, Md. State Gov't. Code Ann. §§10-201 et seq.

3. I acknowledge the validity of this Consent Order as if entered after a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have had the right to counsel, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections provided by law.

4. I voluntarily enter into and consent to the foregoing Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order, provided that the Board adopts the foregoing Consent Order in its entirety. I waive any right to contest the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and I waive my right to a fully evidentiary hearing, as set forth above, and any right to appeal this Consent Order or as set forth in the Act and Md. State Gov't. Code Ann. §§10-201 et seq. (1999).

5. I acknowledge that by failing to abide by the conditions set forth in this Consent Order, and, following proper procedures, I may suffer disciplinary action, which may include revocation of my license to practice alcohol and drug counseling in the State of Maryland.

6. I sign this Consent Order without reservation as my voluntary act and deed. I acknowledge that I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning, and terms of this Consent Order.

11/7/03
Date

Joseph Strovel
Joseph Strovel, LCADC

NOTARY

STATE OF Maryland
CITY/COUNTY OF HARFORD

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT on this 7 day of November, 2003, before me, a Notary Public for the State of Maryland and the City/County aforesaid, personally appeared **JOSEPH STROVEL, LCADC**, and made oath in due form of law that the foregoing Consent Order was his voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS my hand and Notarial Seal.

My Commission Expires: 5/5/07

Paul A. Bianchi Sr.
Notary Public

PAUL A. BIANCHI SR.
NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF MARYLAND
My Commission Expires May 5, 2007

IN THE MATTER OF
JOSEPH STROVEL, CAC-AD
Respondent.

* BEFORE THE MARYLAND
* STATE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL
* COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS

Certification No.: ACO709

* * * * *

TERMINATION OF PROBATION

The Respondent, Joseph Strovel, CAC-AD, has successfully complied with the probationary terms and conditions imposed by the Consent Order of the Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (the "Board"), dated November 21, 2003.

WHEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED by the Board that the probationary terms and conditions imposed by the Consent Order dated November 21, 2003, are hereby **TERMINATED** and are of no further force or effect; and it is further

ORDERED that this **TERMINATION OF PROBATION ORDER** is a Public Document pursuant to Maryland State Gov't Code Ann. §10-611 *et seq.*

June 17, 2005
Date



Joanne Faber, M.Ed., LCPC, Chair
Maryland State Board of Professional
Counselors and Therapists