

# Tales from the Licensing Board

## Home Study Course

### Cases

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## CASE 1

Mary Jones lives in a rural part of Massachusetts. She has one of only a very few therapy practices in the area. Many ago she started a socialization group for women and has successfully run it. Recently a complaint was filed to the Allied Mental Health Board of Registration by one of Ms. Jones' clients expressing concern that Ms. Jones' adult daughter had recently joined the group.

In response to the complaint, Ms. Jones did not deny that her daughter had joined her group, but claimed that because there no other groups for many miles in the rural area and that her daughter has become an active and non judgmental participating member of the group and that the group has a strong social component, ie; going out to dinner afterwards, etc. that she felt her daughter's inclusion in the group wasn't an issue.

## CASE 2

Helen Murphy has a very busy psychotherapy practice which she promoted to be holistic in its view and was named "From the Heart". She recently came back from a wonderful trip to Tahiti. As she returned from her two week vacation, she was asked by many of her clients about her trip and as she discussed it with them they were thrilled to hear the details from her trip and many of them mentioned that would love to go on a trip like that. Their comments generated an idea for Ms. Murphy. She decided to offer a "From the Heart Vacation Club". She got in touch with a travel agent and they created a two week vacation package to Tahiti all inclusive vacation. She invited all who wanted to come to join her for this fabulous vacation "once in a lifetime" trip. She invited all of her current and former clients as well as others in the community for this trip scheduled in February of 2018. She advertised this trip in her waiting room, complete with brochures and descriptions of the ship they were to go on and the hotels they would be staying in.

A complaint was filed with the Allied Mental Health Board of Registration by a therapist who had been in her practice but was no longer there.

In response to the complaint, Ms. Murphy contended that she meant no harm and that she was not making any money from this trip and was offering it only as a service with no profit to her. She further stated that if the Board felt this was not acceptable, she would cancel the trip.

## CASE 3

Matthew Smith, a 14 year old boy, informed his current therapist that his mother is involved in a relationship with his former therapist, George Hammond and that Mr. Hammond has moved into their house. In addition, Matthew reported that he had come home one day and found his mother and Mr. Hammond engaged in sexual relations. Upon that information a complaint was filed with Allied Mental Health Board of Registration

Mr. Hammonds responded that he had been Matthew's therapist when Matthew was 7 years old and has not had contact with him since 2011. He had seen Matthew for less than a year. He said that he had run into Diane, Matthew's mother at an art gallery and they struck up a conversation. That conversation led to more contact and they began a relationship. He said that they now co-habitate and he does occasionally play the role of parent figure to Matthew. He also said that he fails to see "how 2 adults engaged in normal behavior in the privacy of their own bedroom is any of the Dep't of Professional Licensure's business".

In addition, a letter was received from Diane Smith, Matthew's mother. She supported Mr. Hammond's chronology of events and said that the time Matthew came home to find them having sex was a time where Matthew was with his father for the weekend. She reported that Matthew came home to get something unannounced.

During the investigation of the complaint, a review of the clinical records of the agency where the current therapist works said that "client reports that he was upset due to his mother's new boyfriend. Client reported that her boyfriend (Mr. Hammonds) can be harsh with rules. Client appeared tearful when discussing this upcoming transition....Client's mother reported that George can reinforce the household rules". In addition the record stated client's father "reported to him that the former therapist uses information from his sessions with Matthew to parent him which causes Matthew to feel upset".

The mother also reported that Matthew had seen the complaint and was upset at its existence. Subsequently, the Board also received a letter written by Matthew saying that he had read the complaint and found several items to be untrue. He attempted to clarify the dates which he saw Mr. Hammond (in 2011, not 2014 which one report had stated) and that Mr. Hammond was not dating his mother when they were in therapy together. He further said ""I have yes said things about him (Mr. Hammond) and that I dislike Mr. George Hammond but, I say that out of anger and sadness from my parent's divorce and my mother have done intercourse that I saw part of but, it was my fault because I was downstairs for the weekend and I came up and saw it. I was upset when I brought it up with Kathy (current therapist) because I missed my mom and dad together."

# CASE 4

Maria Gonzales filed a complaint against therapist, Juan Torres with the Allied Mental Health Board of Registration. She claimed that she had three appointments with Mr. Torres and had a fourth scheduled. Before the fourth appointment, however, Mr. Torres called her to terminate with her because she was being accused of having stolen a wallet from a business owner whose office was located in the same building and next to Mr. Torres' office. She denied that she stole anything and provided Mr. Torres with information on her whereabouts after leaving his office the day of the third appointment. She reported that Mr. Torres did not want her to come back to the office for fear that the business owner would call the police on her. She stated that since she did not take anything she was not fearful if the police were to be called. She stated that she asked Mr. Torres if they could meet elsewhere and was told by him that they could not. She reported that Mr. Torres did offer her a referral, but she declined and told him that she would find another therapist on her own as she no longer trusted Mr. Torres.

Mr. Torres does not deny that he terminated w/Ms. Gonzales and insisted that he was not providing her therapy as they were still in the "assessment phase of treatment" and had not yet committed to start a therapeutic relationship. He provided details of Ms. Gonzales' description of her history of family and friends being involved with or being victims of high crime and murder. He related that at the beginning of the second session, Ms. Gonzales asked to borrow \$10 to pay a bill from the downstairs (of his office) restaurant which had confiscated Ms. Gonzales' iPad as a result of her not having the money to pay her bill. Mr. Torres also reported that Ms. Gonzales had told him she had a particular insurance carrier, but upon further investigation found this not to be true. He also reported that Ms. Gonzales had informed him that she had looked him up on the internet and had discovered that he was "friends" on a social media site with the father of the woman with whom Ms. Gonzales' ex boyfriend was having an affair during Ms. Gonzales' relationship. Mr. Torres said that he had been colleagues with this man, but did not know the other people Ms. Gonzales had mentioned.

Mr. Torres described the day of the incident and did not deny his own suspicions of Ms. Gonzales stealing the wallet, but had no concrete evidence. Mr. Torres stated that he did consult with a colleague regarding the incident and based on that consultation and his own feelings, decided to terminate the assessment. He reported that he felt it best to call her rather than having her come into the office where he was concerned there might be a scene and police involvement.

# CASE 5

Jane Marks filed a complaint with the Allied Mental Health Board of Registration against Susan King, her 8 year old son's therapist because she alleged that Ms. King "put her son in danger and violated his confidentiality". She described that she had emailed Ms. King requesting an emergency session due to her son having reported being physically abused by his father, as evidenced by a statement the child wrote. According to Ms. Marks, Ms. King emailed her back saying that if the child disclosed this to her, that she should call DCF and file a report. She further said that she could not see the child until after the weekend (it was on a Friday) but that if the father "is this abusive, you need to get an emergency order". Ms. King went on to say "it is puzzling to me because the child talks about how much he enjoys being with his father. I need to call him to let him know because if you get an emergency order he will understand". Ms. Marks reported that on the next day, she requested that Ms. King not contact the father abt the incident so as to not breach the child's confidentiality and put him in an unsafe position.

Ms. Marks went on to say that when DCF contacted Ms. King the next day, Ms. King told the DCF investigator that she had no concerns abt the father physically hitting the child, even though she had not yet seen the child, which she was scheduled to do later that day. Ms. Marks also reported that when Ms. King inquired w/DCF about the incident, she was told that DCF screened out the 51A complaint upon which Ms. King then called the father to inform him of that fact. Ms. Marks did say that the report was not screened out, but was screened in and was being investigated. According to Ms. Marks, once Ms. King was correctly informed that the case had been screened in w/DCF, Ms. King texted that father to terminate therapy with the child, but that the father did bring the child in to see Ms. King one last time two weeks after this incident, even though Ms. Marks had informed Ms. King that she would not give her consent for the child to see Ms. King again.

Ms. King responded by saying that both parents have joint legal custody and she does not believe that the father physically abused the child. She reported that Ms. Marks is a person who constantly coaches the child on what to say about his father for court proceedings and specifically this alleged incident. She said she dutifully provided the information to the mother (Ms. King) on what to do if she was concerned abt abuse of her son, but felt that this incident was an attempt to stop visits he had with his father.

She went on to say that she had had many visits with the boy and his father and had observed their interactions and was struck by the warm and loving relationship they exhibited in her office. She reported that she felt it was her duty to inform the father of the 51A as the parents have joint legal custody. She also reported that when she was able to talk with the child immediately after the 51A was filed, he described a situation where he and his father were play wrestling and his father unintentionally hurt him. The child indicated that he felt safe with his father when Ms. King asked him. According to Ms. King, when the child was with his mother, later in the session, the child changed his story and it was the belief of Ms. King that Ms. Marks was prompting the child on what to say.

Ms. King went on to say that she felt it best to terminate therapy with the child given the negative contact with Ms. King and sent emails to both Ms. King and the father. When father contacted her a bit later, she requested to have the child come in for one last termination session. Although Ms. Marks refused to do this, the father did bring the boy in for one last session.

## CASE 6

Jane Fernandes filed a complaint with the Allied Mental Health Board of Registration against Mary Roslindale complaining that Ms. Roslindale had suddenly terminated her after initiating a romantic relationship and had caused great emotional harm. Ms. Fernandes reported that Ms. Roslindale invited her into her home and understood this to be a romantic gesture.

Ms. Roslindale responded that she had engaged with Ms. Fernandes in a two year therapy process, describing her as a “borderline” female, lesbian client. She went on to say that Ms. Fernandes became very attached and had concern that she (Ms. Fernandes) might have “love” feelings with the therapist. She further went on to describe how Ms. Fernandes began to stalk her office, and also showed up at her home, insisting on time outside scheduled appointments. Ms. Roslindale described how she let Ms. Fernandes into her home “to be nice” and to try to appease her, hoping she would feel better and be satisfied. At that point, Ms. Roslindale increasingly felt threatened by the actions of Ms. Fernandes and terminated treatment with her.