

THE MATTER OF THE *HEALTH PROFESSIONS ACT*, R.S.A. 2000, c.H-7;

AND IN THE MATTER OF A HEARING INTO THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTINA GODDARD, A MEMBER OF THE ALBERTA COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS;

AND IN THE MATTER OF A PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT HEARING REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTINA GODDARD UNDERTAKEN VIRTUALLY;

DECISION OF THE HEARING TRIBUNAL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. A hearing was held virtually on March 23, 2026 concerning allegations of unprofessional conduct against Christina Goddard (the “**Member**”), a regulated member of the Alberta College of Social Workers (“**ACSW**”). The hearing occurred virtually with the consent of both parties.
2. This decision sets out the findings, reasons and penalty orders of the Hearing Tribunal concerning the hearing.
3. The Hearing Tribunal was assisted by Blair E. Maxston, K.C. as independent legal counsel in the drafting of this decision.

II. THE HEARING GENERALLY

4. The March 23, 2026 hearing was held pursuant to the *Health Professions Act*, R.S.A. 2000, c.H-7 as amended (the “**Act**”).
5. The members of the Hearing Tribunal were:

Pat Matusko, (Chair, Public Member)
Emeka Ezike-Dennis (Public Member)
Bjorn Johansson (RSW)
Judith Mason (RSW)

Also participating in the hearing were Bruce Llewellyn (ACSW Complaints Director) and Karen Smith K.C. (legal counsel for the ACSW Complaints Director).

The Member participated in the hearing and was represented by legal counsel, Darin Wight.

6. The hearing was a public hearing pursuant to s. 78 of the Act. There was no application to hold the hearing in private.
7. There were no objections regarding the timeliness of service of the Notice of Hearing and no objections regarding the composition or jurisdiction of the Hearing Tribunal. As well, there were no preliminary applications.
8. The allegations were set out in an Amended Notice of Hearing dated February 10, 2026 (the “**Notice of Hearing**”). The allegations in the Amended Notice of Hearing arise from the Member’s interactions with client AK while the Member was an employee at Alpha House. The allegations in the Notice of Hearing are as follows:

“Breach of Professional Boundaries

1. That during your period of employ, you had a personal, intimate, and/or sexual relationship with client of Alpha House identified as AK.
2. That during your employ with Alpha House, you allowed the client AK to move into your personal residence.
3. That you failed to allow the client to engage in the re-housing program of Alpha House, preferring to allow the client to live at your personal residence.
4. That you continued to have ongoing communications with the client AK with your work cellphone.
5. That you provided your personal cell phone number and personal email to the client and engaged in personal communication with the client via text message.

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of F.5(a)(b)(c), F.7, G.3, and G.5, of the Standards of Practice 2019 and Value 4 of the Code of Ethics 2005 and constitutes unprofessional conduct pursuant to s. (1) (pp) (i) (ii) and (xii) of the Health Professions Act, RSA, 2000, c-H-7, as amended.

Conflict of Interest

6. That you failed to declare a conflict of interest to your employer when you recognized that you knew the client AK from past experiences (2018).

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of B.3 and B.2(c)(ii) of the Standards of Practice 2019 and constitutes unprofessional conduct pursuant to s. (1) (pp) (i) (ii) and (xii) of the Health Professions Act, RSA, 2000, c-H-7, as amended.”

9. Pursuant to s. 70(1) of the Act, the Member provided a written admission of unprofessional conduct to the Hearing Tribunal dated February 4, 2026 stating that the Member admitted that certain Allegations constituted unprofessional conduct. The admitted allegations of unprofessional conduct are:

“Breach of Professional Boundaries

1. That during her period of employ, Ms. Goddard had a personal relationship with client of Alpha House identified as AK.
2. That during her employ with Alpha House, Ms. Goddard allowed the client AK to move into her personal residence.
3. That Ms. Goddard failed to allow the client to engage in the re-housing program of Alpha House, preferring to allow the client to live at her personal residence.
5. That Ms. Goddard provided her personal cell phone number and personal email to the client and engaged in personal communication with the client via text message.

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of F.5(a)(b)(c), F.7, and G.3, of the Standards of Practice 2019 and Value 4 of the Code of Ethics 2005 and constitutes unprofessional conduct pursuant to s. (1) (pp) (i) (ii) and (xii) of the Health Professions Act, RSA, 2000, c-H-7, as amended.

Conflict of Interest

6. That Ms. Goddard failed to declare a conflict of interest to her employer when she recognized that she knew the client AK from past experiences (2018).

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of B.3 and B.2(c)(ii) of the Standards of Practice 2019 and constitutes unprofessional conduct pursuant to s. (1) (pp) (i) (ii) and (xii) of the Health Professions Act, RSA, 2000, c-H-7, as amended.”

(the “**Allegations**”)

10. The following documents were entered as Exhibits at the Hearing with the consent of both parties:

Exhibit 1: Notice of Hearing.

Exhibit 2: Notice to Attend.

Exhibit 3: Investigation Report.

Exhibit 4: Statutory Declaration of Service

Exhibit 5: Admission of Unprofessional Conduct (the “**Admission**”).

Exhibit 6: Consent Order (the “**Consent Order**”).

11. Since the hearing proceeded as a consent hearing, the Hearing Tribunal heard from no witnesses at the hearing.

III. THE HEARING AND THE CONSENT ORDER

12. The Consent Order contained a “Agreed Statement of Facts”, “Agreed Findings”, “Acknowledgment of Responsibility” and “No Right to Appeal” sections.
13. The Consent Order also contained a “Orders as to Sanctions” section (the “**Sanction Orders**”) which will be commented on further later in this decision.

A. Agreed Statement of Facts

14. The facts in this matter are not in dispute and are described in the Agreed Statement of Facts as follows:

“1. At all material times, Christina Goddard was a Registered Social Worker with the Alberta College of Social Workers (“ACSW”) since March 2022.

2. Christina Goddard was an employee at Alpha House for the period 2017 until her resignation on August 9, 2022.

3. Alpha House is established to assist individuals with addiction issues. One goal of the Alpha House is to undertake a housing diversion program that supports individuals into being rehoused to divert from homelessness.

4. As a term of Ms. Goddard’s employment, she signed an acknowledgement of the vulnerable adult policy and was aware of the program protocols that strictly prohibited personal relationships with clients.

5. Alpha House identifies all clients as vulnerable adults.

6. In accordance with the policies of Alpha House, personal relations with clients is strictly prohibited.

7. Ms. Goddard acknowledges that she had a personal relationship with AK. In particular, she:

- Allowed the client, AK, to move into her personal residence;
- Provided her personal cell phone number to AK;
- Provided her personal email to AK;
- Engaged in personal communications with the client via text message;
- Subsequent to the termination of her employ, she had ongoing communication with AK with a work cell phone;

8. Given the personal relationship that existed and/or developed while Ms. Goddard was employed, she did not advise her employer when she recognized AK from past personal experiences and/or the potential for a conflict of interest.

9. Ms. Goddard's employment at Alpha House was terminated on August 8, 2022, ultimately resulting in her resignation August 9, 2022."

B. Acknowledgment of Responsibility and Unprofessional Conduct

15. It was acknowledged by the Member and the ACSW Complaints Director that the Member's conduct as described in the Agreed Statement of Facts and the admitted Allegations constitutes unprofessional conduct.

C. No Right to Appeal

16. The ACSW and the Member agreed that there shall be no appeal from the Consent Order notwithstanding s. 87 of the Act.

D. Submissions from the Parties

17. Ms. Smith's comments on behalf of her client can be summarized as follows:
- After receiving the complaint, the Complaints Director appointed an investigator who prepared an investigation report. In October 2025 and after the investigation report was provided to the Member, candid discussions were held between the Member, the Complaints Director and their respective lawyers which resulted in the Admission and Consent Order.
 - The Member has made admissions to five of the six original Allegations with rewording regarding Allegation 1. This is not a sexual abuse case. This is a professional boundary case. The Admission does not refer to an intimate relationship between the Member and the client AK.
 - The Hearing Tribunal's job is to determine whether there are factual underpinnings for unprofessional conduct for the five admitted charges and then to look at the definition of unprofessional conduct under section 1(1)(pp) of the *HPA* to determine whether proven facts constitute unprofessional conduct.
 - The Hearing Tribunal has ample facts in the Agreed Statement of Facts to establish the relevant facts. In this case, the Member's conduct is clearly unprofessional conduct.
 - If the Hearing Tribunal accepts the Admission, it needs to consider five factors in terms of the consequences for the Member: public protection, deterrence to the Member and members at large, rehabilitation, fairness (comparable consequences for comparable conduct) and the integrity of the profession. The Hearing Tribunal should also review the *Jaswal* factors.

- In terms of the *Jaswal* factors, although the conduct does not have a sexual aspect, it is serious and is at the top-end of allegations as a professional boundary offence. This is an aggravating factor.
- In terms of the Member's age, she had a reasonable time to practice and was not a new graduate. This is an aggravating factor.
- In terms of the age and mental condition of the patient, the patient was vulnerable and this is an aggravating factor.
- In terms of the number of times that the offence occurred, there was a systemic pattern of behaviour over a period of time which is an aggravating factor but there was only one patient and that is a mitigating factor.
- In terms of the Member's role, she did come to the College and a consent hearing avoids the challenges of a contested hearing. This is a mitigating factor.
- There are no prior complaints concerning the Member but generally there is a significant impact on a vulnerable patient such as the case is here.
- The Hearing Tribunal's powers are set out in section 82 of the *HPA*. Ms. Smith reviewed the Consent Order and the proposed penalty orders and costs order.
- Ms. Smith reviewed the *R. v. Anthony-Cook* Supreme Court of Canada case and the public interest test. This means that the Hearing Tribunal should not depart from the joint submission on penalty unless it brings the administration of justice into disrepute or is otherwise contrary to the public interest.
- That is a very high bar and here the Tribunal should give significant deference to and respect the work that has been done by the parties concerning the joint penalty proposal.

18. Mr. Wight's submissions can be summarized as follows:

- There were long settlement discussions that explored every facet of the Consent Order.
- Mr. Wight is very impressed by the Member and her sincerity.
- The Member wants to have a good impact on the profession and wants to move forward.

IV. REASONS FOR DECISION: THE ALLEGATIONS

A. Generally

19. The ACSW is a self-governing professional body established under the Act and is responsible for regulation of the Social Work profession in the public interest. This includes ensuring that all ACSW regulated members practice their profession in a manner that protects the public from unsafe, incompetent or unethical acts.
20. The Hearing Tribunal sees protection of the public as the primary consideration in this matter.
21. After carefully considering all of the information and evidence presented during the Hearing, the Hearing Tribunal accepts all of the admissions of unprofessional conduct by the Member.
22. The factual basis for the Allegations was proven as the result of uncontradicted evidence presented to the Hearing Tribunal. Bearing in mind the Admission signed by the Member, the Hearing Tribunal also concluded that the proven actions of the Member constituted unprofessional conduct as they were a clear breach of the Member's ethical and professional obligations.

B. Analysis

23. The Hearing Tribunal concludes that the Member's admitted unprofessional conduct was serious in nature and agrees with the Complaints Director that it is at the higher end of the range of unprofessional conduct as it involves a clear professional boundary issue.
24. The Member occupied a position of trust and authority and breached the core ethical obligations that she owed to client AK. Moreover, client AK occupied a position of vulnerability in terms of the Member and the Member's actions clearly violated professional boundaries.
25. Failing to allow client AK to engage in the re-housing program of Alpha House and preferring to allow him to live at her personal residence represented a clear departure from the Member's ethical duty to put client AK's interests first. These same comments apply to the Member allowing client AK to move into her personal residence as that constituted a clear breach of the well recognized professional boundaries that the Member was required to maintain.
26. The Member's actions were clearly unprofessional conduct. This was not a "grey area". Instead, the Member's choices were deliberate and were a marked departure from the professional and ethical obligations of a Social Worker.
27. Based on this evidence, the Hearing Tribunal finds the admitted Allegations are factually proven and that the admitted Allegations constitute unprofessional conduct.

V. REASONS FOR DECISION: SANCTIONS AND COSTS

A. The Joint Sanctions Proposal

28. As part of the Consent Order, the parties also jointly presented an Orders as to Sanctions (the "Sanction Orders"). During the March 23, 2026 virtual hearing, the Hearing Tribunal members asked a series of questions to both parties in terms of a number of the Sanction Orders. Their questions focused on concerns about the need for certainty in terms of the commencement dates and enforceability for certain aspects of the Sanction Orders.
29. At the hearing, both parties agreed to provide the Hearing Tribunal with an updated Consent Order which would contain changes to the Sanction Orders to provide clarification.
30. On March 31, 2026, the Hearing Tribunal received an updated Consent Order with changes to the Sanction Orders. The Hearing Tribunal was satisfied that the changes made addressed their concerns about timing and enforceability.
31. The Sanction Orders in the updated Consent Order are:
 1. A Reprimand shall be issued as against Ms. Goddard.
 2. Ms. Goddard's practice of social work shall be suspended for a period of three (3) years. However, Ms. Goddard shall be given credit for the two years of non-practice commencing the date of cancellation of her registration which was March 31, 2023 when she voluntarily cancelled her registration as she was leaving the country. Ms. Goddard shall therefore be suspended for a period of one (1) year from the date of this Order. (*For the purposes of this Consent Order, the Date of the Order shall be the date the written decision is issued by the Hearing Tribunal).
 3. Ms. Goddard's practice of Social Work shall be subject to supervision for a period of two (2) years once she returns to the practice of social work. The supervisor may be inside or outside the employment of Ms. Goddard but must be approved by the Complaints Director. The ACSW Complaints Director shall be entitled to receive appropriate reporting from the supervisor. Any cost associated with the supervision will be the responsibility of Ms. Goddard. Ms. Goddard's permit to practice shall reflect the supervision obligation.
 4. Ms. Goddard shall be required to report to all employers for whom she is employed for the next five (5) years from the date she returns to the practice of social work, including providing the contents of this Admission and Consent Order including the Reasons for Decision to any employer.
 5. Ms. Goddard, at her own cost, shall be required to complete, within one year of the date of this Order, a University level Professional boundaries and ethics course as approved by the Complaints Director. The cost of this course shall be the responsibility of Ms. Goddard and the obligation with respect to the continuing education will be within her annual required continuing competency obligation.
 6. Ms. Goddard shall be required to provide, to the Complaints Director, by 30 days prior to her return to the practice of social work, confirmation from a

medical practitioner that she is sufficiently well to provide professional social work services to the public.

7. Ms. Goddard shall be obliged to maintain ongoing mental health therapy with a counsellor of her choice for a period of one year from the date of this Order. The cost of this counselling shall be that of Ms. Goddards and there shall be reporting as to attendance only to the Complaints Director of the ACSW.

8. The Complaints Director shall maintain the discretion to suspend Ms. Goddard's permit to practice pending a Hearing should the Complaints Director, in his sole discretion, conclude that Ms. Goddard has breached this Order.

9. There shall be publication of this decision and reasons on a with names basis.

32. The parties also jointly proposed a costs order as follows:

1. Ms. Goddard shall pay costs of this matter in the amount of \$1,000.00 within one (1) year of the date of this Order.

(the "**Costs Order**")

33. After considering submissions from the parties, the Hearing Tribunal confirmed that it was accepting the Sanction Orders and the Costs Order for the reasons described below.

B. The Sanction Orders and the Public Interest Test

34. The Hearing Tribunal acknowledges the significant efforts of the parties in preparing the Consent Order and the Sanction Orders. The Hearing Tribunal is also aware of the well-established legal principles indicating that deference should be shown to joint submissions on penalties as they promote certainty for both the member and the regulatory body, reduce the time and cost associated with contested hearings and are the result of careful negotiation.

35. Although the Hearing Tribunal retains ultimate discretion in terms of making penalty orders, it is aware of the legal principles which establish that a decision-maker (such as this Hearing Tribunal) should not depart from a joint submission on sanction unless the joint submission is unfit, unreasonable or contrary to the public interest.

36. For the reasons set out in this decision, the Hearing Tribunal finds that the public interest test for accepting the Sanction Orders was met.

37. The proposed penalty orders must and do convey to the Member, the profession and the public that this conduct will not be tolerated by the ACSW in terms of its public protection mandate and its obligation to uphold the integrity of the profession of social work in the eyes of the public.

38. Ultimately, the Hearing Tribunal concludes that the proposed sanctions are reasonable and appropriate and reflect the serious nature of the Member's conduct, the rehabilitation of the Member and her clear acceptance of responsibility for her actions. Very importantly, by the Member admitting unprofessional conduct and agreeing to the terms of a consent hearing,

both parties avoided the time, cost and uncertainty associated with a contested hearing which could have been very lengthy.

39. The suspension of the Member's practice as set out in order 2 is a serious consequence but is proportionate and justified having regard to the serious nature of the unprofessional conduct. The subsequent two-year supervision requirement is similarly justified in order to ensure safe, competent and ethical practice by the Member once she returns to the practice of social work.
40. Public protection and monitoring the Member's return to practice is also appropriately achieved by requiring the Member to report to employers for five years from the date she returns to practice.
41. The completion of a University level professional boundaries and ethics course, the confirmation from a medical practitioner concerning the Member's fitness to practice and the obligation to maintain ongoing mental health therapy are appropriate in terms of ensuring a return to practice which protects the public and also assists the Member in terms of rehabilitation.
42. Publication of the Member's name with the Hearing Tribunal's decision is a significant sanction but it also justified and appropriate bearing in mind the very serious nature of the unprofessional conduct and the accountability and transparency duties that the College has to the public.
43. Publication with name in concert with the other penalty orders will serve as a specific deterrent to the Member as well as a general deterrent to other social workers that this type of conduct will not be tolerated and will result in significant penalty orders.
44. The \$1,000.00 in costs payable by the Member represents a proportionate financial impact and is fair and reasonable having regard to her deliberate actions.
45. In summary, the Hearing Tribunal concludes that the sanctions recommended by both parties and the Costs Order are fair, reasonable and appropriate and reflect the seriousness of the Member's conduct as well as her acceptance of responsibility for those actions. They also reflect remediation and the Member's efforts in resolving these matters by way of a consent hearing.
46. In summary, the Hearing Tribunal makes the following orders in accordance with s. 82 of the Act:
 1. A Reprimand shall be issued as against Ms. Goddard.
 2. Ms. Goddard's practice of social work shall be suspended for a period of three (3) years. However, Ms. Goddard shall be given credit for the two years of non-practice commencing the date of cancellation of her registration which was March 31, 2023 when she voluntarily cancelled her registration as she was leaving the country. Ms. Goddard shall therefore be suspended for a period of one (1) year from the date of this Order. (*For the purposes of this Consent

Order, the Date of the Order shall be the date the written decision is issued by the Hearing Tribunal).

3. Ms. Goddard's practice of Social Work shall be subject to supervision for a period of two (2) years once she returns to the practice of social work,. The supervisor may be inside or outside the employment of Ms. Goddard but must be approved by the Complaints Director. The ACSW Complaints Director shall be entitled to receive appropriate reporting from the supervisor. Any cost associated with the supervision will be the responsibility of Ms. Goddard. Ms. Goddard's permit to practice shall reflect the supervision obligation.

4. Ms. Goddard shall be required to report to all employers for whom she is employed for the next five (5) years from the date she returns to the practice of social work, including providing the contents of this Admission and Consent Order including the Reasons for Decision to any employer.

5. Ms. Goddard, at her own cost, shall be required to complete, within one year of the date of this Order, a University level Professional boundaries and ethics course as approved by the Complaints Director. The cost of this course shall be the responsibility of Ms. Goddard and the obligation with respect to the continuing education will be within her annual required continuing competency obligation.

6. Ms. Goddard shall be required to provide, to the Complaints Director, by 30 days prior to her return to the practice of social work, confirmation from a medical practitioner that she is sufficiently well to provide professional social work services to the public.

7. Ms. Goddard shall be obliged to maintain ongoing mental health therapy with a counsellor of her choice for a period of one year from the date of this Order. The cost of this counselling shall be that of Ms. Goddards and there shall be reporting as to attendance only to the Complaints Director of the ACSW.

8. The Complaints Director shall maintain the discretion to suspend Ms. Goddard's permit to practice pending a Hearing should the Complaints Director, in his sole discretion, conclude that Ms. Goddard has breached this Order.

9. There shall be publication of this decision and reasons on a with names basis.

10. Ms. Goddard shall pay costs of this matter in the amount of \$1,000.00 within one (1) year of the date of this Order.

Dated this 14th day of May 2026.

PA Matusko

Pat Matusko
Chair on behalf of the Hearing Tribunal