

IN 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 JILLIAN CASSIN, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE
ALBERTA COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS;

AND IN THE MATTER OF A PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
HEARING REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF JILLIAN CASSIN
UNDERTAKEN VIRTUALLY;

DECISION OF THE HEARING TRIBUNAL

I. INTRODUCTION

1. A hearing was held virtually on August 27, 2026 concerning allegations of unprofessional conduct against Jillian Cassin (the "**Member**"), a former regulated member of the Alberta College of Social Workers ("**ACSW**"). The hearing occurred by consent via a virtual WebEx platform through the Edmonton office of Parlee McLaws.
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 Taylor Maxston as independent legal counsel in the drafting of this decision.

II. THE HEARING GENERALLY

4. The August 27, 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:

Barbara Artzen, (Chair – RSW)
Kelsey McWilliams (RSW)
Linda Sheen (Public Member)
Don Wilson (Public Member)

Also present at the hearing were:

Sheryl Pearson (ACSW Complaints Director)
Karen Smith, K.C. (legal counsel for the ACSW Complaints Director)
L.R. (complainant)

Jillian Cassin (the Member)
Joseph Keuber (legal counsel for the Member)

Toni Harrison (ACSW Hearings Director)

Ann Baker (court reporter)

6. The hearing was a public hearing pursuant to s. 78 of the Act.
7. The allegations were set out in a Notice of Hearing dated August 4, 2026 (the “**Notice of Hearing**”). The allegations are as follows:

Registration:

1. *That you, in providing psychedelic assisted therapy and integration sessions to LR in March and April of 2024, practiced within the scope of social work practice when you were not properly registered.*
2. *That you represented yourself on your website and on social media as a Registered Social Worker when you were not registered.*

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of B.1(e) and G.4(c) of the Standards of Practice 2023 and Value 5 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.

Psychedelic Drug Treatment and Psychedelic Assisted Psychotherapy:

3. *That in providing services to LR, you acted contrary to the Mental Health Services Protection Regulation, Part 3 Psychedelic Drug Treatment Services, pursuant to the Mental Health Services Protection Act, s. 68.*

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of E.5, E.6, E.4(b) and (c) of the Standards of Practice 2023, Value 7 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.

Obligation of Registration

4. *That in response to inquiries by the client, LR and the ACSW, you initially failed to acknowledge your breach of your obligations to be registered when performing services within the scope of practice and your responsibilities pursuant to the Mental Health Protection Act Regulation.*

Such conduct constitutes a contravention of G.1(a)(b) of the Standards of Practice 2023, Value 5 of the Code of Ethics 2005 and constitutes unprofessional conduct pursuant to s. (1) (pp) (i) (ii) (iv) and (xii) of the Health Professions Act, RSA, 2000, c-H-7, as amended.

(the “**Allegations**”)

8. Pursuant to s. 70(1) of the Act, the Member provided a written admission of unprofessional conduct to the Hearing Tribunal dated June 29, 2026 stating that the Member admitted that the Allegations constituted unprofessional conduct.
9. 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: Certified Record of Proceedings
 - Exhibit 4: Statutory Declaration of Service
 - Exhibit 5: Admission of Unprofessional Conduct (the "**Admission**").
 - Exhibit 6: Consent Order (the "**Consent Order**").
10. 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

11. The Consent Order contained a "Agreed Statement of Facts", "Agreed Findings", "Acknowledgment of Responsibility", "No Right to Appeal" sections.
12. The Consent Order also contained "Orders as to Sanctions" and "Costs" sections.

A. Agreed Statement of Facts

13. The facts in this matter are not in dispute and are described in the Agreed Statement of Facts as follows:
 1. *Ms. Cassin was formerly Registered as a Social Worker with the Alberta College of Social Workers ("ACSW") in or about July 2017.*
 2. *Ms. Cassin acknowledged that she was Registered with the ACSW until November 1st, 2022 until the cancellation of her registration and is subject to the jurisdiction of the ACSW with respect to this complaint.*
 3. *On or about October, 2024, the ACSW initiated an investigation into Ms. Cassin's conduct following a complaint from a former patient (LR).*
 4. *On or about November 15, 2024, the ACSW appointed an investigator with respect to this matter.*
 5. *As a result of the appointment of the investigator, Ms. Cassin undertook various steps, including proceeding with an application for an Interim Stay and Judicial Review of the ACSW's jurisdiction.*

6. *The parties have resolved all outstanding issues relating to jurisdiction and are proceeding on a consent basis.*
7. *Ms. Cassin was entered from a student membership to the provisional registry on July 24th, 2017. Her Registration was cancelled on August 1st, 2019, for non-payment. On September 15th, 2021, Ms. Cassin was reinstated to the Registry on the provisional registry and cancelled on November 1st, 2022, for non-payment.*
8. *On September 26th, 2024, the ACSW received an inquiry regarding Ms. Cassin's registration status. In response to that inquiry, Ms. Cassin sent correspondence to the ACSW on October 11th, 2024. In that correspondence, Ms. Cassin denied engaging in private practice, providing therapy services and/or providing psychedelic assisted therapy.*
9. *A review of Ms. Cassin's social media at the time of the complaint suggested that:*
 - *She represented herself as a Registered Social Worker;*
 - *She was providing social work services and therapy services.*
10. *Ms. Cassin completed psychedelic assisted therapy training at the Phoenix Academy. She also listed herself as a Member of the ATMA Psychedelic Assisted Therapy.*
11. *In March and April of 2024, Ms. Cassin saw LR as a client and provided psychedelic therapy with MDMA and Psilocybin to the client. The administration of the psychedelic therapy occurred at Ms. Cassin's home. Ms. Cassin met with LR several times between psychedelic therapy sessions to provide integration sessions.*
12. *The cost of the psychedelic sessions provided to LR were in the amount of \$2,700.00. The sessions occurred on March 12th (intake 2024), March 23rd, 2024, and April 27th, 2024.*
13. *Ms. Cassin acknowledges that the actions taken with respect to LR are within the scope of practice of Social Worker.*
14. *Ms. Cassin acknowledges that she was not Registered at the time of the psychedelic assisted treatment provided to LR.*

B. Acknowledgment of Responsibility and Unprofessional Conduct

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

C. No Right to Appeal

15. 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

16. On behalf of her client, Ms. Smith's submissions can be briefly summarized as follows:
- Ms. Smith reviewed the successful settlement discussions between the parties and the admission to the charges made by the Member. Ms. Smith noted that, notwithstanding how the matter had been initially litigious with proceedings in the Court of King's Bench of Alberta, the parties were ultimately able to come to consensus and reach the agreement before the Hearing Tribunal.
 - The factual underpinnings for the charges are set out in the Agreed Statement of Facts and the Member's conduct falls within the definition of unprofessional conduct. The Certified Record of Proceedings also provides useful information, though statements in those records cannot be accepted for the truth of their contents but rather for the fact of statements having been made.
 - Ms. Smith reviewed the order as to sanctions and the general penalty order objectives: public protection, deterrence to the Member and the profession, rehabilitation, fairness in terms of similar consequences for similar conduct and regulating the conduct of social workers properly.
 - Ms. Smith explained the penalty factors set out in the *Jaswal v. Medical Board* case out of Newfoundland, including that the Member's conduct was on the more serious end of unprofessional conduct, the Member was a younger member with some experience in the profession, the Member had no prior complaints, the unprofessional conduct did not demonstrate a systemic pattern although there were a number of instances of treatment, and that the Member ultimately took responsibility for her actions even though the matter was initially quite litigious.
 - 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. The Hearing Tribunal's discretion is therefore fettered in terms of ordering sanctions.
17. On behalf of his client, Mr. Keuber gave submissions to the Hearing Tribunal. He advised that he endorsed Ms. Smith's submissions, noting that the Member's actions began with an honest attempt to help people. She has acknowledged her mistakes and expressed sincere regret, working with the Complaints Director to arrive at the proposed resolution.
18. The Member was also given the opportunity to address the Hearing Tribunal and chose to do so. She confirmed that her actions were well-intended, noting that this has been a meaningful learning opportunity for her.

IV. REASONS FOR DECISION: THE ALLEGATIONS

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 Hearing Tribunal accepts that there was no dispute concerning the Hearing Tribunal's jurisdiction to proceed with the hearing. This was evidenced by the Consent Order coupled with section 54(3) of the Act establishing that a complaint can still proceed provided that no more than two years have passed since the Member became a former member.
23. The factual basis for the Allegations were 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.
24. In terms of the first two allegations concerning registration, the ability to practice social work is a privilege, not a right. Being registered by the ACSW is accepted by the public as confirmation that the regulated member can practice safely, competently, ethically and honestly. The Member's performance of activities restricted to social workers and representation of herself to the public as a regulated member when she was not properly registered went beyond misrepresenting her authority: it deceived members of the public who would be receiving her services and created a situation that posed a potential threat to their safety.
25. In terms of the third allegation concerning the psychedelic drug treatment and psychedelic assisted psychotherapy, regulated members have an obligation to understand the legislation that they work under as well as any standards of practice and codes of ethics applicable to their practice. The Member failed to register in a profession that is allowed to practice psychedelic drug treatment services as required by Mental Health Services Regulations Protection Regulation. The onus was on her to conduct sufficient due diligence and make appropriate inquiries to determine the scope of authorized practice, which she failed to do.
26. In terms of the fourth allegation concerning the obligation of registration, timely and honest communications between the regulator and regulated member are fundamental to the self regulation afforded under the Act. The Member's initial failure to acknowledge her breach of her obligations to be registered and those pursuant to the Mental Health Services Protection Regulation was inappropriate and contrary to the interests of professional self regulation.

27. Based on the evidence, the Hearing Tribunal finds the Allegations factually proven and that they constitute unprofessional conduct.

V. REASONS FOR DECISION: SANCTIONS AND COSTS

A. The Joint Sanctions and Costs Proposal

28. As part of the Consent Order, the parties also jointly presented orders as to sanctions (the "**Sanction Orders**") as follows:

1. *A Reprimand shall be issued as against Ms. Cassin*
2. *Upon registration with the ACSW, Ms. Cassin shall be suspended from the practice of Social Work for a period of 30 days commencing the registration date.*
3. *Ms. Cassin shall be required to successfully complete a university level course on Social Work ethics before her practice permit will be reinstated. The course shall be approved by the Complaints Director and shall be undertaken at the cost of Ms. Cassin.*
4. *Ms. Cassin shall be obliged to undertake four consultations with a senior social work practitioner approved by the ACSW before her practice permit will be reinstated. The cost of any such consultation shall be that of Ms. Cassin.*
5. *There shall be publication of this decision and reasons on a with names basis.*

29. In addition to the Sanctions Orders, the parties jointly included a provision regarding costs (the "**Costs Order**") as follows:

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

30. After considering submissions from the parties, the Hearing Tribunal briefly deliberated and returned to ask the parties how they proposed the reprimand be delivered. Ms. Smith confirmed that the format of the reprimand was in the Hearing Tribunal's discretion, though it is typically done by way of a letter or through the decision itself. Mr. Keuber did not have any further submissions to add to Ms. Smith's point.

31. The Hearing Tribunal deliberated once again, returning to confirm that it was accepting the Sanction Orders and the Cost Order for the reasons described below.

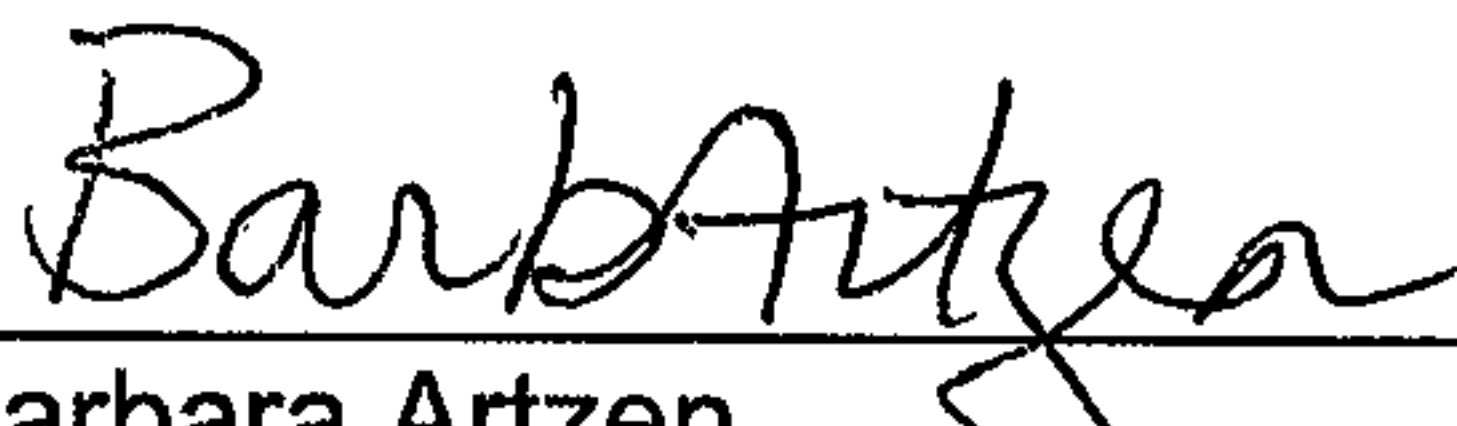
B. The Sanctions Orders and the Public Interest Test

32. The Hearing Tribunal acknowledges the significant efforts of the parties in preparing the Consent Order, the Sanction Orders, and the Costs Order. 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.

33. 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. For the reasons set out in this decision, the Hearing Tribunal found that the public interest test for accepting the Sanction Orders was met.
34. The proposed penalty orders must convey to the Member, the profession and the public that this conduct will not be tolerated by the ACSW. The ACSW has a clear public protection mandate and an obligation to uphold the integrity of the profession of social work in the eyes of the public.
35. Ultimately, the Hearing Tribunal concludes that the proposed sanctions are reasonable and appropriate having regard for the serious nature of the Member's conduct, the rehabilitation of the Member if she chooses to seek registration, 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 lengthy.
36. The initial 30-day suspension along with the requirements to complete a university level social work ethics course and four consultations prior to returning to practice are proportionate orders to address concerns over public protection and will assist the Member in terms of rehabilitation. Although publication of the decision on a with names basis is a significant sanction, it is justified and appropriate bearing in mind the very serious nature of the unprofessional conduct and the accountability and transparency duties that the ACSW has to the public.
37. The Costs Order is also justified in the circumstances. The Court of Appeal of Alberta's recent decision in *Charkhandeh v. College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta* (Alberta) emphasizes that costs are only considered after the sanction is set and are not to be an additional punishment. It is logical to conclude that the ACSW will have reasonably incurred some legal fees and expenses to handle allegations of unprofessional conduct made against its members, especially in matters that begin as litigious as this one. The \$1,000.00 in costs is not an objectively unreasonable amount, nor is it likely to be so burdensome or constitute a crushing blow such that it should not be imposed.
38. 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. Cassin.
 2. Upon registration with the ACSW, Ms. Cassin shall be suspended from the practice of Social Work for a period of 30 days commencing the registration date.
 3. Ms. Cassin shall be required to successfully complete a university level course on Social Work ethics before her practice permit will be reinstated. The course shall be approved by the Complaints Director and shall be undertaken at the cost of Ms. Cassin.
 4. Ms. Cassin shall be obliged to undertake four consultations with a senior social work practitioner approved by the ACSW before her practice permit will be reinstated. The cost of any such consultation shall be that of Ms. Cassin.

5. There shall be publication of this decision and reasons on a with names basis.
6. Ms. Cassin 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 1st day of October, 2026



Barbara Artzen
Chair on behalf of the Hearing Tribunal