

**IN THE MATTER OF: Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology**

**- and -**

**IN THE MATTER OF: Dr. Merete Sommerlund, Registered Psychologist**

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

Dr. Merete Sommerlund is hereby notified that the Hearing Committee of the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology will conduct a hearing pursuant to the *Psychologists Act*, SNS 2000, c 32 (the "***Psychologists Act***"), to consider allegations of professional misconduct and/or conduct unbecoming a psychologist.

The hearing will commence at 9:30am on November 21, 2023 at 1801 Hollis Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and continue as directed by the Hearing Committee.

Dr. Sommerlund's presence at the hearing is required. Dr. Sommerlund may be represented by legal counsel or another representative of her choice at her own expense, and may present evidence or witnesses on her behalf.

**TAKE NOTICE** that if Dr. Sommerlund does not attend this hearing, the Hearing Committee may proceed in her absence and she will not be entitled to any further notice of proceedings.

Any documentary evidence to be used by the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology ("**NSBEP**") at the hearing will be made available to Dr. Sommerlund in advance of the hearing in accordance with section 40 of the *Psychologists Act*. Dr. Sommerlund has all the rights set out at section 45 of the *Psychologists Act*, as well as the disclosure obligations set out at section 40 of the *Psychologists Act*.

The Hearing Committee will consider the following allegations:

That being registered as either a Candidate or Registered Psychologist under the *Psychologists Act* at the time of the subject matter of the allegations leading to this Notice of Hearing, **IT IS ALLEGED THAT:**

1. Beginning in January 2019 and continuing thereafter, Dr. Sommerlund engaged in a sexual relationship with Client "A", a vulnerable client for whom she had very recently provided psychological services, contrary to: the NSBEP's Sexual Misconduct by Psychologists Guideline; the NSBEP Standards of Professional Conduct, Principles 9.1 and 9.4; and the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, Ethical Standards II.1, II.2, II.28, III.28, III.30, and IV.10.<sup>1</sup>
2. Between 2018 – 2021, Dr. Sommerlund failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries by engaging in a personal relationship with Client "A", particulars of which included:

---

<sup>1</sup> See Schedule "A".

- a. allowing Client "A" to render unpaid services to her, including plowing her driveway during winter and stacking wood;
- b. exchanging texts with Client "A" for non-therapeutic reasons; and
- c. allowing Client "A" to move in with her a few months following the termination of the therapeutic relationship,

contrary to the Canadian Code of Ethics, Ethical Standards II.1, II.2, III.30, and IV.10.

3. In or around 2018 – 2019, Dr. Sommerlund failed to refer Client "A" to another psychologist upon initially noting the existence of a dual relationship, contrary to the NSBEP Standards of Professional Conduct, Principle 8 and the Canadian Code of Ethics, Ethical Standards II.33 and III.31.
4. Dr. Sommerlund failed to disclose the nature of her relationship with Client "A" during her oral ethics exam with the Registration Subcommittee of NSBEP on March 29, 2019.

**AND THAT** all of the above constitutes professional misconduct and/or conduct unbecoming a psychologist.

Dated in Nova Scotia, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2023.



---

Dr. Gordon Butler, Registrar  
Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology

**To: Dr. Merete Sommerlund**

Schedule "A"

**NSBEP Sexual Misconduct by Psychologists Guidelines:**

<https://www.nsbep.org/downloads/misconduct.pdf>

**Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists**

Ethical Standard II.1

Protect and promote the well-being and best interests of primary clients, contract examinees, research participants, employees, supervisees, students, trainees, colleagues, team members or other collaborators, and others.

Ethical Standard II.2

Avoid doing harm to primary clients, contract examinees, research participants, employees, supervisees, students, trainees, colleagues, team members or other collaborators, and others.

Ethical Standard II.28

Be acutely aware of the power relationship in therapy and, therefore, not encourage or engage in sexual intimacy with therapy clients, neither during therapy, nor for that period of time following therapy during which the power relationship reasonably could be expected to influence the clients' decision making (also see Standard III.28).

Ethical Standard II.28

Not exploit any relationship established as a psychologist to further personal, political, or business interests at the expense of the dignity or well-being of their primary clients, contract examinees, research participants, students, trainees, employers, or others. This includes, but is not limited to: soliciting primary clients, contract examinees, research participants, or students or trainees of one's employing agency for one's own activities (e.g., private practice, own research study); taking advantage of trust or dependency to encourage or engage in sexual intimacies (e.g., with primary clients or other individuals not included in Standard II.28, with primary clients' or contract examinees' partners or relatives, with students or trainees not included in Standard II.29, with research participants); taking advantage of trust or dependency to frighten individuals or groups into receiving services; establishing an ongoing treatment relationship with members of one's own family, close friends, or others in a significant current or previous personal relationship with the psychologist; misappropriating others' intellectual property, including students' or trainees' ideas, research, or work; using the resources of one's employing institution for purposes not agreed to; giving or receiving financial inducements for referrals; entering into fee arrangements (e.g., bartering) that are clinically or culturally contraindicated; allowing the financial advantages of method or communication-modality choices to outweigh the dignity, well-being or best interests of primary clients or contract examinees; seeking or accepting loans or investments from primary clients or contract examinees; and prejudicing others against a colleague for reasons of personal gain.

Ethical Standard II.33

Give reasonable assistance to secure needed psychological services or activities, if personally unable to meet requests for needed psychological services or activities.

Ethical Standard III.30

Avoid dual or multiple relationships (e.g., with primary clients, contract examinees, research participants, employees, supervisees, students, trainees) that are not justified by the nature of the activity, by cultural or geographic factors, or where there is a lack of reasonably accessible alternatives.

Ethical Standard III.31

Manage dual or multiple relationships or any other conflict-of-interest situation entered into in such a way that bias, lack of objectivity, and risk of exploitation or harm are minimized. This might include involving the affected party(ies) in clarification of boundaries and expectations, limiting the duration of the relationship, obtaining ongoing supervision or consultation for the duration of the dual or multiple relationship, or involving a third party in obtaining consent (e.g., approaching a primary client or employee about becoming a research participant).

Ethical Standard IV.10

Uphold the discipline's responsibility to society by promoting and maintaining the highest standards of the discipline.

**NSBEP Standards of Professional Conduct**

Principle 9.1

A registrant shall not have sexual relations with a client.

Principle 9.4

Psychologists do not engage in sexual intimacies with a former therapy patient or client for at least two years after cessation of, or termination of professional services.

Because sexual intimacies with a former therapy patient or client are so frequently harmful to the patient or client, and because such intimacies undermine public confidence in the psychology profession and thereby deter the public's use of needed services, psychologists do not engage in sexual intimacies with former therapy patients or clients even after a two-year interval except in the most unusual circumstances. The psychologist who engages in such activity after the two years following cessation or termination of treatment bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation, in light

of all relevant factors, including (1) the amount of time that has passed since therapy terminated, (2) the nature and duration of the therapy, (3) the circumstances of termination, (4) the patient's or client's personal history, (5) the patient's or client's current mental status, (6) the likelihood of adverse impact on the patient or client and others, and (7) any statements or actions made by the psychologist during the course of therapy suggesting or inviting the possibility of a post- termination sexual or romantic relationship with the patient or client.