



**Nova Scotia
Board of Examiners
in Psychology**

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**Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology
Summary of Decision of Hearing Committee
Re: Todd Leader**

On June 15, 2022, the Hearing Committee of the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology (“NSBEP”) accepted a Settlement Agreement agreed upon by the NSBEP. A summary of the Settlement Agreement follows:

Todd Leader is a Registered Psychologist, on the Academic Registry. At all times relevant to this matter he was teaching psychology part time at a Halifax University.

On August 28, 2017 and September 14, 2017, the NSBEP received complaints from two psychologists regarding Mr. Leader’s interactions with one of their patients, Student X, during July-August 2017, when Student X was a student in one of Mr. Leader’s university classes. On January 3, 2018, Student X also filed a complaint.

All three complaints alleged that in his communications with Student X, Mr. Leader had failed to act within professional boundaries, causing harm to a student who he was aware was suffering from mental health issues. The allegations focused on text, email and Facebook messages from Mr. Leader to Student X.

An Investigation Committee was struck to investigate the complaints.

The Investigation Committee was in receipt of the communications between Mr. Leader and Student X, and other correspondence Mr. Leader had sent to Student X, Student X’s mother and to one of the Complainants.

All this information had been voluntarily offered to one of the complainants by Mr. Leader. The Investigation committee met with one of the psychologist complainants, Student X, Student X’s roommate and Mr. Leader to ensure it had all relevant information.

The Committee found that Mr. Leader engaged in persistent, inappropriate, and unwanted communications with Student X, who he knew was suffering mental health issues and was extremely vulnerable. Mr. Leader admitted that his conduct was inappropriate, but that he thought he was providing support to Student X. In meeting with the Committee, Mr. Leader expressed remorse and shame for his conduct.

In the course of the Investigation of the Complaints, the Committee became aware of medical issues which combined with other mental health issues, may have impacted Mr. Leader's conduct, and fully reviewed this information.

At Mr. Leader's request and with his explicit consent, the following mental health details are provided. At the time of the events set out in the allegations, Mr. Leader was being treated for depression, and was on a medication, Pramipexole, for another medical condition, Medical opinions provided to NSBEP found that medication Mr. Leader was taking in 2017 caused disinhibition, compulsive behaviour and a lack of insight. An assessment found that when combined with underlying personality and emotional variables that were operant at the time, the medication likely disinhibited Mr. Leader's control over his behaviour resulting in his actions before the Board.

Personal Statement from Mr. Leader:

As part of the settlement process, Mr. Leader provided a personal statement reflecting on his conduct.

In that statement Mr. Leader said that he was deeply sorry for his communications with Student X and for the difficulty he has caused her. He acknowledged that his communication and interactions which led to this complaint were inappropriate and engaged clinical areas which are outside the scope of practice of his teaching role and his registration as a community psychologist.

Mr. Leader expressed that, despite the medication and psychiatric findings, he continues to be remorseful when he considers the harm caused to Student X and others who were offended or hurt by his communications.

Mr. Leader assured the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology that he has received both the psychological and medical treatment required to address the underlying issues, including terminating the medication Pramipexole, that he has re-established his mental health and has gained insight into his actions, the hurt caused, and the measures that he needs to put in place with his family and health care providers, and in his work, to prevent any further behaviours like this in the future.

CHARGES

Based on its investigation, including a review of the medical evidence, the Investigation Committee referred allegations of professional misconduct to the Hearing Committee which included the following:

- a) Knowing the Student X was a vulnerable person, suffering from mental health issues, Mr. Leader failed to maintain appropriate professional boundaries between himself and Student X, by engaging in persistent and unwanted communications with her, including unsolicited sexually oriented comments, and professions of love and admiration.

- b) Mr. Leader caused harm to Student X in respect of her mental health and well being and contributed to her failure to complete the university course in which he was the instructor.
- c) Mr. Leader created a risk of serious harm to Student X by discouraging her from following the advice of her family doctor that she go to hospital emergency department because she was suicidal.
- d) Mr. Leader attempted to manipulate Student X, her mother and her treating psychologist in order to avoid the consequences of his misconduct when he became aware that his conduct could lead to a complaint to the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology.
- e) Mr. Leader failed to protect and promote the wellbeing and best interests of Student X and allowed his personal needs to take priority over due sensitivity to her vulnerable condition and appropriate consideration of how his conduct would benefit and not harm her.
- f) Mr. Leader failed to discontinue teaching psychology in July and August, 2017 while his ability to do so could reasonably be expected to be impaired by a psychological condition which reduced his ability to benefit and not harm Student X.

ADMISSIONS

Mr. Leader admits to the charges set out above, and that his behaviour constituted professional misconduct pursuant to the Psychologists Act.

DISPOSITION

Mr. Leader consents to the following:

1. Mr. Leader's registration as a Psychologist will be suspended for a period of six months commencing (14 days following the approval of the agreement by the Hearing Panel.)
2. Mr. Leader will follow the advice of his treating health professionals as this relates to ongoing counselling and medication
3. Mr. Leader will, at the commencement of each teaching term, advise his class in writing that although he is a Registered Psychologist, that his role with students is as a University professor and not a clinical or counselling psychologist.
4. Mr. Leader will advise any University at which he is teaching of this Settlement Agreement, and the requirement to clarify, in writing, his role.

Mr. Leader will pay costs to the Board in the amount and manner agreed by the Board.