

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA  
ADDICTIONS SPECIALIST  
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE BOARD  
EC CASE NO. 912-25

NORTH CAROLINA ADDICTIONS )  
SPECIALIST PROFESSIONAL )  
PRACTICE BOARD, )  
Petitioner, )  
 )  
v. )  
 )  
HEATHER ANN BUSSELL )  
(CADC-I No. 30356) )  
Respondent. )

**CONSENT ORDER**

THIS MATTER is before a Panel of the Ethics Committee (the “Panel”) of the North Carolina Addictions Specialist Professional Practice Board (the “Board”), pursuant to Chapter 150B, Article 3A of the North Carolina General Statutes; Chapter 90, Article 5C of the North Carolina General Statutes, the North Carolina Substance Use Disorder Professional Practice Act; and Title 21, Chapter 68 of the North Carolina Administrative Code. The Board, with a quorum present, and Respondent stipulate and agree to the entry of the following Consent Order:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Petitioner Board was established by the North Carolina General Assembly to credential and regulate substance use disorder professionals in North Carolina, in accordance with Chapter 90, Article 5C of the North Carolina General Statutes.
2. Respondent currently is a citizen and resident of New Hanover County, North Carolina; and is neither a minor nor an incompetent person.
3. On May 1, 2024, Respondent was credentialed before the Board as Certified Alcohol and Drug Counsel Intern (“CADC-I”) (CADC-I No. 30356), which will expire on April 11, 2029, if the full CADC credential is not awarded prior.

4. On December 25, 2025, Josephine Devone (“Devone”), filed a formal ethics complaint before the Board alleging Respondent engaged in a dual relationship with a client that was romantic in nature. The complaint was designated by the Board as Ethics Complaint (“EC”) Case No. 912-25.
5. Upon investigation into EC Case No. 912-25, the Board determined the following:
  - a. During all times relevant to this matter, Respondent was employed at Reflections of Hope Opioid Addictions Treatment Center (“Reflections”), a provider with locations in Jacksonville and Wilmington, North Carolina.
  - b. Respondent rendered clinical services to clients at Reflections pursuant to her CADC-I.
  - c. J.G., a client at Reflections, was among the clients who received clinical addiction counseling services from Respondent.
  - d. Respondent engaged in a dual relationship with client J.G., as follows:
    - i. Beginning on or about October 2025 and continuing until on or about November 2025, Respondent cohabitated with client J.G.
    - ii. J.G. contributing financially in the form of rental payments for shared housing and to aid in supporting Respondent’s child.
  - e. Respondent did not report or disclose the above-referenced dual relationship with Client J.G. to representatives at Reflections nor the Board.
6. On December 29, 2025, the Board issued a request for response to the complaint in EC Case No. 912-25.
7. On January 10, 2026, Respondent submitted a written response to the complaint, in which Respondent admitted to engaging into a romantic relationship with client J.G.

- a. Respondent admitted to cohabitating with J.G., allowing him to reside at Respondent's residence. Respondent admitted to then removing J.G. from her home upon the expiration of their personal relationship. Respondent indicated law enforcement was contacted to facilitate removal of J.G. from Respondent's home.
- b. Respondent admitted to "financial sharing" with J.G. during the term of their personal relationship, which Respondent indicated was "consensual".
- c. Respondent denied all other allegations in the complaint.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

8. Respondent is subject to the North Carolina Addictions Specialist Professional Practice Act and the rules promulgated pursuant to that Act. The Board has jurisdiction over Respondent and the subject matter of this proceeding.
9. The acts and omissions of Respondent as described above constitute violations of the following:
  - a. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-113.44(a)(6), for engaging in an act or practice in violation of the provisions of Chapter 90, Article 5C of the North Carolina General Statutes (the North Carolina Substance Use Disorder Professional Practice Act), or any of the rules adopted pursuant to it;
  - b. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-113.44(a)(7), for the commission of an act of malpractice, gross negligence, or incompetence while serving as a substance use disorder professional;
  - c. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-113.44(a)(9), for engaging in conduct that could result in harm or injury to the public;

- d. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-113.44(a)(10), for entering into a dual relationship with a client that impaired professional judgment and increased the risk of exploitation of the client;
- e. 21 NCAC 68 .0503(e), for failing to report known unethical conduct to the Board;
- f. 21 NCAC 68 .0507(a), for failure to protect the safety and welfare of a client;
- g. 21 NCAC 68 .0509(b), for failure to avoid a dual relationship that impaired professional judgment and increased the risk of exploitation of a client;
- h. 21 NCAC 68 .0509(c), for engaging in or soliciting sexual activity or sexual contact with a client;
- i. 21 NCAC 68 .0509(d), for misuse of a professional relationship for financial or other personal advantage;
- j. 21 NCAC 68 .0601(4)(b), for participating in or soliciting sexual activity or sexual contact with a client of Respondent's agency; and
- k. 21 NCAC 68 .0601(6)(a), for failure to follow the standards of skill and competence possessed and applied by professional peers credentialed in this State acting in the same or similar circumstances.

Respondent committed one or more of the violations described above. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-113.33(2), the Board has the authority to deny, suspend, or revoke Respondent's licensure, certification, or registration to practice in this State or reprimand or otherwise discipline Respondent's license, certificate, or registration in North Carolina.

BASED upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and in lieu of further proceedings, Respondent wishes to resolve this matter by consent and agrees that Board staff and

counsel may discuss this Consent Order with the Board *ex parte* whether or not the Board accepts this Consent Order as written.

Whereas Respondent acknowledges that she read this entire document and understands it;

Whereas Respondent acknowledges that she enters into this Consent Order freely and voluntarily;

Whereas Respondent acknowledges that she had full and adequate opportunity to confer with legal counsel in connection with this matter;

Whereas Respondent understands that this Consent Order must be presented to the Board for approval; and

Whereas the Board has determined that the public interest is served by resolving this matter as set forth below.

THEREFORE, with the consent of Respondent, it is ORDERED that:

1. Respondent's credential as an CADC-I (CADC-I No. 30356) before the Board is hereby permanently VOLUNTARILY SURRENDERED as of the effective date of this Consent Order.
2. Respondent shall cooperate with and facilitate transition of care of her current clients to credentialed substance use professional(s).
3. If Respondent applies for a new credential or registration before the Board in the future, Respondent shall meet with the Board's Ethics Committee at that time to assess Respondent's eligibility before the Board.
4. The Board shall retain jurisdiction under Article 3A, Chapter 150B for all administrative hearings held in connection with or pursuant to this Consent Order. If the Board receives evidence that Respondent has violated any term of this Consent Order or any other law or

rule enforced by the Board, the Board shall schedule a show cause hearing for a determination of the violations. If the Board determines that a violation has occurred, the Board may impose such disciplinary action as it determines is appropriate and is authorized by law.

5. This Consent Order shall take effect immediately upon its execution by the Board and Respondent and reflect the entire agreement between Respondent and the Board, there being no agreement of any kind, verbal or otherwise, which varies, alters, or modifies this Consent Order.
6. No modification or waiver of any provision of this Consent Order shall be effective unless it is in writing, adopted and approved by the Board, and signed by the parties affected.
7. Both the Board and Respondent participated in the drafting of this Consent Order. Any ambiguities herein shall not be construed against either party in any future civil or administrative proceeding.
8. Each party to this proceeding shall bear their own costs, and the Board shall bear its own costs of investigation.
9. Upon its execution by the Board and Respondent, this Consent Order shall become a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes and shall be subject to public inspection and dissemination pursuant to the provisions thereof.

**CONSENTED TO BY:**

HEATHER ANN BUSSELL (CADC-I No. 30356)

Heather Ann Bussell Date: 3/13/2026  
*Respondent Signature* *Respondent Signature Date*

By Order of the North Carolina Addictions Specialist Professional Practice Board, this the

16th day of March, 2026.

By:   
Kathy Allen, NCASPPB  
Ethics Committee Chair