

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION - November 2, 2020

THIESSEN, Christopher
Grande Prairie, Alberta

In accordance with s. 39.3 of the *Health Professions Act*, the following public notice is given:

Name of Registrant: Christopher Thiessen (now a former registrant)

Reasons for Action: Mr. Thiessen was registered with the College of Occupational Therapists of BC (COTBC) on December 21, 2018. On January 2, 2019, the COTBC was informed that, while registered with the College of Occupational Therapists of Alberta (ACOT), Mr. Thiessen self-reported he had engaged in a personal and sexual relationship with a former patient following her discharge from the hospital. The Alberta College of Occupational Therapists (ACOT) commenced an investigation and convened a discipline hearing on June 20, 2019. A hearing panel found Mr. Thiessen guilty of unprofessional conduct for boundary violations.

Section 39.1 of the *Health Professions Act*, RSBC 1996, c. 183 (the "Act") provides that where a college in another province or foreign jurisdiction has found that the registrant committed an act that constitutes unprofessional conduct, or a registrant admits to committing an act that constitutes unprofessional conduct, the Discipline Committee may, without issuing a citation under s. 37 or conducting a discipline hearing under s. 38 of the Act, make an order under s. 39(2) respecting the registrant. A panel of the Discipline Committee (the "Panel") of COTBC considered whether it was necessary to take steps to protect the public by taking action against Mr. Thiessen under s. 39.1 of the Act.

Actions Taken:

On November 2, 2020, the Panel made the following orders under s. 39(2)(b) of the Act:

(a) Mr. Thiessen will be subject to a condition requiring him to practice under the supervision of a full registrant of COTBC who is not an employer, such registrant to be approved in advance by the Registrar and who agrees to sign a supervision agreement for a period of 18 months. The final three months may be stayed if he is in compliance with the terms of this order and no issues of concern regarding professional boundaries have been identified by the supervisor, on the following terms:

(i) the supervisor will have contact with Mr. Thiessen by telephone or in-person meetings in accordance with the following schedule (the "Regular Meetings"):

- A. Weeks 1 to 4 Contact at least two times per week
- B. Weeks 5 to 12 Contact at least once per week
- C. Weeks 13 to 26 Contact at least once every two weeks
- D. Weeks 27 to 78 Contact at least once every four weeks

(ii) for the first 12 weeks of supervision, during the Regular Meetings, Mr. Thiessen will meet with his supervisor **prior** to performing work on any new referral to discuss the nature of the referral, including age and gender of the client, the reason for the occupational therapy referral, the nature of the occupational therapy services to be provided, and any anticipated issues, including those relating to possible mental health and/or addiction concerns;

(iii) during the Regular Meetings, the supervisor will discuss the following with Mr. Thiessen regarding his occupational therapy practice:

- A. his caseload, including age and gender of clients, reason for occupational therapy referral,
nature of occupational therapy services to be provided, and anticipated length of time that services will be required;
- B. whether his caseload includes any clients with a primary treatment focus of mental health
or addictions issues;
- C. whether he has had any communication with clients or provided any occupational therapy
services outside of scheduled work time;
- D. his hours of work;

E. whether he is working in isolation or with other health care professionals;

F. whether he has encountered any ethical or boundary issues and, if so, how what they were and how he dealt with them; and

G. whether he has socialized with current or former clients, used social media to interact with current or former clients outside scheduled work time, or otherwise interacted with them outside scheduled work time.

(iv) the supervisor will document the Regular Meetings with Mr. Thiessen and report his or her findings in relation to the items addressed in subparagraph (a)(iii) above to the College Registrar by telephone, email or letter at the following frequency:

A. reporting will occur weekly for weeks 1 to 4;

B. reporting will occur every two weeks for weeks 5 to 26; and

C. reporting will occur every four weeks for weeks 26 to 78.

(v) If, at any time, the supervisor raises concerns regarding Mr. Thiessen's conduct that are not adequately addressed, the Registrar may refer those concerns to the Inquiry Committee for investigation;

(b) Mr. Thiessen will be subject to a condition requiring him to continue to engage with therapeutic supports with a treating therapist of his choosing until such time as his treating therapist notifies the College in writing that continued therapy is no longer required to ensure his continued fitness to practice occupational therapy safely and in accordance with College standards;

(c) Mr. Thiessen will be subject to a condition that restricts him from practicing occupational therapy primarily in a mental health setting until such time as he completes further training and demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the College Registrar, that he is qualified to engage in a primary practice in that area.

NOTE: Mr. Thiessen is now a former registrant of the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia and the subject terms and conditions of this order have not been activated.