

WHILE HIGGINBOTHAM PRACTICED SOCIAL WORK BETWEEN DECEMBER, 2006, THROUGH MARCH, 2007, ON A CONTRACT BASIS WITH CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES, IN COLUMBUS, OHIO, SHE FALSIFIED BILLING DOCUMENTS DEMONSTRATING HOME VISITS AND BILLABLE HOURS FOR SERVICES SHE DID NOT PROVIDE. INACCURATE RECORD KEEPING AND FALSIFICATION OF RECORDS IS A VIOLATION OF O.R.C. 4757.36(A)(1) AND O.A.C. 4757-5-01(I)(1). Terms of the consent agreement complete as of 4/28/2008

**CONSENT AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
GERLINDE HIGGINBOTHAM
AND THE
STATE OF OHIO COUNSELOR, SOCIAL WORKER, MARRIAGE AND
FAMILY THERAPIST BOARD**

This CONSENT AGREEMENT is entered into by and between **GERLINDE HIGGINBOTHAM** hereinafter, "**HIGGINBOTHAM**" and the STATE OF OHIO COUNSELOR, SOCIAL WORKER, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST BOARD, hereinafter "**BOARD**" the state agency charged with enforcing Chapter 4757 of the Ohio Revised Code and all rules promulgated therein.

HIGGINBOTHAM hereby acknowledges that she has read and understands this CONSENT AGREEMENT and has voluntarily entered into it without threat or promise by the **BOARD** or any of its members, employees or agents.

HIGGINBOTHAM is fully aware of her rights, including her right to be advised by counsel and her right to a hearing pursuant to Chapter 119 of the Ohio Revised Code on the issues which are the subject of this CONSENT AGREEMENT. Should **HIGGINBOTHAM** fail to comply with any provisions of this CONSENT AGREEMENT, **HIGGINBOTHAM** knowingly waives her rights under ORC Chapter 119.

This CONSENT AGREEMENT contains the entire agreement between the parties, there being no other agreement of any kind, verbal or otherwise, which varies the terms of this CONSENT AGREEMENT.

This CONSENT AGREEMENT is entered into on the basis of the following stipulations and, understandings:

1. **HIGGINBOTHAM** is a social worker (S-0020776) licensed to practice social work in the State of Ohio, and is subject to the laws and rules of Ohio regulating the practice of social work as outlined in Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4757 and Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 4757. **HIGGINBOTHAM** received her social work license on December 16, 1994.
2. While **HIGGINBOTHAM** practiced social work between December, 2006 through March, 2007, on a contract basis with Catholic Social Services, in Columbus, Ohio, she falsified billing documents demonstrating home visits and billable hours for services she did not provide. Inaccurate record keeping and falsification of records is a violation of O.R.C. 4757.36(A)(1) and O.A.C. 4757-5-01 (I)(1).

3. **HIGGINBOTHAM** admits the allegations referenced in paragraph 2.

Wherefore, in consideration of the foregoing and mutual promises hereinafter set forth, and in lieu of any formal disciplinary proceedings, **HIGGINBOTHAM** knowingly and voluntarily agrees with the **BOARD** to the following terms and conditions:

1. **HIGGINBOTHAM'S** license to practice social work (S-0020776) is **SUSPENDED** for nine (9) months beginning July 20, 2007 through April 20, 2008.
2. **HIGGINBOTHAM** must take an additional six (6) hours in social work ethics continuing education. All hours must be pre-approved by the Board's Deputy Director or his designee. Once **HIGGINBOTHAM** successfully completes this continuing education, **HIGGINBOTHAM** must send verification directly to the attention of the Investigation Unit at the Board office. The certificates verifying completion are due in the Board office no later than January 20, 2008. The credit earned from the workshops may not be used toward the thirty (30) hours of continuing education required for license renewal. All costs associated with the continuing education are at the expense of **HIGGINBOTHAM**.

It is hereby agreed by and between both parties that this **CONSENT AGREEMENT** hereby settles all issues concerning this matter.

By her signature on this **CONSENT AGREEMENT**, **HIGGINBOTHAM** acknowledges that in the event the **BOARD**, in its discretion, does not approve this **CONSENT AGREEMENT**, this settlement offer is withdrawn and shall be of no evidentiary value and shall not be relied upon or introduced in any disciplinary action or appeal by either party. **HIGGINBOTHAM** agrees that should the **BOARD** reject this **CONSENT AGREEMENT** and if this case proceeds to hearing, she will assert no claim that the **BOARD** was prejudiced by its review and discussion of this **CONSENT AGREEMENT** or of any information relating thereto.

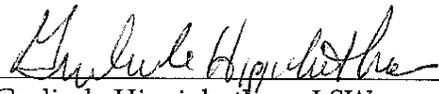
HIGGINBOTHAM hereby releases the members of the **BOARD**, its officers and employees, jointly and severally, from any and all liability arising from the matter within.

This **CONSENT AGREEMENT** shall be considered a public record as that term is used in Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code. Pursuant to 42 USC Section 132a-73(b), 5 USC Section 552a, 45 CFR part 61, and Ohio Revised Code 3123.41 et seq., the **BOARD** may be required to provide **HIGGINBOTHAM'S** social security number to requesting governmental agencies.

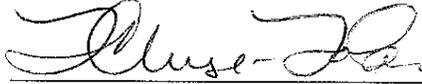
Consent Agreement between Gerlinde Higginbotham and the State of Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist Board

The BOARD shall incorporate this CONSENT AGREEMENT into a formal journal entry at its July, 2007, meeting.

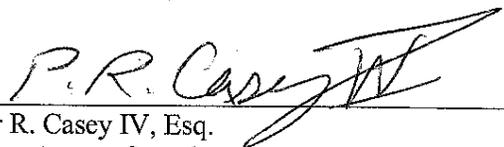
This CONSENT AGREEMENT shall take effect upon the date of the Board Chair's signature below:


Gerlinde Higginbotham, LSW

7-8-07
Date


Theresa Cluse-Tolar, Ph.D., LISW
Chair, Counselor, Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist Board

7/20/07
Date


Peter R. Casey IV, Esq.
Assistant Attorney General
Counselor, Social Worker, Marriage and Family Therapist Board

7/20/07
Date