

Public

NEW YORK
state department of
HEALTH

Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

Sue Kelly
Executive Deputy Commissioner

April 9, 2012

CERTIFIED MAIL-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Denise J. Signs, M.D.

REDACTED SIGNATURE

Re: License No. 166407

Dear Dr. Signs:

Enclosed is a copy of the New York State Board for Professional Medical Conduct (BPMC) Order No. 12-69. This order and any penalty provided therein goes into effect April 16, 2012.

Please direct any questions to: Board for Professional Medical Conduct, 90 Church Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10007-2919, telephone # 212-417-4445.

Sincerely,

REDACTED SIGNATURE

Katherine A. Hawkins, M.D., J.D.

Executive Secretary

Board for Professional Medical Conduct

Enclosure

IN THE MATTER

CONSENT

OF

ORDER

DENISE SIGNS
CO-10-11-7044-A

Upon the application of **DENISE SIGNS, M.D.**, (Respondent), in the attached Consent Agreement, that is made a part of this Consent Order, it is

ORDERED, that the Consent Agreement, and its terms, are adopted and it is further

ORDERED, that this Consent Order shall be effective upon issuance by the Board, either by mailing of a copy of this Consent Order, either by first class mail to Respondent at the address in the attached Consent Agreement or by certified mail to Respondent's attorney, or upon facsimile or email transmission to Respondent or Respondent's attorney, whichever is first.

SO ORDERED.

DATED: 4/6/2012

REDACTED SIGNATURE

KENDRICK A. SEARS, M.D.
Chair
State Board for Professional
Medical Conduct

IN THE MATTER

CONSENT

OF

AGREEMENT

**DENISE SIGNS, M.D.
CO-10-11-7044-A**

DENISE SIGNS, M.D., (Respondent), representing that all of the following statements are true, deposes and says:

That on or about June 19, 1986, I was licensed to practice medicine as a physician in the State of New York and issued license number 166407 by the New York State Education Department.

My current address is REDACTED ADDRESS, and I will advise the Director (Director) of the Office of Professional Medical Conduct (OPMC) of any change of my address within thirty (30) days, thereof.

I understand that the New York State Board for Professional Medical Conduct (Board) has charged me with three (3) Specifications of professional misconduct.

A copy of the Statement of Charges, marked as Exhibit A, is attached to and part of this Consent Agreement.

I do not contest the Third Specification, and agree to the following sanction:

Pursuant to New York Public Health Law § 230-a (9), I shall be placed on probation for a period of five (5) years, subject to the terms set forth in attached Exhibit B, and any extensions and/or modifications thereto.

I agree, further, that the Consent Order shall impose the following conditions:

Should Respondent return to the practice of medicine in the State of New York or in any Jurisdiction where that practice is predicated upon Respondent's New York State Medical license, Respondent shall provide ninety (90) days notice in writing to the Director, Office of Professional Medical Conduct (OPMC). The Director, in his sole discretion, may impose whatever limitations, or further conditions, he deems

appropriate.

Respondent shall comply fully with the State of Ohio, Medical Board (hereinafter "Ohio Board"), Consent Orders (hereinafter "Ohio Orders"), dated August 11, 2010 and June 9, 2011.

Respondent shall provide a written authorization for the Ohio Board to provide the Director of OPMC with any/all information or documentation as requested by OPMC to enable OPMC to determine whether Respondent is in compliance with the Ohio Order.

Respondent shall submit semi-annually a signed Compliance Declaration to the Director of OPMC, which truthfully attests whether Respondent has been in compliance with the Ohio Order during the declaration period specified.

That Respondent shall remain in continuous compliance with all requirements of New York Education Law § 6502 including, but not limited to, the requirements that a licensee shall register and continue to be registered with the New York State Education Department (except during periods of actual suspension) and that a licensee shall pay all registration fees. Respondent shall not exercise the option provided in New York Education Law § 6502(4) to avoid registration and payment of fees. This condition shall take effect 30 days after the effective date of the Consent Order and will continue so long as Respondent remains a licensee in New York State; and

That Respondent shall cooperate fully with the OPMC in its administration and enforcement of the Consent Order and in its investigations of matters concerning Respondent. Respondent shall respond in a timely manner to all OPMC requests for written periodic verification of Respondent's compliance with this Consent Agreement. Respondent shall meet with a person designated by the Director, OPMC, as directed. Respondent shall respond promptly and provide all documents and information within Respondent's control, as directed. This condition shall take effect upon the Board's issuance of the Consent Order and will continue so long as Respondent remains licensed in New York State.

I stipulate that my failure to comply with any conditions of the Consent Order shall constitute misconduct as defined by New York Education Law § 6530(29).

I agree that, if I am charged with professional misconduct in the future, this Consent Agreement and the Consent Order shall be admitted into evidence in that proceeding.

I ask the Board to adopt this Consent Agreement.

I understand that if the Board does not adopt this Consent Agreement, none of its terms shall bind me or constitute an admission of any of the acts of alleged misconduct; this Consent Agreement shall not be used against me in any way and shall be kept in strict confidence; and the Board's denial shall be without prejudice to the pending disciplinary proceeding and the Board's final determination pursuant to New York Public Health Law.

I agree that, if the Board adopts this Consent Agreement, the Chair of the Board shall issue a Consent Order in accordance with its terms. I agree that the Consent Order shall take effect upon its issuance by the Board, either by mailing of a copy of the Consent Order by first class mail to me at the address in this Consent Agreement, or to my attorney by certified mail, or upon facsimile or email transmission to me or my attorney, whichever is first. The Consent Order, this Consent Agreement, and all attached Exhibits shall be public documents, with only patient identities, if any, redacted. As public documents, they may be posted on the Department of Health website.

I stipulate that the proposed sanction and Consent Order are authorized by New York Public Health Law §§ 230 and 230-a, and that the Board and OPMC have the requisite powers to carry out all included terms. I ask the Board to adopt this Consent Agreement of my own free will and not under duress, compulsion or restraint. In consideration of the value to me of the Board's adoption of this Consent Agreement, allowing me to resolve this matter without the various risks and burdens of a hearing on the merits, I knowingly waive my right to contest the Consent Order for which I apply, administratively and/or judicially, I agree to be bound by the Consent Order, and I ask that the Board adopt this Consent Agreement.

I understand and agree that the attorney for the Department, the Director, OPMC, and the Chair of the Board each retain complete discretion either to enter into the proposed Consent Agreement and Consent Order, based upon my application, or to decline to do so. I further understand and agree that no prior or separate written or oral communication can limit that discretion.

AFFIRMED:

DATED: March 29, 2012

REDACTED SIGNATURE

DENISE SIGNS, M.D.
Respondent

The undersigned agree to Respondent's attached Consent Agreement and to its proposed penalty, terms and conditions.

DATE: 4/2/12

REDACTED SIGNATURE

JUDE B. MULVEY
Associate Counsel
Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct

DATE: 4/5/12

REDACTED SIGNATURE

KEITH W. SERVIS
Director
Office of Professional Medical Conduct

EXHIBIT A

STATE OF NEW YORK : DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
STATE BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL CONDUCT

IN THE MATTER
OF
DENISE SIGNS, M.D.
CO-10-11-7044-A

STATEMENT
OF
CHARGES

DENISE SIGNS, M.D., Respondent, was authorized to practice medicine in New York state on June 19, 1986, by the issuance of license number 166407 by the New York State Education Department.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

A. On or about August 11, 2010, the State Medical Board of Ohio, (hereinafter "Ohio Board"), by a Consent Order (hereinafter "Ohio Order"), inter alia, suspended Respondent's license to practice medicine for an indefinite period of time but not less than 270 days, and ordered Respondent to, among others, abstain from drugs or alcohol, be subject to random testing and attend a rehabilitation program, based on her failure to report she had been found guilty of Driving Under the Influence in 2004, Operating a Vehicle While Impaired in 2005 and Driving While Intoxicated in 2008, and upon her treatment for chemical and alcohol dependency.

B. On or about June 9, 2011, Respondent's medical license was reinstated by the Ohio Board by Consent Order (hereinafter Ohio Order II) with conditions including a five year term of probation, continue with psychiatric treatment and quarterly reports, participate in rehabilitation program, comply with impaired physician aftercare program, log all controlled substances prescribed to patients and provide the log to the Board, have a practice monitor in place prior to returning to practice and comply with all reporting requirements.

C. On or about December 8, 2010, in Onslow County District Court, Onslow, North Carolina, Respondent was found guilty based on her guilty plea to Impaired Driving, a misdemeanor in violation of North Carolina General Statutes 20-138.1. Respondent was sentenced, among others, to unsupervised probation for twelve months, a fine of \$100, and

other costs and fees.

D. The conduct resulting in the Ohio Board disciplinary actions against Respondent would constitute misconduct under the laws of New York state, pursuant to the following sections of New York state law:

1. New York Education Law §6530(8) (habitual abuse of alcohol).
2. New York Education Law §6530(21) (failing to file a report required by law).

SPECIFICATIONS

FIRST SPECIFICATION

Respondent violated New York Education Law §6530(9)(b) by having been found guilty of improper professional practice or professional misconduct by a duly authorized professional disciplinary agency of another state where the conduct upon which the finding was based would, if committed in New York state, constitute professional misconduct under the laws of New York state, in that Petitioner charges:

1. The facts in Paragraphs A and/or B and/or D.

SECOND SPECIFICATION

Respondent violated New York State Education Law §6530 (9)(d) by having his license to practice medicine suspended and/or having other disciplinary action taken by a duly authorized professional disciplinary agency of another state, where the conduct resulting in the suspension and/or other disciplinary action would, if committed in New York state, constitute professional misconduct under the laws of New York state, in that Petitioner charges:

2. The facts in Paragraphs A and/or B and/or D.

THIRD SPECIFICATION

Respondent violated New York Education Law §6530 (9)(a)(iii) by being convicted of an act constituting a crime under the law of another jurisdiction and which, if committed within this state, would have constituted a crime under New York state law, in that Petitioner charges:

3. The facts in Paragraph C.

DATED: *February 16*, 2012
Albany, New York

REDACTED SIGNATURE

PETER D. VAN BUREN
Deputy Counsel
Bureau of Professional Medical Conduct

EXHIBIT B
Terms of Probation

1. Respondent's conduct shall conform to moral and professional standards of conduct and governing law. Any act of professional misconduct by Respondent as defined by N.Y. Educ. Law §§ 6530 or 6531 shall constitute a violation of probation and may subject Respondent to an action pursuant to N.Y. Pub. Health Law § 230(19).
2. Respondent shall maintain active registration of Respondent's license (except during periods of actual suspension) with the New York State Education Department, Division of Professional Licensing Services, and shall pay all registration fees.
3. Respondent shall provide the Director, Office of Professional Medical Conduct (OPMC), Hedley Park Place, 433 River Street Suite 303, Troy, New York 12180-2299 with the following information, in writing, and ensure that this information is kept current: a full description of Respondent's employment and practice; all professional and residential addresses and telephone numbers within and outside New York State; all current and past affiliations and/or privileges, with hospitals, institutions, facilities, medical practices, and managed care organizations, and/or applications for such affiliations, and/or privileges; and all investigations, arrests, charges, convictions and/or disciplinary actions by any local, state or federal agency, institution or facility. Respondent shall notify OPMC, in writing, within 30 days of any additions to or changes in the required information.
4. Respondent shall cooperate fully with, and respond in a timely manner to, OPMC requests to provide written periodic verification of Respondent's compliance with the terms of this Consent Order. Upon the request of the Director, OPMC, Respondent shall meet in person with the Director's designee.
5. Respondent's failure to pay any monetary penalty by the prescribed date shall subject Respondent to all provisions of law relating to debt collection by New York State, including but not limited to: the imposition of interest, late payment charges and collection fees; referral to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance for collection; and non-renewal of permits or licenses [Tax Law § 171(27); State Finance Law § 18; CPLR § 5001; Executive Law § 32].
6. The probation period shall toll when Respondent is not engaged in active medical practice in New York State for a period of 30 consecutive days or more. Respondent shall notify the Director, OPMC, in writing, if Respondent is not currently engaged in, or intends to leave, active medical practice in New York State for a consecutive 30 day period or more. Respondent shall then notify the Director again at least 14 days before returning to active practice. Upon Respondent's return to active practice in New York State, the probation period shall resume and Respondent shall fulfill any unfulfilled probation terms and such additional requirements as the Director may impose as reasonably relate to the matters set forth in Exhibit "A" or as are necessary to protect the public health.
7. The Director, OPMC, may review Respondent's professional performance. This review may include but shall not be limited to: a review of office records, patient records, hospital charts, and/or electronic records; and interviews with or periodic visits with Respondent and staff at practice locations or OPMC offices.

8. Respondent shall adhere to federal and state guidelines and professional standards of care with respect to infection control practices. Respondent shall ensure education, training and oversight of all office personnel involved in medical care, with respect to these practices.
9. Respondent shall maintain complete and legible medical records that accurately reflect the evaluation and treatment of patients and contain all information required by State rules and regulations concerning controlled substances.
10. Respondent shall remain free from alcohol and all other mood altering substances other than those prescribed for Respondent's treatment by a licensed health care professional aware of Respondent's history of chemical dependency and mental illness. Respondent shall not self-prescribe any medications.
11. Respondent shall remain active in self-help groups such as, but not limited to, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous and Caduceus.
12. Respondent shall notify all treating physicians of Respondent's history of substance abuse. Respondent shall advise OPMC of any controlled or mood-altering substance given or prescribed by treating physicians.
13. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of the Consent Order, Respondent shall practice only when monitored by qualified health care professional monitors: a Sobriety Monitor, a Practice Supervisor and a Therapist. Any medical practice in violation of this term shall constitute the unauthorized practice of medicine.

All monitors shall be proposed by Respondent and approved, in writing, by the Director of OPMC before Respondent may practice after the effective date of this Order. Within 7 days of learning the approved monitor is no longer willing or able to serve, Respondent shall submit the name of a proposed successor to the Director of OPMC. Monitors shall not be family members or personal friends or be in professional relationships that would pose a conflict with monitoring responsibilities. All monitors shall execute acknowledgment forms provided by OPMC certifying familiarity with Respondent's history of substance abuse, with this Order and its terms, and acknowledging a willingness to comply with the monitor's reporting responsibilities regarding Respondent's compliance with the terms of this Order.

- A. Respondent shall ensure that the monitors are familiar with Respondent's history of substance abuse and with the terms of this Order. Respondent shall cause the monitors to report any deviation from compliance with the terms of this Order to OPMC. Respondent shall cause the monitors to submit required reports on a timely basis.
- B. Respondent shall submit to random, unannounced observed blood, breath and/or urine screens for the presence of drugs and alcohol (hereafter "drug screen"), when requested by a monitor. The monitoring shall be on a random, unannounced, directly-observed, 7-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day basis. Respondent shall report for a drug screen within 4 hours of being contacted by a monitor. Monitors shall report to OPMC immediately if Respondent refuses or delays a test or if a test is positive for alcohol, or any other unauthorized drug or substance. Respondent shall avoid all substances that may cause positive urine drug screens, such as poppy seeds, mouthwash or cough medicine. Any positive test result shall constitute a violation of the terms of this Order.

- C. Respondent shall meet regularly with a Sobriety Monitor. During the first 12 months of monitoring, the Sobriety Monitor shall obtain drug screens at a frequency of no less than 6 times per month. If Respondent is compliant throughout the first 12-month period, subsequent drug screens shall be obtained at a frequency to be proposed by the Sobriety Monitor and approved by OPMC. The Sobriety Monitor shall submit quarterly reports to OPMC certifying Respondent's sobriety or lack of sobriety. These reports are to include forensically valid results of all drug screens performed and an assessment of self-help group (e.g., AA/NA/Caduceus) attendance and 12-step progress.
- D. Respondent shall practice only when supervised in medical practice by a licensed physician (hereafter "Practice Supervisor"). The Practice Supervisor shall be on-site at all locations, unless determined otherwise by the Director of OPMC, and shall be in a position to regularly observe and assess Respondent's medical practice. The Practice Supervisor shall oversee Respondent's compliance with the terms of practice imposed by the Order and Respondent's prescribing, administering, dispensing, inventorying, wasting and disposal of controlled substances. The Practice Supervisor shall report to OPMC immediately any suspected impairment, inappropriate behavior, questionable medical practice, possible misconduct, or violation by Respondent of any of the terms of this Order. The Practice Supervisor shall submit quarterly reports to OPMC regarding the quality of Respondent's medical practice and prescribing practices, any unexplained absences from work, and certifying Respondent's compliance or detailing Respondent's failure to comply with each term imposed.
- E. Respondent shall engage and continue in therapy with a treating health care professional (hereafter "Therapist"). Respondent shall cause the Therapist to submit a proposed treatment plan and quarterly reports to OPMC certifying whether Respondent is in compliance with the treatment plan. OPMC, at its discretion, may provide information or documentation from its investigative files concerning Respondent to Respondent's Therapist. The Therapist shall report to OPMC immediately if Respondent leaves treatment against medical advice or displays any symptoms of a suspected or actual relapse.
14. At the direction of the Director of OPMC, Respondent shall submit to evaluations by a board-certified psychiatrist, licensed mental health practitioner or other health care professional or program designated by the Director (hereafter "Evaluator.") Respondent shall provide the Evaluator with a copy of this Order and copies of all previous treatment records. OPMC, at its discretion, may provide information or documentation from its investigative files concerning Respondent to Respondent's Evaluator. The Evaluator shall report to the Director regarding Respondent's condition and fitness or incapacity to practice medicine. Respondent shall comply with all treatment recommendations based upon the evaluation; failure to comply with such treatment recommendations shall constitute professional misconduct.
15. Respondent shall enroll, or continue enrollment, in the Committee for Physician Health (CPH) and shall engage in a contract with CPH that defines the terms, conditions and duration of Respondent's recovery program. Respondent shall comply with the contract. Respondent shall give written authorization for CPH to provide the Director of OPMC with all information or documentation requested by OPMC to determine whether

Respondent is in compliance with the contract and with this Order, including full access to all records maintained by CPH will respect to Respondent;

A. Respondent shall cause CPH to report to OPMC promptly if Respondent refuses to comply with the contract, refuses to submit to treatment or if Respondent's impairment is not substantially alleviated by treatment;

B. Respondent shall cause CPH to report immediately to OPMC if Respondent is regarded at any time to be an imminent danger to the public.

16. Respondent shall comply with this Consent Order and all its terms, and shall bear all associated compliance costs. Upon receiving evidence of noncompliance with, or a violation of, these terms, the Director, OPMC, and/or the Board may initiate a violation of probation proceeding, and/or any other such proceeding authorized by law, against Respondent.