



STATE OF MAINE  
 BOARD OF NURSING  
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 04333-0158

PAUL R. LEPAGE  
 GOVERNOR

MYRA A. BROADWAY, J.D., M.S., R.N.  
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IN RE: LAURA L. COTTON )  
 of Clearwater, FL )  
 Licenses #RN41831 )      **CONSENT AGREEMENT  
 FOR REPRIMAND & VOLUNTARY  
 SURRENDER OF LICENSE**

**INTRODUCTION**

This document is a Consent Agreement (“Agreement”) regarding Laura L. Cotton’s license as a registered professional nurse (“RN”) in the State of Maine. The parties to this Agreement are Laura L. Cotton (“Licensee” or “Ms. Cotton”), Maine State Board of Nursing (“Board”) and the Office of the Attorney General, State of Maine. The parties enter into this Agreement pursuant to 32 M.R.S. § 2105-A (1-A) (C), 10 M.R.S. §§ 8003 (A-1) (4), 8003 (5) (B) and 8003 (5) (D). The Board met with Ms. Cotton in an informal conference on January 6, 2010; a decision was deferred pending further investigation. The informal conference was subsequently continued with the Licensee via telephone conference call on April 11, 2012. The parties reached this Agreement on the basis of: 1) a Board Notice of Complaint or Provider Report dated October 21, 2008 with information from Down East Community Hospital (“Down East”) located in Machias, ME dated September 29 and October 20, 2008; 2) supplemental information from Down East dated November 4, 2008; 3) Licensee’s response dated November 21, 2008; 4) Investigative Report ME#7715 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Licensing and Regulatory Services, dated February 10, 2009; and 5) Board Investigative Report dated August 5, 2011.

**FACTS**

1. Laura L. Cotton had been licensed as an RN to practice in Maine since November 20, 1997; said license lapsed December 31, 2009.
2. Laura L. Cotton was employed as an RN/Director of Inpatient Nursing at Down East from January 2008 until her termination on September 26, 2008 following its investigation of narcotic irregularities. During the time period of August 18-22, 2008, there were 13 instances in which a narcotic [Demerol] was removed from the automatic dispensing system with Ms. Cotton’s fingerprint identification with no documentation for administration of these narcotics after their removal. In addition, it was discovered that Ms. Cotton had removed narcotics for patients who were not physically present at the hospital. Ms. Cotton admits that she diverted the Demerol for her own personal use.
3. Laura L. Cotton is currently living in Florida and working as an RN at Mease Countryside Hospital, a former employer. Ms. Cotton admits that at the time she renewed her Florida license, she did not disclose the pending Maine complaint.
4. Laura L. Cotton states that she is in the first year of a five-year contract with Florida’s Intervention Program for Nurses (“IPN”); an IPN report dated March 23, 2012 was submitted to the Board from her case manager and reflects negative urine screens monthly since August 2011. Ms. Cotton states that she has maintained sobriety since December 2010 and that she is currently in treatment for substance abuse. Under IPN, she is subject to quarterly treatment provider and nursing employer reporting.
5. Laura L. Cotton has offered to surrender her registered professional nursing license based upon the above-stated facts and thereby waives her rights to an adjudicatory hearing.

**AGREEMENT**

6. Ms. Cotton understands and agrees that should this matter go to hearing before the Board on the above-stated facts and the underlying information to support those facts, it is more likely than not they would support the Board’s findings in this Agreement. Further, she understands and agrees that this document



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imposes discipline regarding her nursing practice in the State of Maine. The grounds for discipline are found under Title 32 M.R.S. § 2105-A(2) (A), (2) (B), (2) (E) (1), (2) (E) (2), (2) (F) and (2) (H) and Chapter 4, Sections 1(A) (1), 1(A) (2), 1(A) (5), 1(A) (6), 1(A) (8) and Chapter 4, Sections 3(F), 3(K), 3(O), 3(P) and 3(Q) of the Rules and Regulations of the Maine State Board of Nursing. Laura L. Cotton is hereby **REPRIMANDED** for the diversion at Down East. In addition, the Maine State Board of Nursing will accept Laura L. Cotton's offer to voluntarily surrender her registered professional nursing license based on her admitted diversion and working while impaired. Specifically, the violations are:

Title 32 M.R.S. §§:

- a. 2105-A (2) (A). The practice of fraud or deceit in obtaining a license or in connection with service rendered within the scope of the license issued. See also: Chapter 4, Section 1.A.1.
- b. 2105-A (2) (B). Habitual substance abuse that has resulted or is foreseeably likely to result in the licensee performing services in a manner that endangers the health or safety of patients. See also: Rule Chapter 4, Section 1.A.2.
- c. 2105-A (2) (E). Incompetence in the practice for which the licensee is licensed. A licensee is considered incompetent in the practice if the licensee has: (1) engaged in conduct that evidences a lack of ability or fitness to discharge the duty owed by the licensee to a client or patient of the general public; or (2) engaged in conduct that evidences a lack of knowledge or inability to apply principles or skills to carry out the practice for which the licensee is licensed. See also: Rule Chapter 4, Sections 1.A.5.a. and 1.A.5.b.
- d. 2105-A (2) (F). Unprofessional Conduct. A licensee is considered to have engaged in unprofessional conduct if the licensee violates a standard of professional behavior that has been established in the practice for which the licensee is licensed. See also: Rule Chapter 4, Section 1.A.6.
- e. 2105-A (2) (H). Ms. Cotton violated a Maine Revised Statute in Title 32, Chapter 31 and rules adopted by the Board. See also: Board Rule Chapter 4, Section 1.A.8
- f. Chapter 4, Section 3. *Unprofessional Conduct* as defined by the Rules and Regulations of the Maine State Board of Nursing states that *Nursing behavior which fails to conform to legal standards of the nursing profession, and which could reflect adversely on the health and welfare of the public shall constitute unprofessional conduct and shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:*

Chapter 4, Section 3(F). Failing to take appropriate action or to follow policies and procedures in the practice situation designed to safeguard the patient.

Chapter 4, Section 3(K). Inaccurate recording, falsifying or altering a patient or health care provider record.

Chapter 4, Section 3(O). Practicing nursing when physical or mental ability is impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Chapter 4, Section 3(P). Diverting drugs, supplies or property of patients of health care provider.

Chapter 4, Section 3(Q). Possessing, obtaining, furnishing or administering prescription drugs to any person, including self, except as directed by a person authorized by law to prescribe drugs.

7. Laura L. Cotton understands and agrees that her nursing license will remain on surrender status and subject to the terms of this Agreement indefinitely until and unless the Board, at her written request, votes to reinstate her license. Ms. Cotton understands and agrees that if the Board reinstates her license, it may be for a probationary period.

8. The State of Maine is a "Party state" that has adopted the Nurse Licensure Compact ("Compact"), which is set out in Chapter 11 of the Rules and Regulations of the Maine State Board of Nursing. At the time of these incidents, Maine was Ms. Cotton's declared state of residence. She understands this Agreement is subject to the Compact.
9. Laura L. Cotton understands that she does not have to execute this Agreement and has the right to consult with an attorney before entering into the Agreement.
10. Laura L. Cotton shall not work or volunteer in any capacity for a health care provider as defined by Title 24 M.R.S. § 2502 (2) or in any position holding herself out as a registered professional nurse or with the designation "RN" while her nursing license is surrendered.
11. This Agreement is a public record within the meaning of 1 M.R.S. § 402 and will be available for inspection and copying by the public pursuant to 1 M.R.S. § 408.
12. Modification of this Agreement must be in writing and signed by all parties.
13. This Agreement is not subject to review or appeal by the Licensee, but may be enforced by an action in the Superior Court.
14. Laura L. Cotton affirms that she executes this Agreement of her own free will.
15. This Agreement becomes effective upon the date of the last necessary signature below.


I, LAURA L. COTTON, HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE FOREGOING CONSENT AGREEMENT. I UNDERSTAND THAT BY SIGNING IT, I WAIVE CERTAIN RIGHTS. I UNDERSTAND THE EFFECT IT WILL HAVE ON MY NURSING LICENSE. I SIGN IT VOLUNTARILY, KNOWINGLY, AND INTELLIGENTLY AND AGREE TO BE BOUND BY THIS AGREEMENT. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS CONSENT AGREEMENT CONTAINS THE ENTIRE AGREEMENT AND THERE IS NO OTHER AGREEMENT OF ANY KIND.

DATED: 10/12/12

  
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LAURA L. COTTON

FOR THE MAINE STATE  
BOARD OF NURSING

DATED: 10/16/12

  
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MYRA A. BROADWAY, J.D., M.S., R.N.  
Executive Director

FOR THE OFFICE OF THE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DATED: 10/17/12

  
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JOHN H. RICHARDS  
Assistant Attorney General