

JOHN BEL EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR



CHARLOTTE F. MARTIN, M.P.A.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

State of Louisiana  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS  
**Louisiana Physical Therapy Board**

**IN THE MATTER OF**  
**SACHA COMEAUX, PT**  
**LICENSE NO. 07048**

**CONSENT ORDER**  
**NUMBER: 2016-I-002**

**CONSENT ORDER**

Ms. Sacha Comeaux, PT ("Ms. Comeaux" or "Respondent") initially came to the attention of the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board ("LPTB" or "Board") on February 25, 2016 when a complaint was submitted to the Board office therein alleging that the Respondent refused a drug test following an injury at work. Respondent entered into a Consent Order with the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board on April 22, 2016 for failing to submit to a drug test at the request of the executive director and failing to cooperate with the Board. Thereafter, upon the receipt of medical records, it was discovered that Respondent has a history of drug abuse, abused controlled substances while practicing physical therapy, and was discharged from an extended care facility on May 26, 2016, while under a Consent Order with the Board, due to a drug test positive for cocaine. Additionally, Respondent intentionally mislead an Investigative Committee of the Board, failed to cooperate with an Investigative Committee of the Board and fraudulently completed license renewal applications with regard to her use of drugs and participation in drug rehabilitation program.

**FACTUAL BASIS FOR CONSENT ORDER**

1. Respondent is, and at all times pertinent hereto, was a physical therapist licensed by the Board as evidenced by license number 07048.
2. On April 22, 2016, Respondent entered into a Consent Order with the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board for failing to submit to a drug test at the time and place directed by the executive director in violation of Board Rule §345B(12); unprofessional conduct in violation of La. R.S. 37:2420(A)(7); and failing to communicate with the executive

director and refusing to provide a sample of hair for a drug test in violation of Board Rule §383(A)(1). The Consent Order was agreed and accepted by the Board on April 26, 2016 and is included herein *in extenso*.

3. The April 22, 2016 Consent Order requires, in part, that Respondent submit to a drug test at the time date and facility specified by the Executive Director of the Board and psychological and substance abuse evaluation, Part "A"; sign all releases and authorizations to obtain records from health care providers, Part "D"; reply to all Board emails and telephone calls within 48 (forty-eight) hours of a communication, Clause "O"; and write an essay of no fewer than 750 words to be submitted by May 18, 2016, Clause "R".
4. On or about May 2, 2016 Ms. Comeaux sent an email to the Executive Director of the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board stating that she underwent surgery on her arm on May 1, 2016 and has complications due to infection. Therein she informed the Board that a second surgery was scheduled on May 4, 2016, and following she would be admitted to a nursing home where she would receive intravenous antibiotics through June 22, 2016.
5. Due to Ms. Comeaux's medical condition, and at her request, on May 19, 2016 Mrs. Charlotte Martin, Board Executive Director, petitioned the Board for an extension to deadlines found within the Consent Order. Specifically, Mrs. Martin requested that the deadlines related to Clause "A", requiring submission to a supervised drug test and psychological and substance abuse evaluation, and Clause "R", requiring that Respondent write an essay to be submitted to the Board, be extended until after discharge.
6. The Board approved the request for extension and on May 23, 2016 Mrs. Martin mailed a letter to Ms. Comeaux notifying her that the Board granted a 30 (thirty) day extension from the date of discharge of treatment of the documented diagnosed medical condition. The letter also clearly required Ms. Comeaux to provide the Board with written documentation verifying the date of discharge and status of condition.
7. On May 24, 2016 Ms. Comeaux notified Mrs. Martin by email that following discharge for her most recent surgery she would need another surgery and six week recovery period. That same day Mrs. Martin responded asking Ms. Comeaux to provide an updated estimated date of discharge, as well as information regarding the scheduled surgery and supporting documentation.
8. On May 25, 2016 Ms. Comeaux responded by email therein agreeing to submit the information regarding the scheduled surgery and supporting documentation.
9. On May 26, 2016, Ms. Comeaux was discharged from a long term acute care facility where she had been receiving care following her May 1, 2016 surgery.
10. On June 21, 2016 Mrs. Martin contacted Ms. Comeaux by telephone, leaving a voicemail, and email requesting information pertaining to her current medical condition, treatment

status, and discharge. She received no response.

11. On June 28, 2016 Mrs. Martin again contacted Ms. Comeaux by telephone, leaving a voicemail, and email requesting information pertaining to her current medical condition, treatment status, and discharge. She received no response.
12. On June 29, 2016, following a telephone call with a family member of Ms. Comeaux who confirmed that Ms. Comeaux communicated with him by text that day, Mrs. Martin texted Ms. Comeaux twice requesting that she contact the Board office. She received no response.
13. As of July 12, 2016 Ms. Comeaux has failed to communicate with the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board regarding her current medical condition, treatment status, and discharge.
14. In addition, on March 29, 2016, prior to the Consent Order, an Investigative Committee of the Board asked Ms. Comeaux repeatedly if she has or ever had a history of substance abuse, addiction, or use of controlled dangerous substances not prescribed by a physician. Ms. Comeaux denied ever using or abusing illegal drugs.
15. On or about May 10, 2016 the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board office received Ms. Comeaux's medical records. Review of Ms. Comeaux's medical records reveal that prior to physical therapy school Ms. Comeaux engaged in IV drug abuse and utilized heroine. In addition, for a period of four to five months in 2014, Respondent snorted Opana and Dilaudid daily. Later that same year, Respondent sought help and participated in a rehabilitation program for addiction to prescription medication;
16. Ms. Comeaux's intentionally denied a history of substance abuse, addiction, or use of controlled dangerous substances not prescribed by a physician in an attempt to mislead the Board's Investigative Committee.
17. Furthermore, on or about July 12, 2016 the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board office received Ms. Comeaux's medical records from Acadiana Management Group ("AMG") Specialty Hospital. Review of Ms. Comeaux's medical records reveal that on May 26, 2016 Ms. Comeaux tested positive for cocaine in her urine and was immediately discharged long term acute care facility where she had been receiving care following her May 1, 2016 surgery as addressed in allegation "9". Ms. Comeaux failed to notify the Board of both the reason for discharge and drug use.
18. Furthermore, in 2014 and 2015 Respondent submitted license renewal applications to the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board. Therein Respondent answered "no" to all questions related to addiction, drugs, and participation in rehabilitation programs.
19. On information and belief, Ms. Comeaux intentionally falsified her physical therapy license renewal applications by answering "no" to all questions related to illegal drug use, addiction, and rehabilitation.

20. Finally, from January 20, 2014 until February 9, 2015 Ms. Comeaux was employed as a physical therapist. During this time Ms. Comeaux snorted Opana and Dilaudid daily and participated in a rehabilitation program.

## **VIOLATIONS RELATED TO RESPONDENT'S CONDUCT**

Respondent's conduct described above and otherwise reviewed in this action is subject to and/or in violation of the following provisions of law regarding her practice of physical therapy:

- A. The Board has the authority to suspend or revoke a professional license which it has issued, or place probationary conditions upon such license, upon proof that the licensee has practiced physical therapy in violation of the Practice Act, Board Rules, or standards of practice. La. R.S. 37:2420A(1) and Board Rule §343.
- B. By engaging daily in the unlawful use of drugs while employed as a physical therapist at LHC Group, Inc. Respondent violated Board Rule § 373 A (2) (a).
- C. By fraudulently answering questions about illegal drug use, abuse, and rehabilitation on her license application and renewals, the Respondent violated La. R.S. 2420 A (2), obtaining a license by fraud or misrepresentation. La. R.S. 2420 A (2).
- D. By fraudulently completing a physical therapy license application and license renewal application, Respondent violated Board Rule §345B.1., acts "contrary to honesty" and unprofessional. When engaging in this act Respondent "depart[ed] from, [and] fail[ed] to conform to, *the Minimal Standards of Acceptable and Prevailing Physical Therapy Practice in the State of Louisiana*" and the APTA Code of Ethics.
- E. By failing to comply with the terms and conditions of the Board Order, Respondent violated Board Rule §343C.
- F. By failing to comply with the terms found within the Consent Order, Respondent violated Clause "T" of the Consent Order which gives the Board has authority to summarily suspend or initiate disciplinary action against Respondent.
- G. By failing to provide the Investigative Committee of the Board with truthful information upon request, and in failing to respond to telephone calls, voicemails, and emails from the Investigative Committee of the Board, Respondent failed to cooperate with the Board in violation of La. R.S. §383.
- H. By failing to respond to a Board communication within forty-eight (48) hours of the time a message was sent, Respondent violated Clause "O" of her Consent Order.

- I. In using cocaine, illegal drugs, and abusing prescription medications, Ms. Comeaux violated La. R.S. 37:2420A(5), “[b]een habitually intemperate”, as further defined by Board Rule 351A(2), “the ingestion, self administration, or other use of legally controlled substances or medications which affect the central nervous system, other than pursuant to and used in accordance with a lawful prescription and/or medical advice.”

## **ORDER**

Pursuant to the foregoing Factual Basis for Consent Order and Violations Related to Respondent’s Conduct, and, in order to avoid further administrative and judicial proceedings, Respondent and the Board, by vote of quorum, agree as follows:

- A. Respondent’s physical therapy license is suspended for a minimum period of one (1) year from the date of acceptance of the Consent Order by the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board and until the requirements of Paragraphs “B” through “D” are satisfied. Respondent shall submit to the Board Executive Director in writing no less than thirty (30) calendar days prior to completion of the summary suspension period or fifteen (15) days following successful completion of the requirements of Paragraphs “B” through “D”, whichever is later, documentation of successful completion of all requirements found within Paragraphs “B” through “D” and a request for a letter from the Board formally acknowledging the close of the suspension period. Respondent’s suspension period concludes upon receipt by respondent of the Board a letter acknowledging the close of the suspension period;
- B. Prior to conclusion of the minimum one (1) year suspension period and prior to two (2) years from the date of acceptance of the Consent Order by the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board, Respondent shall, at her own expense, be evaluated and participate in a Board approved in-patient drug rehabilitation program. The requisite time period of the in-patient drug rehabilitation program is to be determined by facility specialists upon initial evaluation at the facility. Respondent shall cooperate fully with the evaluation and in-patient treatment and will provide the Board with access to information, including but not limited to signing all releases and authorizations to enable the Board or its designated agent to obtain reports, evaluation and test results. Respondent shall comply with and successfully fulfill all requirements and treatment recommendations;
- C. Respondent shall abstain from alcohol, mood altering substances, and controlled dangerous substances unless lawfully prescribed in accordance with Paragraph “H”. During her suspension and probationary period, following successful completion of the in-patient drug rehabilitation program, Respondent shall comply with the requests of the Board or its designated agent for random drug and/or alcohol tests. Respondent is responsible for the cost of all testing. If tested by her employer, a recovery treatment program, a mental health professional, a medical provider, or any other entity at any time during the suspension or probationary period, Respondent shall authorize and direct said entity or individual to

furnish the Board Executive Director with a copy of the results for all drug and/or alcohol tests within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of the test results. Following successful completion of the in-patient drug rehabilitation program and prior to two (2) years from the date of acceptance of the Consent Order by the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board, Respondent shall contact the Board Executive Director for instructions on activating an account and shall activate an account with the Board's designated drug and alcohol screening program within five (5) days of receipt of instructions. Respondent shall establish continuous abstinence from alcohol, mood altering substances, and controlled dangerous substances unless lawfully prescribed for a period not less than three (3) months prior to the termination of her suspension period;

- D. Prior to the conclusion of the suspension period and prior to two (2) years from the date of acceptance of the Consent Order by the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board, Respondent shall write an essay of no fewer than words explaining how her conduct violated the Practice Act and Board Rules and what she has learned as a result of the disciplinary process. Upon request by the Board Executive Director, Respondent shall present her essay to the Board at a scheduled Board meeting;
- E. Upon satisfaction of the requirements found within Paragraphs "A" through "D", Respondent's license shall be on probation for a minimum of five (5) years. Respondent shall submit to the Board Executive Director in writing not less than thirty (30) calendar days prior to completion of probationary period a request for a letter from the Board formally acknowledging the close of the probationary period. Respondent's probationary period concludes upon receipt by respondent of the Board a letter acknowledging the close of the probationary period and final exit interview with the Board to be scheduled by the Board Executive Director;
- F. Upon successful completion of the Board approved in-patient drug rehabilitation program, during both the suspension period and probationary period, for as long as is recommended by the in-patient rehabilitation program, Respondent shall comply with the continued treatment and after care recommendations given by said rehabilitation program and provide documentary evidence of such compliance to the Executive Director no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Documents may be submitted via FAX, mail or email attachment;
- G. Unless its equivalent as determined by the Executive Director is mandated within the aftercare or continued treatment recommendations provided by the in-patient rehabilitation program in which Respondent received treatment, Respondent shall attend three (3) meetings per week of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or other recovery support programs for a period of one (1) year, and two meetings per week thereafter. Respondent shall submit for approval of meeting type to the Executive Director prior to attending meetings. Respondent shall document attendance on Board-provided forms. Completed forms shall be submitted monthly to the Board Executive Director no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month following the month of meeting attendance. Forms may be submitted via FAX, mail or email attachment;

- H. During the license suspension and probation Respondent shall abstain from the use and ingestion by any means of alcohol, mood altering substances, and/or any controlled dangerous substance as defined by Louisiana and federal laws unless lawfully prescribed by a physician, dentist, or individual legally authorized to prescribe medications. If Respondent is prescribed a medication by a treating physician or other healthcare provider which is a controlled dangerous substance or administered such medication by physician order, Respondent shall within three (3) calendar days of obtaining such a prescription/medication provide documentation of the prescription/medication, the condition for which the medication is given, and contact information for the prescribing physician to the Executive Director of the Board. Respondent will provide to the Executive Director of the Board names and contact information for the prescribing physician or other healthcare provider and the pharmacy where the prescription has been filled. Respondent will provide to the Board Executive Director names and contact information for the pharmacist filling the prescription. Respondent will provide to the Executive Director of the Board names and contact information for all physicians or other healthcare providers who are treating his during his suspension and probationary periods and a listing of all medication she is prescribed for any medical condition. By signing this document Respondent authorizes his treating physicians to provide information on his diagnosis treatment and prescriptions and communicate with the Board Executive Director or board agent;

In the event that Respondent ingests alcohol, mood altering substances, and/or any controlled dangerous substance as defined by Louisiana and federal laws during the minimum one (1) year suspension and five (5) year probationary periods, Respondent shall immediately cease practice and shall notify the Executive Director of the Board in writing within twenty-four (24) hours of ingestion;

- I. The five (5) year probation period shall be extended for any period of time in which Respondent is not employed as a physical therapist within the State of Louisiana and regularly working at *twenty (20) hours* each week as such. If Respondent ceases to be regularly employed as a physical therapist in Louisiana, she shall notify the Executive Director in writing within *ten (10) calendar days* of the last date she has practiced physical therapy in Louisiana. Likewise, if Respondent returns to work as a physical therapist within the State of Louisiana, she shall notify the Executive Director in writing within *ten (10) calendar days* of his return to practice;
- J. During the suspension period and probationary period Respondent shall promptly comply, as directed, with the requests of the Board or its designated agent to obtain and provide to the Board Prescription Monitoring Program ("PMP") reports at his expense. Respondent shall provide the Executive Director of the Board with the PMP report within five (5) calendar days of request by the Board or its designated agent;
- K. During Respondent's license suspension and probation Respondent shall avoid all situations and environments where others are utilizing illegal substances. In the event that Respondent finds himself in a situation or environment where others are utilizing illegal

substances, Respondent shall notify the Board Executive Director within twenty-four (24) hours of such occurrence;

- L. During the suspension and probationary period, if any drug test of Respondent results in a positive finding for alcohol, mood altering substance, or any controlled dangerous substance taken without a valid prescription in accordance with Paragraph "H", Respondent's license shall automatically and summarily be suspended without further action by the Board, subject to Respondent's right to a full due process hearing before the Board within a reasonable time period. Thereafter, and for as long as Respondent holds a license, if any drug test of Respondent results in a positive finding for controlled dangerous substances taken without a valid prescription or illegal drugs, Respondent's license shall automatically and summarily be suspended without further action by the Board, subject to Respondent's right to a full due process hearing before the Board within a reasonable time period;
- M. Respondent shall complete thirty (30) hours of board-approved continuing education courses or activities required in the biennial renewal period under Rule §194 during his suspension and probationary periods. In addition, during each of the one (1) year suspension and five (5) years of probation, Respondent shall complete an additional four (4) hours of continuing education courses in Ethics per renewal period. Respondent will complete an additional ten (10) Continuing Education hours of Professional Conduct/Development per renewal period. The Ethics and Professional Conduct/Development courses shall be submitted in writing to the Board Executive Director for approval prior to taking the course. Respondent shall also attend one (1) live Jurisprudence Seminar per renewal period. Respondent shall provide documentation in the form of a course completion certificate to the Executive Director within five (5) calendar days of receipt of such documentation;
- N. Respondent shall not seek or accept work in a home health setting. Furthermore, Respondent shall submit to the Board Executive a request for approval of any work setting prior to accepting work. Once the setting is approved, Respondent shall notify the Executive Director in writing of all employment and/or contractual service arrangements which she has to work as a physical therapist and shall update the Executive Director in writing within five (5) calendar days of any and all changes in such arrangements. Respondent shall provide a copy of this Consent Order to her employer(s) and direct supervisor(s) before providing services to that employer and shall have the employer(s) and direct supervisor(s) notify the Executive Director in writing that she/he has received and reviewed a copy of this Consent Order prior to Respondent providing physical therapy services. Respondent shall do this also with any new or subsequent employer(s) and direct supervisor(s) during the probationary period;
- O. During the five (5) year probationary period Respondent shall fully cooperate with the Board representatives making random unannounced monitoring visits to her work sites and shall provide complete access to her place of employment, employment and/or business records, patient treatment and billing records, and all other documentation necessary for a



full legal compliance review. Respondent shall reimburse the Board \$150.00 for each such monitoring visit;

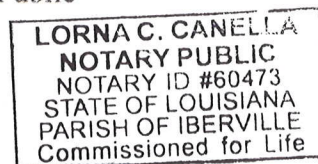
- P. Respondent shall meet with the Board, or with the Board's representative, whenever requested during the suspension and probationary period, and shall fully cooperate in providing information and documents requested in such meetings;
- Q. Respondent shall have reliable access to a computer, internet, and telephone. In accordance with Board Rule §385 Respondent shall provide to the executive director their preferred telephone number and/or email address in writing for expedited communications regarding compliance with board order within forty-eight (48) hours of signing the Consent Order. Respondent shall reply to Board emails and telephone calls within four (4) hours of such communication. Respondent shall notify the Executive Director in writing of any change to their preferred telephone number and/or email address immediately upon change;
- R. Respondent shall pay the Board the sum of \$1,500.00, plus the amount of \$2,750.00 remaining from the Consent Order dated April 22, 2016, in partial reimbursement for legal and administrative expenses incurred in this matter, this amount may be paid in a lump sum, or monthly installments, if arranged in writing in advance with the Executive Director, over the six (6) years of her suspension and probation. In the event that the Respondent reimburses the Board in monthly installments, payment shall be submitted to the Board Executive Director no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Failure to provide payment by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month three times is a basis for further disciplinary action by the Board;
- S. Respondent shall comply with Board Rule §363 and notify the Executive Director of the Louisiana Physical Therapy Board in writing and prior to a change of residence to another country, state, or jurisdiction. Upon relocation, all provisions of this Consent Order, except Paragraph "R" pertaining to reimbursement of legal and administrative expenses, are suspended until Respondent again resides within Louisiana, notifies the Executive Director of her Louisiana residence, and receives written confirmation from the Executive Director;
- T. Respondent declares that, before signing this Consent Order, she is of sound mind has carefully read this document, understands the contents, and freely consents to it as valid and binding upon her. She is aware of her right to a notice of hearing, to a formal administrative hearing and to judicial review of an administrative finding, and freely waives those rights. She has waived her right to be represented by counsel;
- U. Respondent acknowledges that her failure to comply with any term of this Consent Order is a basis for immediate summary suspension of her license and for further disciplinary action by the Board;
- V. Respondent acknowledges that this Consent Order only addresses the specific violations outlined above;

- W. Respondent authorizes the Investigating Board Member, Kristina Lounsberry, PT, and legal counsel assisting the Investigating Board Member, to present this Consent Order to the full Board for its consideration and to fully disclose and discuss with the Board the nature and results of the investigation. Respondent waives any objection to such disclosures under La. R.S. 49:960 and expressly acknowledges that the disclosure of such information to the Board shall be without prejudice to the Investigative Board Member's authority to file a formal Administrative Complaint against her, or to the Board's capacity to adjudicate such Complaint, should the Board decline to approve this Consent Order. Should the Board decline to approve this Consent Order, Respondent retains all rights to due process including, but not limited to, her right to have notice of any allegations or charges against her, to administrative adjudication of such allegations or charges, and to a subsequent final decision rendered upon written findings of fact and conclusions of law;
- X. Respondent acknowledges that presentation to and consideration by the Board of this Consent Agreement, including presented documentary evidence and information, shall not unfairly or illegally prejudice or preclude the Board, or any of its members, from further participation in hearings or resolution to these proceedings; and
- Y. Respondent acknowledges that this Consent Order becomes effective only upon signature by the Board Chair.
- Z. Respondent acknowledges that all communication regarding compliance with and/or fulfillment of the requirements of this Consent Order shall be in writing between Respondent and the Board Executive Director. No verbal communication shall be considered proof of compliance or commitment. Respondent acknowledges that it is the responsibility of the Respondent to fully comply with the Consent Order and proactively communicate with the Board Executive Director.

Sacha Comeaux, PT  
Sacha Comeaux, PT

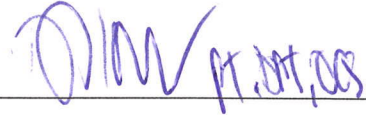
SWORN TO and subscribed before me, Notary Public 4 day of Jan., 2017  
Plaquemine, Louisiana.

Lorna C. Canella  
Notary Public



AGREED AND ACCEPTED by official action of the Board, the 11<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2017, at Lafayette, Louisiana.

Louisiana Physical Therapy Board



Donald Cassano, Jr., P.T., Chair