

BEFORE THE VIRGINIA BOARD OF NURSING

IN RE: TARA J. HARKINS, L.P.N.
a.k.a Tara Steppe
License Number: 0002-070528
Expiration Date: April 30, 2018
Case Number: 175011

**NOTICE OF INFORMAL CONFERENCE BEFORE AN AGENCY SUBORDINATE
AND STATEMENT OF ALLEGATIONS**

You are hereby notified that an informal conference has been scheduled before an Agency Subordinate of the Board of Nursing (“Board”) regarding your license to practice practical nursing in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

TYPE OF PROCEEDING:	This is an informal conference before an Agency Subordinate of the Board.
DATE AND TIME:	February 16, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.
PLACE:	Virginia Department of Health Professions Perimeter Center - 9960 Mayland Drive 2 nd Floor - Virginia Conference Center Henrico, Virginia 23233

LEGAL AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION:

1. This informal conference is being held pursuant to Virginia Code §§ 2.2-4019 and 54.1-2400(10). This proceeding will be convened as a public meeting pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3700.
2. After consideration of all information, the Agency Subordinate is authorized to take any of the following actions:
 - If the Agency Subordinate finds that there is insufficient evidence to warrant further action or that the charges are without foundation, notify you by mail that your record has been cleared of any charge which might affect your right to practice practical nursing in the Commonwealth;
 - Recommend findings of fact, conclusions of law and a sanction, to include a reprimand, placing you on probation with terms, suspension or revocation of your license, or imposing a monetary penalty pursuant to § 54.1-2401 of the Code.

Further, the Agency Subordinate may refer this matter for a formal administrative proceeding pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-4020.

Board's Review of Agency Subordinate's Recommended Decision

If you appear in person or by counsel at the informal conference, the recommendation of the Agency Subordinate will be presented to a quorum of the Board. The Board may accept or modify the recommendation, or reject the recommendation and refer the case to a formal hearing. If you do not agree with the decision of the Board, you have the right to a formal administrative hearing before the Board.

If you fail to appear in person or by counsel at the informal conference, the recommendation of the Agency Subordinate will be presented to a quorum of the Board. The Board may accept or modify the recommendation, or reject the recommendation and refer the case to a formal hearing. The Board's decision regarding the agency subordinate's recommendation is a final order that can only be appealed to circuit court as provided by Rule 2A:2 of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

ABSENCE OF RESPONDENT AND RESPONDENT'S COUNSEL:

If you fail to appear at the informal conference, the Agency Subordinate may proceed to hear this matter in your absence and may take any of the actions outlined above.

RESPONDENT'S LEGAL RIGHTS:

You have the right to the information on which the Agency Subordinate will rely in making a decision, to be represented by counsel at this proceeding, to subpoena witnesses and/or documents, and to present relevant evidence on your behalf.

INFORMAL CONFERENCE MATERIALS:

Enclosed is a copy of the documents that will be considered by the Agency Subordinate when discussing any allegations with you and when deliberating on your case. **These documents are enclosed only with the notice sent by certified mail, which you may be required to claim at the post office. Please bring these documents with you to the informal conference.**

FILING DEADLINES:

1. Deadline for filing materials: February 9, 2017. Submit 5 copies of all documents you want the Board to consider to Sylvia Tamayo-Suijk, Board of Nursing, 9960 Mayland Drive, Suite 300, Henrico, Virginia 23233. Exhibits may not be sent by facsimile or e-mail.
2. Deadline for filing motions, including requests for continuance or objections to materials, in writing, to Sylvia Tamayo-Suijk at the above address: February 9, 2017. NOTE: the failure to object to materials does not deprive you of the right to contest their contents at the proceeding.

REQUEST FOR A CONTINUANCE

Absent exigent circumstances, such as personal or family illness, a request for a continuance after **February 9, 2017**, will not be considered. If you obtain counsel, you should do so as soon as possible, as a motion for a continuance due to the unavailability of counsel will not be considered unless received by **February 9, 2017**.

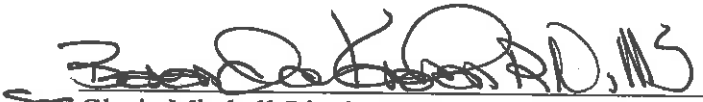
STATEMENT OF ALLEGATIONS

The Board alleges that:

1. At all times relevant hereto, Tara J. Harkins, L.P.N., was licensed to practice practical nursing in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Ms. Harkins violated Virginia Code § 54.1-3007(2), (5), (6) and (8) and 18 VAC 90-20-300(A)(2)(c), (e), and (f) of the Regulations Governing the Practice of Nursing (“Regulations”) in that:
 - a. During the course of her employment with Charlottesville Pointe, Charlottesville, Virginia, on or about July 14, 2016, she diverted oxycodone (C-II) for her own personal and unauthorized use, as evidenced by the following:
 - i. Ms. Harkins documented the administration of 15 mg oxycodone (C-II) to Patient A at midnight on July 14, 2016. Patient A, who was alert and oriented, reported to another nurse that he did not receive his 15mg dose of oxycodone.
 - ii. Pursuant to Charlottesville Pointe’s facility investigation into this incident, Ms. Harkins submitted to a reasonable suspicion urine drug screen on July 15, 2016, which was negative. Ms. Harkins later admitted that she submitted her son’s urine for the urine drug screen.
 - b. Ms. Harkins admitted to an investigator for the Department of Health Professions that while working for Charlottesville Health and Rehabilitation, Charlottesville, Virginia, between December 29, 2014 and May 2, 2016, she diverted controlled substances. She stated that she did so by either removing an opioid for a patient who did not need it or request it and keeping it for herself, by keeping wastes of narcotics, or by keeping medications for patients that had been discharged.

3. Ms. Harkins violated Virginia Code § 54.1-3007(6) in that she is unsafe to practice professional nursing due to substance abuse , as more fully set out in Confidential Exhibit I.

See Confidential Attachment I for the name of the patient referenced above.


Gloria Mitchell-Lively, R.N., M.S.N., M.B.A.
Deputy Executive Director
Virginia Board of Nursing

January 23, 2017
Date