



COPY

**STATE OF OHIO  
COUNSELOR AND SOCIAL WORKER BOARD**

ADJUDICATION ORDER  
in the Matter of:

Cari Knoerzer  
607 W. North Street, Apt. 2  
Lima, Ohio 45801

IN THE MATTER OF THE ELIGIBILITY OF CARI KNOERZER TO BE LICENSED AS A SOCIAL WORKER IN THE STATE OF OHIO.

THE MATTER OF CARI KNOERZER CAME BEFORE THE OHIO COUNSELOR AND SOCIAL WORKER BOARD'S SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE AT ITS JULY 1998 MEETING.

**FINDINGS, ORDER, AND JOURNAL ENTRY**

This matter came for consideration after a Notice of Opportunity for Hearing was issued to Cari Knoerzer by the Counselor and Social Worker Board's Social Work Professional Standards Committee on March 23, 1998. An administrative hearing was held on June 15, 1998, at 1:00 p.m. in the offices of the Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Board, 77 S. High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43266, pursuant to Chapter 119 and Section 4757 of the Ohio Revised Code. The State was represented by Assistant Attorney General Jonathan M. Bowman. Cari Knoerzer was not present.

The Social Work Professional Standards Committee has reviewed the Hearing Officer Report and Recommendations prepared in this case following the administrative hearing. The Committee adopts in their entirety the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law in the Hearing Officer Report and Recommendations. A copy of the Hearing Officer Report and Recommendations is attached to this Adjudication Order. The Committee also adopts the Hearing Officer's recommendation to revoke Ms. Knoerzer's license to practice social work in the State of Ohio.

THEREFORE, it is hereby ORDERED that for the reasons outlined in this ORDER and in the attached Hearing Officer Report and Recommendations which is hereby incorporated, by reference, into this ORDER, the license of Cari Knoerzer (S-17002) to practice as a Licensed Social Worker in the State of Ohio is REVOKED. This ORDER was approved by unanimous vote of the Social Work Professional Standards Committee who reviewed this case.

Motion carried by order of the Counselor and Social Worker Board's Social Work Professional Standards Committee.

It is hereby certified by this Board that the above language is incorporated into the Board's journal in this matter.

### **APPEAL RIGHTS**

Pursuant to Section 119.12 of the Ohio Revised Code, you may appeal from this Order. Such an appeal may be taken to the court of common pleas in the county in which your place of business is located or to the court in the county in which you reside. If you do not have a place of business in Ohio and are not a resident of Ohio, you may appeal to the Court of Common Pleas in Franklin County, Ohio.

Such an appeal, setting forth the Order appealed from and the grounds of the appeal must be commenced by the filing of a Notice of Appeal with the State of Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Board and the appropriate Court within fifteen (15) days after the mailing of this notice and in accordance with the requirements of Section 119.12 of the Ohio Revised Code.

By Order of the State of Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Board.



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Robert L. Moore  
Chairman

**Certification**

I hereby certify that a true and accurate copy of this Adjudication Order of the State of Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Board was mailed return receipt requested to Cari Knoerzer this 21st day of July 1998.

Beth Farnsworth  
Beth Farnsworth  
Executive Director

7-21-98  
Date

2337 619 135  
Certified Mail Number  
Return Receipt Requested

STATE OF OHIO

COUNSELOR AND SOCIAL WORKER BOARD

RECEIVED  
JUN 30 '98

COUNSELOR AND SOCIAL  
WORKER BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF THE  
LICENSURE OF

Cari Knoerzer

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF  
HEARING EXAMINER

AS A SOCIAL WORKER  
IN THE STATE OF OHIO

June 30, 1998

**FOR THE APPLICANT:**

No appearance

**HEARING EXAMINER:**

Ronda S. Shamansky  
245 East Gay Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3210  
614/224-9078

**FOR THE BOARD:**

Jonathan M. Bowman  
Assistant Attorney General  
Health & Human Services Section  
30 E. Broad St., 26th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614/466-8600

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

1. The hearing on this matter was held on Monday, June 15, 1998 commencing at 1:00 p.m. in the offices of the Counselor and Social Worker Board, 77 South High Street, Columbus, Ohio. The Board was represented by Jonathan Bowman. The licensee, Cari Knoerzer, did not appear. The hearing allowed the opportunity for direct and cross examination of witnesses, the submission of documents, and for arguments to be made.
2. The Board has proposed disciplinary action against Ms. Knoerzer's social worker license for alleged violations of the Ohio Revised Code pertaining to the practice of social work. Particularly, the Board alleges that on January 7, 1998, Ms. Knoerzer was convicted of possession of drugs, a fifth degree felony, in the Ross County Court of Common Pleas. R.C. 4757.36(A)(5) authorizes the Board to suspend, revoke, or otherwise restrict the license of a social worker who has been convicted of a felony.
3. The Board notified Ms. Knoerzer of its intention to take action against her license through its Notice of Opportunity for Hearing dated March 23, 1998. (State's Exhibit 1) Ms. Knoerzer made a timely request for a hearing through her letter dated April 24, 1998; however, she indicated that she would like to submit her contentions in writing since she was in the ninth month of a pregnancy at that time. (State's Exhibit 2) Ms. Knoerzer was given notice of the initial hearing date, notice of a continuance of that date, and notice of the hearing ultimately held on June 15, 1998. (State's Exhibits 3, 4)
4. At the hearing, the State introduced into evidence State's Exhibits 1 through 6. The Board's investigative supervisor, William Hegarty, testified that the Board had received no written statement from Ms. Knoerzer stating her position. The State offered into evidence State's Exhibit 5, which is a copy of the Judgment Entry of the Ross County Court of Common Pleas sentencing Ms. Knoerzer following her felony conviction of Possession of Drugs. The Court fined Ms. Knoerzer \$2,500, with \$1,500 of that amount suspended, and imposed five years of community control to be monitored by the Ross County Adult Probation Department. It further suspended her driver's license for a

period of six months and ordered her to pay restitution and court costs. (State's Exhibit 5)

5. The State also introduced into evidence State's Exhibit 6, which is a report provided to this Board by the Ohio Credentialing Board. The report details the investigation that the Ohio Credentialing Board conducted prior to revoking Ms. Knoerzer's certification as a CCDC II. (State's Exhibit 6) Ms. Knoerzer filed the complaint against herself with the Ohio Credentialing Board, and provided a detailed explanation of the acts that lead to her being convicted of this crime.
  
6. In Ms. Knoerzer's statement that she filed with the Ohio Credentialing Board, she indicates that sometime in 1995, she became overwhelmed with expenses. She was supporting three children, including one who was in a 6-month treatment program, on a yearly salary of \$21,000. (State's Exhibit 6) In early 1996, her husband, who was in prison on drug-related convictions, suggested to her that she make extra income by delivering marijuana and money to a guard at the Ross Correctional Institution, who would then deliver the marijuana to inmates.<sup>1</sup> Ms. Knoerzer agreed to make 6-8 trips within the next 6 months to Columbus, Cincinnati, and Fayette County to pick up marijuana and/or money, take it back to her home, and wait for instructions about how to deliver it to the prison guard. (State's Exhibit 6) Ms. Knoerzer had made approximately 8 trips, and then decided in January 1997 that she did not want to continue this because it had become a hassle and was not proving as profitable as she had hoped. (State's Exhibit 6) Around that same time, her vehicle became irreparable, and she needed money for a down payment on a new car so that she could keep her job. (State's Exhibit 6) In February 1997, she was offered \$400 to make a pickup and delivery of marijuana and money, which was double the amount that she usually received. She agreed to do it. (State's Exhibit 6)

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<sup>1</sup>In Ms. Knoerzer's statement, she does not identify the person who approached her with this offer, and she refers to him as "an ex-inmate." However, in the additional documentation from the Ohio Credentialing Board, it is indicated that Ms. Knoerzer admitted to that Board that the inmate is her husband, and that he has been in prison for more than ten years as a result of various drug offenses. (State's Exhibit 6)

7. When Ms. Knoerzer attempted to make this final delivery, she was approached by two detectives from Ross County who asked her help in apprehending the prison guard, whom they said had been providing drugs to the inmates for quite some time. (State's Exhibit 6) She agreed to give her full cooperation to the prison officials and to the Ross County authorities, and she pleaded guilty to the fifth degree felony of possession of drugs. She has resigned from her position as the director of a community correctional day reporting probation program, and at the time of her statement was unemployed. (State's Exhibit 6) Ms. Knoerzer also noted in her statement that she has been in recovery from alcohol abuse since April 1981, and that she is currently in counseling through a women's crisis center. (State's Exhibit 6)

## DISCUSSION

The facts in this matter are not in dispute. Ms. Knoerzer pleaded guilty and was convicted of possession of drugs, a fifth degree felony for her role in delivering drugs to a prison guard, whom she knew would deliver the drugs to inmates. The only explanation Ms. Knoerzer offers is that she needed money very badly at that time to augment her salary. I found it ironic that in her statement, she explains that one of the reasons she needed extra money was that her son was sent to a six-month treatment program, which sounds as though it is for some kind of substance abuse, yet she planned to pay for this expense by delivering illegal drugs in exchange for money. Thus, it appears that she agreed to traffic in marijuana in order to pay for her son's treatment for drug addiction.

There are numerous reasons in the record that demonstrate the fact that Ms. Knoerzer should have been keenly aware of the consequences of drug use. She was licensed as a chemical dependency counselor, and was recovering from alcohol abuse herself. In addition, the report from the Ohio Credentialing Board indicates that her husband was serving time in prison on drug-related convictions, and her own statement suggests that her son also had a problem with substance abuse. It would appear that drug abuse has had a devastating effect on Ms. Knoerzer's own family. Her offense is made more egregious by the evidence that she had firsthand knowledge of the destructive effect that the use of illegal drugs can have, and yet she nonetheless chose to try to profit from the sale of drugs.

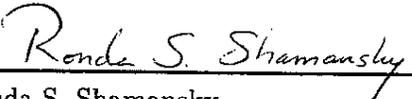
Finally, Ms. Knoerzer indicated in her written statement to the Ohio Credentialing Board that in January 1997, she had decided to discontinue this activity, because "it had become more of a hassle than an assistance. Traveling after work hours, long distance, phone calls, little profit, etc." (State's Exhibit 6) She apparently made this decision not because it had occurred to her that this might not be the right thing to do, but rather because it wasn't turning out to be as profitable as she had expected. Thus, it appears that even in hindsight, Ms. Knoerzer doesn't perceive an ethical or moral problem with her role in providing illegal drugs to prisoners in exchange for money. Under these facts, revocation of her license to practice social work appears to be the most appropriate action for this Board to take.

#### CONCLUSION OF LAW

I conclude that Cari Knoerzer has been convicted of possession of drugs, a fifth degree felony, in the Ross County Court of Common Pleas. Based on this felony conviction, the Board has the authority pursuant to R.C. 4757.36(A)(5) to revoke her license to practice social work.

#### RECOMMENDATION

For the reasons detailed in this report, I recommend that the Board revoke Cari Knoerzer's license to practice social work.

  
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Ronda S. Shamansky  
Hearing Examiner