ONTARIO REGISTERED PSYCHOTHERAPISTS DISCIPLINE TRIBUNAL

Citation: *College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario v. Hamouche,* 2026 ONRPDT 10
Date: September 14, 2026
Tribunal File No.: 26-001-RP

BETWEEN:

College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

College

- and -

Zeina Hamouche

Registrant

FINDING AND PENALTY REASONS

Heard: July 15, 2026

Panel:
Sophie Martel (panel chair)
Shelley Briscoe-Dimock (registered psychotherapist)
Jason King* (public)
Kenneth Lomp (registered psychotherapist)
Kevin Sack (public)

*Mr. Jason King was initially a member of the panel but was unable to participate in the reasons process. The remaining panel members give the decision pursuant to s. 4.4 of the *Statutory Powers Procedure Act*.

Appearances:
Emily Graham, for the College
Zeina Hamouche, not present or represented

RESTRICTION ON PUBLICATION

Pursuant to Rule 2.2.2 of the HPDT Rules of Procedure and ss. 45-47 of the Health Professions Procedural Code, no one shall publish or broadcast the names of patients/clients or any information that could identify clients or disclose clients' personal health information or health records referred to at a hearing or in any documents filed with the Tribunal. There may be significant fines for breaching this restriction.

Introduction

[1] Zeina Hamouche, a registrant in the Qualifying class (who has not yet completed all requirements to transition to full independent practice), crossed professional boundaries in her relationship with her client and his spouse. She exchanged hundreds of messages and phone calls with her client that were inappropriately personal, informal and overly familiar in nature. She also inappropriately communicated with her client's spouse.

[2] This was one of two referrals heard by this panel, one after the other, on July 15, 2026. The registrant did not participate in these proceedings. The reasons in the other referral are reported at *College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario v. Hamouche*, 2026 ONRPDT 11.

[3] Relying on deemed admissions pursuant to a request to admit, we concluded that the registrant committed professional misconduct by contravening standards of practice of the profession, acting in a professional capacity while in a conflict of interest or being in a conflict of interest when acting in a professional capacity, and engaging in conduct that was disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.

[4] We have ordered that the registrant's certificate of registration be revoked and that she pay $4,700 in costs within a month of the release of these reasons.

Proceeding in the registrant's absence

[5] The registrant was provided with the notice of hearing and all other related documents. She has not participated in the discipline process. In a case management direction (CMD) dated June 18, 2026 (corrected on June 24, 2026), the Tribunal Chair concluded that the registrant was not entitled to further notice of this proceeding and that the College did not need to continue to deliver documents to her. The CMD notes the College's extensive efforts to send documents to the registrant by multiple means: email, regular mail, registered mail, personal service of the notice of hearing, and attempts at personal service for other documents. The Tribunal Chair was satisfied that the registrant had actual notice of the proceeding and had decided not to participate. She was evading personal service and not responding to all other communications sent to her such that the College should not be required to continue to incur costs to locate the registrant or send documents she would ignore.

[6] In these circumstances, we proceeded without the registrant's participation.

Request to admit

[7] Rule 12.3 of the Tribunal's Rules of Procedure provides for requests to admit. It states that a party may deliver to the other party a request to admit, asking the other party to admit the truth of facts or the authenticity of documents for the purposes of the Tribunal proceeding (Rule 12.3.1). It may not be delivered less than 30 days before the hearing (Rule 12.3.8). A party who fails to respond to the request to admit within 30 days after delivery is deemed for the purposes of the Tribunal proceeding to admit the truth of the facts or the authenticity of the documents (Rules 12.3.2 and 12.3.3). A party who received a request to admit and who does not attend the hearing, is also deemed to admit the facts or the authenticity of the documents (Rule 12.3.4).

[8] A request to admit generally enhances the efficiency of proceedings by narrowing the factual and legal issues in dispute. It can be particularly useful when, as in this case, a registrant is non-responsive. By requesting a non-responsive registrant to admit facts and documents, the College avoids having to prepare for a fully contested hearing, which includes securing the attendance of witnesses. This in turn avoids the time and costs of scheduling and convening a lengthy hearing.

[9] Rule 12.3.7 states that a request to admit may only be delivered where the other party, after receiving notice, has not indicated any intention to participate in the proceeding or the Tribunal has given permission. In this case, the registrant has not indicated any intention to participate in the proceeding. Furthermore, the Tribunal gave its permission for the delivery of a request to admit in a CMD dated March 18, 2026.

[10] The College served its request to admit multiple times in multiple ways. On April 2, 2026, it sent the request to admit to the registrant's email address on file with the College. She had previously used this email address to communicate with the College during the investigation. The email did not bounce back as undeliverable. On May 4, 2026, the College mailed the request to an address the College believes is the registrant's current home address. The letter was not returned to the sender. On June 4, 2026, the College served the registrant with its motion materials in respect of its motion not to have to send her any further documents. These motion materials included the request to admit. The motion materials were sent to the registrant by email and mail at all known addresses, past and present, for the registrant.

[11] We accept that the registrant was served with the request to admit.

[12] The registrant did not respond to the request to admit and failed to attend the hearing. In these circumstances, we accept that the registrant is deemed to admit the truth of the statements and the authenticity of the documents contained in the request to admit for the purposes of this proceeding.

Deemed admissions

Treatment relationship with Client A

[13] The registrant treated Client A between approximately June 2021 and October 2022. From June 2021 to January 2022, she treated the client through the practice operated by her then supervisor, and from January to October 2022, she treated the client through her home-based private practice. She had 38 appointments with Client A, the majority of which were conducted virtually. Client A was primarily seeking treatment for substance abuse. Other areas explored during the treatment included his relational difficulties, familial relationships, and boundary difficulties in interpersonal relationships.

Communications between the registrant and Client A

[14] Between October 2021 and November 2022, the registrant and Client A exchanged 586 text and WhatsApp messages, 28 emails and 115 phone calls. The frequency of these communications increased as the treatment relationship progressed. The registrant initiated almost all the message exchanges, often reaching out to the client between therapy sessions. She repeatedly contacted Client A despite the frequent lack of a response from Client A.

[15] In May 2022, she began exchanging text messages and telephone calls with Client A between midnight and 6:00 a.m. She also frequently spoke on the phone with Client A at inappropriate times in the late evening and early morning outside of scheduled appointment times. The phone calls were often quite lengthy - at times lasting more than one hour.

[16] In October 2022, the last month the registrant saw the client in treatment, they exchanged 279 messages and had 49 phone calls.

[17] The content of the written communications was at times inappropriately personal, informal and overly familiar in nature. It included the use of profanities and redacted

profanities. While there were dozens and dozens of these inappropriate messages, we only set out a few examples below:

- Regarding a scheduling matter, the registrant texted the client, “Sorry to msg late. I kind of f***ed up with schedule for tomorrow.”

- In response to the client’s music preference, she responded, “I was not expecting that but that’s my boy!!! lol & I don’t mean that in a weird or inappropriate way.”

- In respect of a request made to Client A not to do something, the registrant texted, “Keep in mind it’s just a request/favour on my end and you can do whatever you want even if I don’t like I’ll still love you! (I say that in a healthy client/counsellor type relationship way).”

- In respect of a therapist who had been providing couples’ counselling to Client A and his spouse, she texted, “I remember this one now. [She] was the one that shit all over me and said you need someone with more experience. Sorry Random […] You thought she was a ‘cocky bitch’.”

- She texted the client, “If I was allowed to hire you to edit my site content I would [smiley face emoji].”

[18] Some of the written communications occurred via WhatsApp. The registrant’s profile picture on WhatsApp depicted her wearing a low-cut tank top that revealed her cleavage. In response to the client’s message that he liked her profile picture, the registrant replied by saying, “Thanks! I hope you have a goodnight and that you know I’ll always be around until you no longer need me to be.”

[19] In July 2022, the registrant sent a gift that she had made to the client’s house. It consisted of photographs of the client’s family, which she had requested and obtained from the client’s spouse.

[20] The registrant also inappropriately shared her own personal information with Client A, including that she “suck[s] at keeping things inside,” that she was “a bit off the last few days,” and comments that disparaged the father of her own children.

[21] The messaging in October 2022 became increasingly frequent and personal, to the point where the registrant herself acknowledged that that her certificate of registration may be revoked:

> I know my license will be revoked now. & I feel like the more I share the worse I'm going to make it on myself and especially you. I really care about you a lot and I don't want you to be put in an uncomfortable position so again please don't mention or do anything. Whatever happens happens, even if it means I have to start life over doing something else. I rather that than cause you any pain and discomfort.

[22] On November 2, 2022, the registrant texted the client, "I don't know what I did to make you hate me this much & to the extent that you're getting people I don't even know to want to hurt me. Just please stop [Client A] please [crying face emoji]."

Communications between the registrant and Client A's spouse

[23] Client A's spouse was not the registrant's client.

[24] Between October 2021 and December 2022, the registrant and Client A's spouse exchanged 581 text and WhatsApp messages, 29 emails and 219 phone calls. The registrant's chart for Client A indicates that his spouse was to receive only copies of Client A's receipts, statements and financial emails. The timing and content of the registrant's communications with Client A's spouse was inconsistent with this limited permission.

[25] Client A's spouse frequently sent the registrant lengthy text messages in which she detailed her own personal troubles as they related to Client A. The registrant provided her with an outlet for venting. In October 2021, the registrant's supervisor had a discussion with the registrant about a text the registrant had received from the spouse. The supervisor discussed, among other things, the inappropriateness of such messages and that texting with clients and their family members was not recommended. The supervisor discussed how to set communication boundaries. Despite receiving this advice, the registrant's communications with the spouse about personal matters continued. Some of their communications also occurred in the middle of the night and included lengthy phone calls.

[26] Even after receiving Client A's complaint to the College on November 24, 2022, the registrant continued to communicate by text and phone with Client A's spouse.

Professional misconduct findings

[27] It is clear from the volume, the content and the late-night timing of the registrant's communications with the client and his spouse that the registrant developed a personal relationship with them. The registrant fostered these personal relationships.

[28] These personal relationships risked compromising the registrant's professional objectivity in respect of her treatment of Client A. The relationship with the spouse risked compromising not only the care she provided to Client A, but also the confidentiality of their treatment discussions. By failing to maintain appropriate boundaries and inserting herself in the family dynamics, the registrant placed herself in a conflict of interest.

[29] We conclude that the College has established that the registrant engaged in professional misconduct under s. 51(1)(c) of the Health Professions Procedural Code, Schedule 2 to the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, *1991*, SO 1991, c. 18. Specifically, in respect of s. 51(1)(c), we find that the registrant breached the following paragraphs of s. 1 of Ontario Regulation 317/12 made under the *Psychotherapy Act*, 2007, SO 2007, c. 10, Sched. R (Professional Misconduct Regulation):

- paragraph 1: contravening, by act or omission, a standard of practice of the profession or failing to maintain the standard of practice of the profession, including but not limited to the following:
    i. Standard 1.6 – Conflict-of-interest; and
    ii. Standard 1.7 – Dual or Multiple Relationships;
- paragraph 16: acting in a professional capacity while in a conflict of interest or being in a conflict of interest when acting in a professional capacity; and
- paragraph 52: engaging in conduct or performing an act relevant to the practice of the profession that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.

[30] The standard on dual or multiple relationships states that whenever possible, a registrant should avoid dual or multiple relationships with a client in addition to their

professional one. There is no evidence that the registrant was in a friendly relationship with her client prior to the onset of their treatment relationship. However, a personal and friendly relationship developed, thus creating a dual relationship with the client.

[31] We note that the conflict-of-interest standard outlines when a conflict of interest exists:

> A conflict-of-interest exists when a member is in any arrangement or relationship where a reasonable person could conclude that the exercise of the registrant's professional expertise or judgment may be compromised by, or be influenced inappropriately by, the arrangement or relationship. A conflict-of-interest may be actual, potential or perceived.

[32] Registrants should be alert to any circumstance where a conflict of interest may develop and respond by taking appropriate action. In this case, the registrant's continued initiation of personal communications exacerbated the conflict of interest that resulted from her increasingly personal relationships with her client and his spouse. Furthermore, paragraph 16 of s. 1 of the Professional Misconduct Regulation states that it is professional misconduct to act in a professional capacity while in a conflict of interest or to be in a conflict of interest when acting in a professional capacity.

[33] Finally, the registrant's behaviour is conduct that the profession would reasonably regard to be disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional. The relationship between a client and their therapist is one of trust, in which clients expect their therapist to act with sound professional and unbiased judgment. The registrant failed to understand and to enforce the required boundaries, thereby compromising the therapeutic relationship with her client.

Penalty

[34] The College seeks revocation of the registrant's certificate. The College provided notice to the registrant in advance of the hearing that it would be seeking revocation. The College does not request that we order a reprimand. Given the registrant's lack of participation in this proceeding, it is of the view that a reprimand would not serve any useful purpose to supplement the revocation order.

[35] The College submits that the registrant is ungovernable. The registrant never provided a substantive response to the client complaint and resulting investigation. She

did not attend any of the case management conferences, and she did not file any materials nor respond to the motion to dispense with further service. She has not participated in any of the required steps in this disciplinary hearing. She did not respond to the request to admit and did not appear at the hearing. She also did not complete her annual renewal form nor pay her annual registration fee for the years 2025 and 2026.

[36] The College submits that the seriousness of the misconduct, together with the registrant's disregard of her regulator, is such that only revocation will protect the public and instil confidence in the College's ability to regulate the profession of registered psychotherapists. The registrant has not tendered any evidence of mitigation. The College submits that by not participating the registrant has shown that she is not willing to be governed by the rules put in place to protect the public, particularly those who seek psychotherapy.

[37] Ungovernability in the context of a regulated health professional has been defined as a "pattern of conduct that demonstrates that the member is unprepared to recognize his or her professional obligations and the regulator's role." It does not just relate to a prior disciplinary record but occurs "when the member's present attitude to his or her governing body makes it clear that the member is unlikely to cooperate with the College in the future" (*College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario v. Sweet*, 2017 ONCPSD 40 at p. 17).

[38] Recently, in *College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario v. Kravetsky*, 2023 ONCRPO 3, *College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario v. Becker*, 2024 ONRPDT 7 and *College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario v. Jayatunge*, 2024 ONRPDT 8, panels have found registrants to be ungovernable and ordered the revocation of their certificates of registration where the registrants ignored College communications and failed to participate in discipline proceedings.

[39] The misconduct in this case is serious. The registrant developed and promoted a personal relationship with her client and his spouse. She failed to maintain required boundaries with her client, thereby compromising her professional judgment and the therapeutic relationship with her client. There is no evidence of remorse, insight or willingness to change or to learn from previous mistakes.

[40] There is also no evidence that the registrant is willing to be governed. The registrant never provided a substantive response to the investigation. She requested an extension of time to respond, which was granted, but then never provided her response. She has not completed her annual renewal form nor paid her annual registration fees for two consecutive years. She did not participate in any of the steps of this disciplinary proceeding. She was found to have evaded service of documents.

[41] As indicated at the outset of these reasons, this application was one of two applications heard one after the other pertaining to this registrant. There is also no evidence in the other application of the registrant's willingness to be governed.

[42] We conclude that the seriousness of the misconduct, the absence of any evidence that the registrant is a suitable candidate for remediation, and the registrant's non-involvement in the investigation and discipline processes are such that only the revocation of her certificate of registration will protect the public and instil confidence in the College's ability to regulate the profession in the public interest.

Costs

[43] We also accept the College's request for costs of $4,700, which reflect the tariff costs and expenses of a half-day hearing set out in the Tribunal's Rules of Procedure.

Order

[44] We order:

Penalty

1. The Tribunal directs the Registrar to revoke the registrant's certificate of registration effective September 15, 2026 at 12:01 a.m.

Costs

2. The Tribunal requires the registrant to pay the College costs in the amount of $4,700 within one month of the date of these reasons.