



Nova Scotia  
Board of Examiners in  
Psychology

Suite 455, 5991 Spring Garden Road  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3H 1Y6  
www.nsbep.org

Telephone: (902) 423-2238  
Fax: (902) 423-005

**NOVA SCOTIA BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN PSYCHOLOGY**  
**SUMMARY OF DECISION OF INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE**  
**MEAGHAN HOLLETT, MASP**  
**REGISTRATION NUMBER: R0863**

---

The panel of the Investigation Committee of the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology concluded its investigation into a complaint against Meaghan Hollett by issuing its decision dated October 3, 2019. The Investigation Committee reached agreement with Ms. Hollett with respect to the disposition of the complaint. A summary of the complaint and disposition appears below.

**OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINT AND SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION**

This matter was initiated by a complaint form dated July 27, 2018 and a letter of complaint dated August 1, 2018, regarding the conduct and competence of Meaghan Hollett.

Ms. Hollett is a registered psychologist with a self-declared area of practice in school psychology.

The complainants consisted of two registered psychologists and a staff member at Ms. Hollett's former employer.

Ms. Hollett provided a written response to the complaint on October 17, 2018.

A panel of the Investigation Committee, formed in accordance with section 35 of the Psychologists Act of Nova Scotia, was responsible for the investigation of this complaint.

The complainant provided additional information. Ms. Hollett had the opportunity to respond to this information and also had opportunities to respond at other points in the investigation but did not provide any further written responses.

In addition to considering the written complaint and response, the committee also examined reports completed by Ms. Hollett; as well as directory and appointment listings.

In April 2019, the Investigation Committee retained a registered psychologist to provide an audit review of four of the reports completed by Ms. Hollett. The Investigation Committee

provided a copy of the audit to Ms. Hollett.

On May 10, 2019, the Investigation Committee met with Ms. Hollett to discuss the complaint.

## **ISSUES**

The issues identified for investigation based on the letters of complaint were:

1. Did Ms. Hollett fail to adhere to accepted standards of practice?
2. Is Ms. Hollett competent to practise psychology?
3. Did Ms. Hollett practise psychology while incapacitated?

An additional matter arose throughout the Committee's investigation:

4. Ms. Hollett's level of cooperation with the NSBEP's professional conduct process.

## **KEY POINTS AS RAISED BY THE COMPLAINANT**

Cancelling a pre-paid follow-up meeting to review assessment results with a client. Ms. Hollett advised the client that the follow-up meeting was not necessary, although the client reported they did not understand Ms. Hollett's report nor the diagnosis.

Failure to complete reports in a timely matter – numerous instances and complaints from clients regarding lengthy delays between Ms. Hollett's in-person assessments and completion of the resulting reports.

Frequent last-minute cancellations – for some clients, 2 to 5 consecutive appointments were cancelled. One client, who was reportedly in a crisis state by the 5<sup>th</sup> cancellation, requested a switch to another psychologist within the practice, while another client switched to a different practice.

The Complainant alleged that Ms. Hollett submitted dates and hours to the insurance provider that differed from the dates and hours of appointments.

Failure to properly secure paper files and her laptop computer; failure to return test protocols, client files, and other materials belonging to the Employing Organization.

The Complainant reported that Ms. Hollett generally did not take responsibility for her mistakes and placed blame on others and that staff had to implement a communication plan among the general manager, lead psychologists, and administrative staff.

The Complainant noted that Ms. Hollett's lack of accountability or concern regarding the impact of her choices on her clients and colleagues was the most discouraging element of the complaint. The Complainant stated that each time staff approached Ms. Hollett to address a concern, she denied there was a problem and passed blame onto another staff member.

The Complainant indicated that the 3 reports she reviewed prepared by Ms. Hollett were not at an acceptable standard in that the reports were submitted incomplete, contained factual errors, or included recommendations not sustained by the assessment. The Complainant observed that it appeared that sections of reports were cut and pasted from

other reports. The Complainant expressed concern about Ms. Hollett's lack of interpretation, inaccurate interpretation, and inaccurate recommendations.

Ms. Hollett provided a diagnosis of meeting the DSM-V criteria for Moderately Gifted although there is no "Gifted" diagnosis in the DSM-V.

The Complainant reported that despite her having outlined to Ms. Hollett the limitations in scope of practice of psychologists trained in School Psychology, Ms. Hollett sought cases in which she believed that Ms. Hollett was working outside her area of competency, including severe depression, adults presenting with suicidal ideation, teen depression, and family/custody counselling.

Ms. Hollett reportedly instructed administrative assistants to book clients outside of her area of competency.

The Complainant reported that Ms. Hollett was offered support, feedback, and guidance to address these concerns. She reported that Ms. Hollett denied that there were problems and declined much of the support that was offered. She noted that Ms. Hollett did not always follow up on feedback (e.g., to correct reports) and that at times Ms. Hollett would book consultation time with The Complainant, only to cancel at the last minute.

The Complainant alleged that Ms. Hollett practised psychology while suffering from a physical or psychological incapacity that impaired her ability to practise psychology.

## **AUDIT REPORT**

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Investigation Committee retained a registered psychologist, to review four assessment files completed by Ms. Hollett during her tenure at the Employing Organization. The report found the following:

- Lack of attention to details including missing/omitted information and data
- Errors and miscalculations in scoring/interpreting information
- Test administration errors
- Concerns regarding the thoroughness and/or quality of the assessments themselves (e.g., failing to take important information into account during testing, clarifying reasons for testing or caveats to be considered when reading the results, carelessness in report writing by including incorrect names of people or tests themselves).

## **MS. HOLLETT'S RESPONSE**

Ms. Hollett provided a written response to the original letter of complaint and met with the Investigation Committee. She responded to each of the allegations. She reported that some events were misunderstandings while other events did not occur in the way described. She provided some alternative explanations for some of the situations (e.g., noting that some of the cancellations were made by the clients, not her) and denied practicing outside of her scope of practice. Some additional responses made by Ms. Hollett to specific issues are described in the Discussion section below.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Investigation Committee reviewed all the documentation before it with great care, consideration, and sensitivity.

## 1. Standards of Practice

With respect to Ms. Hollett's practice at the Employing Organization, the Investigation Committee noted that the repeated cancellation of appointments from July 2017 to July 2018, regardless of whether they occurred on short notice or not, may have resulted in harm to clients, as they were not receiving care and/or follow-up when expected. The repeated cancellations over a prolonged period of time appear to demonstrate a lack awareness regarding the impact on clients. Such behavior is not in keeping with the principle of protecting and promoting the well-being of clients.

Further, it seemed to the Committee that Ms. Hollett failed to accept responsibility for the consequences of her actions, as evidenced by her deflection of blame onto fellow psychologists, administrative staff, and clients themselves. During her interview with the Committee, Ms. Hollett accepted some responsibility for cancellations, but also noted that the calendar software may not have accurately captured cancellation data, repeating that other cancellations were initiated by clients. Her statements did not reflect sufficient concern for clients or staff affected by her behaviors.

The Investigation Committee considered the information provided regarding record keeping and confidentiality. There are conflicting reports by each party of the circumstances surrounding these incidents. Ms. Hollett claims a sudden illness requiring her to leave the office while some of her items were left unsecured and she asked administrative staff to secure items. There is a discrepancy between what both parties claim in terms of responsibility

The following ethical and professional standards are relevant to these allegations:

NSBEP's Standards of Professional Conduct, including those related to:

- fulfilling the terms of an agreement with a client (5.3);
- informing a client of the conclusions, opinions, and recommendations issuing from an assessment within a reasonable time (5.4);
- taking responsibility for the maintenance and security of client records if planning to or ceasing practice (7.7);
- making all reasonable efforts to ensure policy is in place that specifies the steps necessary to secure, maintain and make available, on appropriate request, all client records in the event of the registrant's departure from private practice (7.8).

*Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists:*

- collecting, recording, storing, handling, and transferring all private information in a way that attends to the needs for privacy, confidentiality, and security (I.41);
- creating and maintaining records relating to their activities that are sufficient to support continuity and coordination over time and to manage risks (II.21);
- giving reasonable assistance to secure needed psychological services or activities, if personally unable to meet requests for needed psychological services or activities (II.33);

- giving reasonable notice and be reasonably assured that discontinuation will cause no foreseeable material harm to the primary client, before discontinuing services (II.36); and
- honouring all promises and commitments included in any written or verbal agreement, unless serious and unexpected circumstances (e.g., illness) intervene. If such circumstances occur, then the psychologist would make a full and honest explanation to other parties involved (III.17).

A number of examples were raised in the complaint regarding Ms. Hollett acting dishonestly. These allegations could not be substantiated.

## 2. Competence

The Committee noted concern that Ms. Hollett may have practised outside of her self-declared areas of competency. The Committee observed several discrepancies between what Ms. Hollett claimed as her competency areas and the actual clients she saw for treatment while employed at the Employing Organization.

The Investigation Committee noted that Ms. Hollett displayed some difficulty articulating the limits of her competency during her interview with the Committee. She identified “clinical cases” as those which she does not work with, and when asked to provide further clarification as to what was meant by this, she indicated this meant “long-term cases” and that she focused on “brief counseling for minor concerns.” This is not in keeping with the treatment cases she took on at the Employing Organization. Ms. Hollett’s difficulty articulating what a school psychologist can assess and treat when compared to a clinical psychologist also lacked clarity and understanding.

In regard to Ms. Hollett’s awareness and self-knowledge, the Committee noted that it is concerning that she appeared either unaware or unwilling to admit to professional challenges or weaknesses despite these being brought to her attention. An example of this is demonstrated through her history of difficulty completing reports in a timely manner. Further, it was of concern to the Investigation Committee that Ms. Hollett appeared to demonstrate a lack of insight into her need for continued competency in the area of assessment and report writing. Moreover, it appeared that Ms. Hollett failed to respond to advice or suggestions related to areas in need of improvement as identified by her employer.

The following ethical and professional standards are relevant to these allegations:

NSBEP’s Standards of Professional Conduct:

- providing services within the boundaries of their competence (3.1);
- undertaking appropriate training, education and supervision upon changing or expanding their professional practice to a new area or client group (3.2)

*Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists:*

- consulting or referring a client to another appropriate professional if it becomes apparent that the client’s issues or problems are beyond their competence (II.8)
- keeping up to date with knowledge, research methods, techniques, and technologies (II.9)

Ms. Hollett's competency in assessment and report writing was examined thoroughly as part of the Investigation Committee's work. The Committee noted a number of concerns with respect to the accuracy of Ms. Hollett's diagnoses, assessments, and reports. A number of completed assessments prepared by Ms. Hollett contained either scoring or interpretation errors. In one instance, which resulted in an emailed complaint to the Employing Organization, the report took months to complete and contained multiple inaccuracies that were discovered by staff at the child's school. As an example of the type of errors being discussed, Ms. Hollett noted this student's Verbal Comprehension Index was at the 19th percentile when re-examination of the scores revealed the true score to be 5th percentile, a significant difference that may have led to this child not receiving adequate or appropriate support services at home or school. The family also noted this, expressing frustration that their child may not be receiving appropriate services as a result of the poor assessment practices conducted by Ms. Hollett. The Committee's concerns were also supported by the results of the file audit. Taken together, this series of incidents was particularly concerning to the Committee.

### 3. Capacity

There is insufficient information before the Investigation Committee to demonstrate that Ms. Hollett suffered from a psychology or psychological incapacity that impaired her ability to practise psychology.

### 4. Cooperation with NSBEP's professional conduct process

The Committee expressed its concern with respect to Ms. Hollett's delay in responding to the complaint. Pursuant to principle 1.3 of the NSBEP Standards of Practice, registrants have a professional responsibility to promptly comply with requests for information made by the NSBEP or one of its committees. Ms. Hollett's delay hindered the commencement of the investigation of this matter.

The Committee also expressed its concern regarding potential misrepresentations Ms. Hollett made to the Investigation Committee with respect to her treatment of patients outside of her professional scope. A review of her case files showed her clear engagement in treatment with individuals suffering from depression and suicidal ideation or adult clients as old as 37 years of age despite her stating otherwise.

Pursuant to principle III.1 of the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, a psychologist must not knowingly participate in misrepresentation. Further, pursuant to principle III.2, a psychologist must accurately represent their own qualifications (e.g., credentials, education, experience, competence, affiliations).

## **DISPOSITION**

Pursuant to section 35(13) of the *Psychologists Act*, the Investigation Committee has determined there is sufficient evidence that, if proven, would constitute professional misconduct, conduct unbecoming, incompetence, and/or incapacity, and warrants a licencing sanction.

1. The Investigation Committee provides informal **guidance** to Ms. Hollett to:
  - a. demonstrate accountability with respect to any issues or concerns that may arise in the course of her practice;

- b. promptly respond and comply with communications from the NSBEP and its committee with respect to its regulatory processes; and
  - c. employ more careful practices regarding the protection of confidential materials and protocols.
2. With the consent of Ms. Hollett, the Investigation Committee orders the following pursuant to section 35(11)(h), Ms. Hollett is **reprimanded** for:
- a. failing to meet the standards of practice expected of her in providing psychological services, specifically by:
    - i. frequently cancelling appointments, including on a last-minute basis,
    - ii. failing to complete reports in a timely matter; and
    - iii. failing to return a client's file,
  - b. failing to provide competent psychological services, including with respect to:
    - i. providing a diagnosis, Moderately Gifted, that is not a diagnosis in the DSM-V;
    - ii. inaccurate test scoring in assessment reports; and
    - iii. unclear diagnosis of ADHD and no explanation of the diagnosis,
  - c. providing clinical services to clients outside the boundaries of her competence, including with respect to:
    - i. a 37-year-old individual;
    - ii. an individual presenting with grief and OCD; and
    - iii. individuals presenting with depression and/or suicidal thoughts,
  - d. failing to refer clients whose needs were beyond her competence.
3. With the consent of Ms. Hollett, the Investigation Committee orders the following **re-education and training** pursuant to section 35(11)(i):
- a. the Board will appoint a mentor to facilitate Ms. Hollett's remedial re-education and training. The mentor will be a registered psychologist practising in the area of school psychology;
  - b. Ms. Hollett will meet on a monthly basis in person with the mentor. Mentorship will continue for at least a period of one year, at which time the mentor will make a recommendation to terminate or continue mentorship beyond the initial one year based upon whether or not they believe the standards and competence concerns identified above have been adequately addressed. Based upon the mentor's recommendation and a review of the mentor reports, the Board will evaluate whether or

not the identified concerns have been adequately addressed and make a determination regarding terminating or continuing mentorship;

- c. Ms. Hollett will arrange for her mentor to submit monthly reports to the Board providing an update with respect to Ms. Hollett's re-education and training, as well as identifying any areas of concern;
- d. mentorship will focus on the standards and competence concerns identified above. Mentorship meetings should include a review of assessments and reports prepared by Ms. Hollett. Particular focus should be upon the following:
  - i. accuracy in recording raw data and subsequent translation to scaled scores, percentiles, etc.,
  - ii. appropriate interpretation of scores,
  - iii. appropriate and personalized/individual evidence-based recommendations,
  - iv. timeliness of reports, (i.e., no longer than 4-weeks after all raw data has been collected, under ordinary circumstances).
  - v. the rate of cancellation and/or missed appointments during each time period and the reasons for missed and cancelled appointments,
  - vi. appropriate record keeping and confidentiality practices,
  - vii. identification of areas of competency for a school psychologist (with comparison to counselling psychology and clinical psychology in order to fully understand similarities and differences), and
  - viii. review of Ms. Hollett's progress with her Learning Plan.

Although mentorship will focus upon the identified concerns, it does not need to be limited to these areas and can include any other areas of concern Ms. Hollett and/or her mentor deem relevant to her practice. Any cost of mentorship will be covered by Ms. Hollett.

- e. in lieu of a graduate level course, Ms. Hollett will engage in didactic re-education and training specifically related to the competency-based concerns noted above regarding testing and assessment methods and practices. This training may include readings, workshops, course work, and/or written assignments. At least one form or method of didactic re-education should be used monthly (e.g., one workshop, one formal reading exercise, etc.) during mentorship meetings as opportunities to attend formal training sessions may vary over time.
- f. Ms. Hollett must detail her proposed re-education and training noted in the paragraph above in a Learning Plan. The Learning Plan must satisfy two full years of Continuing Competency (CC) requirements. Ms. Hollett must submit the Learning Plan to the Board within four weeks of Ms. Hollett's signing the Consent to Reprimand and Re-education/Training.



The Board's approval will depend upon the Learning Plan's inclusion of sufficient commitments to attending workshop- and/or coursework-based continuing competency credits. The specific workshops and courses need not be specified, but must be undertaken and reported regularly, and be part of her Continuing Competency Plan. Because this is mid-year, both the Learning Plan and Continuing Competency will span three calendar years.

- g. Ms. Hollett will agree to her Continuing Competency Plan being audited for three consecutive years to ensure she is maintaining standards and keeping her professional competencies up to date.
- h. Self-care methods taken throughout the supervisory period to ensure she is managing both personal and professional stressors carefully and with appropriate awareness and regard

The Board and Ms. Hollett may agree to extend, alter, or modify the terms of the re-education and training. Should Ms. Hollett fail to successfully complete the terms of the re-education and training, or should Ms. Hollett violate any of the terms, the Board may pursue further disciplinary action.

The Committee believes that the disposition outlined above reflects its serious concerns with Ms. Hollett's practice and conduct. The Committee believes the public interest is served by reprimanding Ms. Hollett and requiring remedial re-education and training.