

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CREDENTIAL OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
KEISHA MORSINDI : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 1314-160

At its meeting of December 6, 2013, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information it had received from the Camden County Prosecutor's Office and the Cherry Hill Municipal Court regarding Keisha Morsindi. Morsindi pled guilty in October 2013 to Disturbing the Peace, a local ordinance violation, after being charged with Child Abuse for allegedly leaving a four year old child unattended in her car on a hot day for over an hour. Morsindi currently holds a Substitute Credential, which expires in July 2018. Upon review of the above information, at its January 17, 2014 meeting, the Board voted to issue Morsindi an Order to Show Cause.

The Board sent Morsindi the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on January 24, 2014. The Order provided that Morsindi must file an Answer within 30 days. Morsindi filed her Answer on February 7, 2014. In that Answer, Morsindi stated that she made a bad choice in a desperate situation to provide for her two daughters. (Answer, p. 1). Morsindi claimed that when she went in to finish paperwork for a new job, they required her to fill out many forms and told her she could not start that Monday unless she did so. (Answer, p. 1). She stated that she was not a child abuser or a neglectful parent and added that her "track record" proved that since the charges had been dropped and she still had her children. (Answer, p. 1). She added that it was difficult to find a job that coincided with child care hours because she had no one else to help. (Answer, p. 1). Morsindi claimed that substitute teaching was her only source of income and that she loved working with children. (Answer, p. 1).

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on February 11, 2014, the Board sent Morsindi a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Morsindi was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause constituted conduct unbecoming a certificate holder as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board determined to take action against her credential. It also explained that upon review of the charges against her and the

legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if Morsindi's conduct warranted action against her credential. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Morsindi was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Morsindi submitted a Hearing Response on February 21, 2014.

In her Hearing Response, Morsindi stated that she was not convicted of a crime and submitted her criminal record. (Hearing Response, p. 1). In addition to her Hearing Response, Morsindi requested to appear before the Board.

In testimony before the Board, Morsindi reiterated that she made a bad choice out of desperation while trying to support her family. She noted that she was commuting to Delaware and trying to find a job closer to home that was conducive to raising her children. She added that she liked working with children and encouraging them.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Morsindi's conduct and conviction constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. At its meeting of July 15, 2014, the Board considered the allegations in the Order to Show Cause, Morsindi's Answer, Hearing Response with accompanying submissions and her testimony. The Board determined that no material facts related to Morsindi's offense were in dispute since she admitted to the conduct and that she had pled guilty to the ordinance violation. Thus, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(h)*. It is therefore ORDERED that the charges in the Order to Show Cause are deemed admitted for the purpose of this proceeding.

The Board must now determine whether Morsindi's conviction, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against her credential pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. The Board finds that they do.

The Board may revoke or suspend the certification of any certificate holder on the basis of demonstrated inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher or other just cause. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. "Teachers... are professional employees to whom the people have entrusted the care and custody of ... school children. This heavy duty requires a degree of self-restraint and controlled behavior rarely requisite to other types of employment." *Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 *S.L.D.* 302, 321. In this matter,

Morsindi's conduct in leaving a four year old child unattended in a hot car for over an hour is serious and belied by the fact that she was able to plead down her crime to a lesser municipal offense. While the Board may be sympathetic to her difficulties in obtaining employment that is conducive to raising her children alone, it has a greater responsibility to all of the public school children in New Jersey and must examine her behavior in the context of conduct unbecoming a teacher. Given those constraints, the Board believes that the appropriate sanction in this matter is the revocation of Morsindi's credential.

Accordingly, on July 15, 2014, the Board voted to revoke Keisha Morsindi's Substitute Credential. On this 24th day of July 2014 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Morsindi's credential be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Morsindi return her credential to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Licensure, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.

Robert R. Higgins, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing:

Appeals may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38.4.

RRH/MZ/th