

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of:

Michelle Perkins
Respondent.

No. 2012-071

STIPULATED FACTS,
CONCLUSIONS AND ORDER

I. STIPULATION

THIS STIPULATION is entered into under WAC 292-100-090(1) between the Respondent, MICHELLE PERKINS, and Board Staff of the WASHINGTON STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD (Board) through MELANIE DeLEON, Executive Director. The following stipulated facts, conclusions, and agreed order will be binding upon the parties if fully executed, and if accepted by the Board without modification(s), and will not be binding if rejected by the Board, or if the Respondent does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, to the stipulation.

Section 1: PROCEDURAL FACTS

1.1. On November 9, 2012, the Executive Ethics Board (Board) initiated a complaint alleging that Michelle Perkins, Social Worker 3/Investigator, Division of Children's Administration, Department of Social and Health Services may have violated the Ethics in Public Service Act when she used her state issued cell phone for personal benefit. On May 10, 2013, the Board found Reasonable Cause.

1.2. The Board is authorized under RCW 34.05.060 to establish procedures for attempting and executing informal settlement of matters in lieu of more formal proceedings under the Administrative Procedures Act, including adjudicative hearings. The Board has established such procedures under WAC 292-100-090.

1.3. Michelle Perkins understands that if Board staff proves any or all of the alleged violations at a hearing, the Board may impose sanctions, including a civil penalty under RCW 42.52.480(1)(b) of up to \$5,000, or the greater of three times the economic value of anything received or sought in violation of chapter 42.52 RCW, for each violation found. The Board may also order the payment of costs, including reasonable investigative costs, under RCW 42.52.480(1)(c).

1.4. Michelle Perkins recognizes that the evidence available to the Board staff is such that the Board may conclude she violated the Ethics in Public Service Act. Therefore, in the interest of seeking an informal and expeditious resolution of this matter, the parties agree to entry of the stipulated findings of fact, conclusions of law and agreed order set forth below.

1.5. Michelle Perkins waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or her acceptance of any modification(s) proposed by the Board, pursuant to the provisions of WAC 292-100-090(2) which provides in part:

The board has the option of accepting, rejecting, or modifying the proposed stipulation or asking for additional facts to be presented. If the board accepts the stipulation or modifies the stipulation with the agreement of the respondent, the board shall enter an order in conformity with the terms of the stipulation. If the board rejects the stipulation or the respondent does not agree to the board's proposed modifications to the stipulation, the normal process will continue. The proposed stipulation and information obtained during formal settlement discussions shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing.

1.6. If the Board accepts this stipulation, the Board will release and discharge Michelle Perkins from all further ethics proceedings under chapter 42.52 RCW for matters arising out of the facts contained in the complaint in this matter, subject to payment of the full amount of the civil penalty due and owing, any other costs imposed, and compliance with all other terms and conditions of the agreed order. Michelle Perkins in turn agrees to release and discharge the Board, its officers, agents and employees from all claims, damages, and causes of action arising out of this complaint and this stipulation and agreed order.

1.7. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order does not purport to settle any other claims between Michelle Perkins and the Washington State Executive Ethics Board, the State of Washington, or other third party, which may be filed in the future.

1.8. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order is enforceable under RCW 34.05.578 and any other applicable statutes or rules.

1.9. If the Board rejects this stipulation, or if Michelle Perkins does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, this matter will be scheduled for an administrative hearing in front of the Board and Michelle Perkins waives any objection to participation by any Board member at any subsequent hearing to whom this stipulation was presented for approval under WAC 292-100-090(2). Further, Michelle Perkins understands and agrees that this proposed stipulation and information obtained during any formal settlement discussions held between the parties shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing, unless otherwise agreed by the parties.

Section 2: FINDINGS OF FACT

2.1. Ms. Perkins is currently a social worker working for Children's Administration, Department of Social and Health Services as an investigator and was serving in that capacity for all times pertinent to this investigation.

2.2. On November 5, 2012, the Board staff received a complaint alleging that Ms. Perkins was using her state-issued cell phone for her personal benefit. The Executive Ethics Board initiated the investigation into the allegations on November 9, 2012.

2.3. Upon visual review of Ms. Perkins' state issued cell phone records for the past 24 months, five billing statements had evidence of Ms. Perkins' personal use. Those five statements were analyzed and the results are listed below:

■ Billing statement December 27, 2010 through January 26, 2011.

- 89 calls to 509-879-7932. (Ms. Perkins' daughter's phone)
 - 48 incoming, 222 minutes
 - 41 outgoing, 91 minutes
 - 15 of those calls were made from California incurring roaming fees costing \$16.24.
- 22 personal long distance calls.
 - 135 minutes - \$14.82

■ Billing statement January 27 through February 26, 2011.

- 36 calls to 509-879-7932. (Ms. Perkins' daughter's phone)
 - 23 incoming, 64 minutes
 - 13 outgoing, 28 minutes
- 49 personal long distance calls.
 - 229 minutes — \$28.20

■ Billing statement April 27 through May 26 2011.

- 30 calls to 509-879-7932. (Ms. Perkins' daughter's phone)
 - 13 incoming, 20 minutes
 - 17 outgoing, 36 minutes
- 11 personal long distance calls.

- 46 minutes — \$4.60
- Billing statement July 27 through August 2012.
 - 6 calls to 509-879-7932. (Ms. Perkins' daughter's phone)
 - 2 incoming, 64 minutes
 - 4 outgoing, 28 minutes
 - 11 personal long distance calls.
 - 92 minutes, costing \$19.16
 - 30 calls made while on vacation in California.
 - 5—411 calls—\$6.25
 - 1—call Fwd—\$.80
 - 12—Roaming—\$17.98
 - 12—other calls
- Billing statement September 27 through October 26, 2012.
 - 8 calls to 509-879-7932. (Ms. Perkins' daughter's phone)
 - 2 incoming, 5.5 minutes
 - 4 outgoing, 15.5 minutes
 - 33 personal long distance calls.
 - 413.5 minutes, costing \$58.00

2.4. A review of Ms. Perkins Scan phone logs from November 2010 through November 2012 revealed no evidence of personal use.

Section 3: CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

3.1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Michelle Perkins and over the subject matter of this complaint.

3.2. Pursuant to WAC 292-100-090(1), the parties have the authority to resolve this matter under the terms contained herein, subject to Board approval.

3.3. The Ethics in Public Service Act, chapter 42.52 RCW, governs the conduct of state officers and employees. A state employee is restricted from having an interest or engaging in an

activity or transaction where there is a conflict with the performance of official duties. RCW 42.52.020 states:

No state officer or state employee may have an interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in a business or transaction or professional activity, or incur an obligation of any nature, that is in conflict with the proper discharge of the state officer's or state employee's official duties.

3.4. Based on Findings of Fact 2.1 through 2.3, Ms. Perkins received a special privilege by using her state issued cell phone to make personal calls in violation of RCW 42.52.070.

3.5. The Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, prohibits state employees from using state resources for their benefit. RCW 42.52.160(1) states:

No state officer or state employee may employ or use any person, money, or property under the officer's or employee's official control or direction, or in his or her official custody, for the private benefit or gain of the officer, employee, or another.

3.6. Based on Findings of Fact 2.1 through 2.3, Michelle Perkins' activities and use of state resources to make personal phone calls violated RCW 42.52.160, as well as WAC 292-110-010.

3.7. The Board is authorized to impose sanctions for violations to the Ethics Act pursuant to RCW 42.52.360. The Board has set forth criteria in WAC 292-120-030 for imposing sanctions and consideration of any mitigating or aggravating factors.

Section 4: AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING FACTORS

In determining the appropriateness of the civil penalty, the Board reviewed the criteria in WAC 292-120-030. It is a aggravating factor that these types of violations significantly reduce

the public's respect and confidence in state government employees, the violation was were continuing in nature and impaired a function of the Agency.

Section 5: AGREED ORDER

5.1 For violating RCW's 42.52.070 and 42.52.160, Michelle Perkins will pay a civil penalty in the amount of, three thousand dollars (\$3,000). The Board agrees to suspend (\$1,500.00) on the condition that Michelle Perkins complies with all terms and conditions of this Stipulation and Order and commits no further violations of RCW 42.52 for a period of two years from the date this agreement is executed.

5.2 The civil penalty of \$1,500.00 is payable in full, to the State Executive Ethics Board within 45 days after this stipulation is accepted by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

II. CERTIFICATION

I, Michelle Perkins, hereby certify that I have read this Stipulation and Agreed Order in its entirety; that my counsel of record, if any, has fully explained the legal significance and consequence of it; that I fully understand and agree to all of it; and that it may be presented to the Board without my appearance. I knowingly and voluntarily waive my right to a hearing in this matter; and if the Board accepts the Stipulation and Agreed Order, I understand that I will receive a signed copy.

Michelle Perkins 10/29/2013
Michelle Perkins Date
Respondent

Stipulated to and presented by:

Melanie deLeon 11/4/13
Melanie deLeon Date
Executive Director

