

**SUMMARY of the Decision of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee
(the Committee)**
(Information is available about the complaints process [here](#) and about the Committee [here](#))

**Dr. Celeste Jean Thirlwell (CPSO #76629)
(the Respondent)**

INTRODUCTION

The Complainant, legal counsel for a housing cooperative, contacted the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (the College) to express concerns about letters the Respondent wrote on behalf of a former patient.

COMPLAINANT’S CONCERNS

The Complainant is concerned that the Respondent wrote letters of support for the Patient that were not objective and were biased.

COMMITTEE’S DECISION

A Mental Health Panel of the Committee considered this matter at its meeting of July 13, 2021. The Committee required the Respondent to appear before a panel of the Committee to be cautioned in person with respect to accuracy of communications and professionalism, including when providing third party reports. The Committee also required the Respondent to complete a specified continuing remediation and education program (SCERP) consisting of:

- Successful completion of the next available session of the Saegis Clinical Communication Program
- Review and reflection on College policies
- Clinical supervision
- Reassessment.

COMMITTEE’S ANALYSIS

As part of this investigation, the Committee retained an independent Assessor who specializes in psychiatry. The Assessor opined that the care the Respondent provided did not meet the standard of practice of the profession and that the Respondent lacked either knowledge, skill or judgement in recognizing boundaries between her role as a psychiatrist toward a patient, a legal advisor and/or a citizen advocate. The Assessor opined that the Respondent’s clinical practice, behaviour or conduct could expose or is likely to expose patients to harm or injury.

The Respondent acknowledged that the letters she wrote on the Patient's behalf were not appropriate and that she ought not to have relied on subjective information reported to her by the Patient without verification, or at the very least without making clear that she was reporting subjective information only. The Respondent indicated that she no longer writes letters of the general type she wrote on behalf of the Patient.

The Respondent did not respond to the letters the Complainant sent to her in regard to this matter. She also failed to respond promptly to the College's communication about this complaint. Failure to respond to the College's requests for information was an issue in a previous matter in 2019, so the Committee saw a pattern in the Respondent's behaviour.

The Respondent's letters reflected poor judgement and professionalism and a significant lack of appreciation of boundaries; however, the Committee's concerns, particularly in light of the Respondent's history with the College, pertained to more than the writing of third party reports. The investigation into this complaint and the Assessor report identified deficiencies in the Respondent's documentation, record keeping, boundaries with patients and third parties, and her professionalism and communication, including responding to the College.

On this basis, the Committee decided to require the disposition as set out above.