



STATE OF ARIZONA
BOARD OF PSYCHOLOGIST EXAMINERS
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KATIE HOBBS
Governor

HEIDI HERBST PAAKKONEN
Executive Director

Sent USPS Regular & Certified Mail #70212720000061826925
Also sent by email to: [REDACTED]

February 13, 2024

Blake Harding, Ed.D., Ph.D.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

RE: NOTICE OF DENIAL OF APPLICATION FOR TELEHEALTH REGISTRY

Dear Dr. Harding:

At a public meeting held on January 12, 2024, the Arizona Board of Psychologist Examiners ("Board"), considered your application for telehealth registry pursuant to A.R.S. §36-3606 ("Application"). You appeared personally and on your own behalf. Additionally, the Board met again on February 9, 2024, to consider additional information relating to your application. Despite having been properly noticed, you did not appear at that meeting. After having considered all of the evidence, the Board voted to deny your application for telehealth registry.

The factual basis for the denial of your application includes:

1. On November 23, 2023, you submitted an application for Telehealth Registry pursuant to A.R.S. §36-3606.
2. Pursuant to A.R.S. §36-3606, a healthcare provider who is not licensed in this state may provide telehealth services to a person located in this state if the healthcare provider satisfies the statutory requirements set forth in A.R.S. §36-3606. One of those requirements includes providing proof of their current, valid and unrestricted license to practice in another state that is substantially similar to a license issued in this state to a comparable health care provider and that is not subject to any past or pending disciplinary proceedings in any jurisdiction.
3. Additionally, the applicant must submit evidence of professional liability insurance coverage, designate a duly appointed statutory agency for service of process and not open an office in this state, except as part of a multistate provider group.
4. You do not hold a current, valid and unrestricted psychologist license in any other state or U.S. jurisdiction that is substantially similar that would allow you to practice at the independent level in Arizona. Specifically, your **Vermont** license is for an interim telehealth registry. Under that registration, you may not provide in-person services to clients located in Vermont, and the license is predicated on you holding an active, unencumbered license to practice psychology in another U.S. jurisdiction which you do

not hold. Furthermore, this license is summarily suspended by Order of the Vermont Office of Professional Regulation as of February 12, 2024. In **Colorado**, you hold a Temporary Permit as a Psychologist Candidate; this permit is issued to those who are completing postgraduate work. It does not qualify you to practice as a psychologist at the independent level and thus, is not substantially similar to what is required for Arizona's telehealth registry. Similarly, your **Michigan** Doctoral Temporary Educational Psychologist Limited license does not qualify you for the Arizona Telehealth Registry. This educational permit only allows a licensee to engage in the practice of psychology under the supervision of a fully licensed psychologist. Your **Washington** Psychologist Temporary Permit was never issued and is now closed. Your **Washington** Mental Health Counselor Associate License is not comparable or substantially similar in that it does not permit you to practice at the independent level as a psychologist.

5. On one or more of your websites, you represent that you practice under "applicable provisions such as Psypact..." The Board determined that at the time it considered your application for telehealth registration you in fact are not and never have been authorized to practice under Psypact. This is confirmed by Psypact's Executive Director. Your statements to the contrary are false and misleading.
6. Significant evidence was presented to the Board that you maintain one or more residences in Arizona. Specifically, you listed Tucson addresses as your primary residence on your telehealth registration application, your self-query with the National Practitioners Data Bank and documentation relating to your purchase of professional liability insurance. Your website also lists a practice address in Tucson, Az. Additional evidence of your presence in Arizona is that you have three registered entities with the Arizona Corporation Commission: Be Change Partners, LLC (formation date 05/06/2017), Dr. Blake Harding, PLC (formation date 08/01/2022), and Mysa, LLC (formation date 07/31/2020). All three have Tucson, Arizona addresses. In the Articles of Organization for Dr. Blake Harding, PLC, the character of business is listed as, "Health Care and Social Assistance". The telehealth registry applies to providers who do not hold a conventional psychology license in Arizona but do hold an active and comparable license from another jurisdiction.
7. A.R.S. §36-3606 requires an applicant for telehealth registry to provide evidence of professional liability insurance coverage. The Board found your receipt for payment from CPH Insurance inadequate evidence of professional liability coverage to practice as a psychologist as there was no policy provided.
8. With respect to the designation of a duly appointed statutory agent, the Board found inadequate the undated statement from Allison Barta agreeing to serve as statutory agent as evidence of duly-appointed statutory agent. The Arizona Corporation Commission provides a form for statutory agents to complete that demonstrates the agent satisfies all requirements for appointment.
9. The Board also concluded that you violated A.R.S. §32-2084(C)(1) by using the designation of "psychology", "psychological", or "psychologist" or (2) use any combination of words, initial and symbols that leads the public to believe the person is licensed to practice psychology in the State of Arizona. Specifically, you maintain two websites, blakeharding.com and drblakeharding.com. The most recent appears to be drblakeharding.com, in which the following information was captured by Board staff in December of 2023:
 - On the Home page, the main header states, "Dr. Blake Harding / Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychologist." The first paragraph states, "I am Dr. Blake Harding, a child, adolescent and adult psychologist and counselor. I offer therapy, evaluations, coaching and consulting." A more recent version of this statement (accessed on February 9, 2024) now states, "I am Dr. Blake Harding, a child, adolescent and adult *psychotherapist*, counselor, *psychologist* and *psychologist candidate*."

- On the Specialties page, you make several references regarding your practice and being a clinical psychologist, as well as providing psychotherapy.
10. On your psychologytoday.com profile, you list practice addresses in Tucson, Arizona and Seattle, Washington. You also list twenty-one areas of expertise and twenty-five types of therapy you offer.
 11. Pursuant to A.R.S. § 36-3606(A)(4), an applicant for Arizona’s telehealth registry “is not subject to any past or pending disciplinary proceedings in any jurisdiction.”
 12. The Board’s investigation revealed that your application for a Master’s Degree Level Psychologist License was denied by the State of Vermont on March 24, 2022. The application was denied because you had not completed the course of study required for licensure. There is no record to indicate that this decision was appealed.
 13. Additionally, on December 11, 2023, the State of Vermont issued a Notice of Preliminary Denial of your application for Massage Therapist, Bodyworker or Touch Professional. The basis for the preliminary denial was related to the false statements in his application for a Master’s Degree Level Psychologist License in the State of Vermont. A preliminary hearing on this matter was scheduled for February 6, 2024, but was subsequently rescheduled to a later date.
 14. On February 2, 2024, a Request for Summary Suspension of Blake Harding’s Telehealth Registration was filed in the State of Vermont alleging that you falsely attested to holding an active license as a psychologist in another state when you applied for telehealth registration in Vermont. Specifically, you represented that you held a psychologist license from the State of Colorado, when in fact, you held only a temporary permit as a psychologist candidate, which does not allow you to practice psychology without supervision. A hearing on that Request was held on February 9, 2024. This suspension was upheld by Board action on that date and an Order of Summary Suspension was issued on February 12, 2024.
 15. On January 24, 2024, the Board issued you a Cease and Desist which required you to cease and desist from practicing psychology in the State of Arizona or holding yourself out as a psychologist in the State of Arizona until such time you are licensed to do so.
 16. Despite the Board’s Order to cease and desist practicing psychology or holding yourself out as a licensed psychologist you continue to advertise on your website that you are a psychologist and a psychotherapist, and that you provide various psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic treatments and services.
 17. A.R.S. §36-3606(C) provides that a health care provider who fails to comply with the applicable laws and rules of this state is subject to investigation and both non-disciplinary and disciplinary action by the applicable health care provider regulatory board or agency in this state.

Given the foregoing, the Board voted to deny your application for Telehealth Registration based upon your failure to demonstrate that you meet the requirements as set forth in A.R.S. §36-3606 in that you reside in the State of Arizona; (A)(1)(d), failure to submit evidence of proof of professional liability coverage; (A)(1)(e), failure to designate a duly appointed statutory agent; and (A)(4) failure to hold a current, valid and unrestricted license to practice in another state that is substantially similar to a license issued in this state to a comparable health care provider and is not subject to any past or pending disciplinary proceedings in any jurisdiction and failure to provide the health care provider regulatory board within five days after any restriction is placed on the health care provider’s license or any disciplinary action is initiated or imposed.

The Board also found that you violated A.R.S. §36-3606(A)(5) in that you failed to act in full compliance with all applicable laws and rules of this state as it relates to: A.R.S. §32-2071.01(A)(3), specifically, failing to have a professional record that indicates that the applicant has not committed any act or engaged in any conduct that constitutes grounds for disciplinary action against a licensee; A.R.S. §32-2061(16)(c), making or using statements of a character tending to deceive or mislead; A.R.S. §32-2061(16)(j), making a fraudulent or untrue statement to the board or its investigators, staff or consultants; A.R.S. §32-2061(16)(k), violating any federal or state laws or rules that relate to the practice of psychology or to obtaining a license to practice psychology; A.R.S. §32-2061(16)(m), using fraud, misrepresentation or deception to obtain or attempt to obtain a psychology license or to pass or attempt to pass a psychology licensing examination or in assisting another person to do so; A.R.S. §32-2061(16)(n), unprofessional conduct in another jurisdiction that resulted in censure, probation or a civil penalty or in the denial, suspension, restriction or revocation of a certificate or license to practice as a psychologist; A.R.S. §32-2061(16)(x), engaging in false, deceptive or misleading advertising. Additionally, the Board found that you violated A.R.S. §32-2084(B)(1), it is a class 2 misdemeanor for any person to secure a license to practice psychology pursuant to this chapter by fraud or deceit, and of A.R.S. §32-2084(D), it is a class 2 misdemeanor for a person not licensed or not exempt from licensure pursuant to this chapter to use the designation "psychotherapist" or other derivation of the root word "psycho". Additionally, the Board found that you violated A.A.C. R4-26-303, A person shall not use a title that claims a potential or future degree or qualification such as "Ph.D. (Cand)," "Ph.D. (ABD)," "License Eligible," "Candidate for Licensure," or "Board Eligible." The use of a title that claims a potential or future degree or qualification is a violation of A.R.S. § 32-2061 et seq.

NOTICE

Notice of Appealable Agency Action. Right to Hearing on Denial of Application for Re-Licensure

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 41-1092.03, you have the right to appeal the denial of application for licensure by requesting a hearing. To obtain a hearing, you must submit a written request for a hearing to the Arizona Board of Psychologist Examiners, 1740 West Adams St., Suite 3403, Phoenix, Arizona, 85007. Pursuant to A.R.S. §41-1092.03(B), the request for hearing must be received at the Board's office within thirty-five (35) calendar days of the date of this Order. The request must state your name, your address, the action being appealed (denial of licensure), and must contain a concise statement of the reasons for the appeal. The hearing will be held within sixty (60) calendar days after the Board receives your request for hearing (A.R.S. § 41-

1092.05(A)). At the hearing, you will have the burden of proof to demonstrate that you are qualified for re-licensure regarding the matters set forth in this Order of Denial of Application for Renewal of License. The Office of the Attorney General will represent the State of Arizona at the hearing.

Please contact me if you have questions: heidi.paakkonen@psychboard.az.gov or 602-542-3018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heidi Herbst Paakkonen".

Heidi Herbst Paakkonen, MPA
Executive Director

Sent interagency mail to:
Jeanne Galvin, Assistant Attorney General