



ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING COMMISSION OF MISSOURI

STATE BOARD OF REGISTRATION FOR
THE HEALING ARTS,

Petitioner,

v.

RYAN K. PALMER, A.T.,

Respondent.

No. 26-0765

ORDER

We grant the State Board of Registration for the Healing Arts' (Petitioner) motion for emergency suspension. Ryan K. Palmer's (Respondent) license as an athletic trainer is suspended upon personal service of this order and pending the conclusion of this case.

Petitioner shall personally serve Respondent with this order and file proof of service with this Commission.

Procedural Facts

On June 4, 2026, Petitioner filed a complaint and motion for emergency suspension seeking this Commission's determination that probable cause exists to suspend Respondent's license. On June 8, 2026, Petitioner filed the return of service, signed before a notary, that the Service Packet¹ was personally served on June 5, 2026, by leaving the Service Packet with Al Siguenza at 1717-B Rangeline Rd., Joplin, Missouri. This is Respondent's last known business address on file with Petitioner. *See* Complaint and Motion for Emergency Suspension, at Paragraph 4. Also on June 8, Petitioner filed a return of service, signed before a notary, that the

¹ The Service Packet included a copy of the complaint and motion with attached exhibits and our notice of complaint/notice of hearing and motion for emergency suspension and other documents as listed on the return of service.

Service Packet was left on June 5, 2026, at 11738 County Road 160, Carthage, Missouri, but not with a person residing or present therein. This is Respondent's last known home address provided to Petitioner. *Id.*; *see also* Pet. Ex. 1.

We allowed Respondent until 5:00 p.m., June 8, 2026, to file affidavits and certified court records for our consideration, in accordance with Section 334.102.2,² but Respondent did not submit any filing to this Commission.

Findings of Fact for Purposes of this Order

1. At all relevant times, Respondent was licensed by Petitioner as an athletic trainer. Respondent's license was first issued on July 9, 1999. [Ex. 1]
2. At the time of the events described below, Respondent was a sports trainer for Carthage R-9 School District (school district) and employed through Mercy Health, an entity contracted to provide athletic training services to the school district. [Ex. 2 at 6; Ex. 3 at 6]
3. On May 11, 2026, the Jasper County, Missouri, prosecuting attorney filed a criminal complaint in the Circuit Court of Jasper County, Case Number 26AO-CR00258, charging Respondent with two counts of sexual contact with a student on public school property, a class E felony, in violation of Section 566.086, RSMo, by knowingly having sexual contact with Victim 1³ by touching her genitals and breast. [Ex. 2 – Certified Records for Case No. 26AO-CR00258].
4. In the probable cause statement filed with the complaint in Case Number 26AO-CR00258, Detective Trent McMain, with the Carthage Police Department, detailed the following: [Ex. 2 – PC Statement]
 - a. Victim 1 was a student at Carthage High School (high school) and under the age of 18 at the time of the incident.
 - b. Victim 1 was alone with Respondent on a treatment table in the high school training room, when Respondent “placed his hands beneath her clothing and

² Statutory references are to RSMo 2016, unless otherwise indicated.

³ Petitioner's complaint at Paragraph 16 identifies the victim in Case Number 26AO-CR00258 as Victim 1.

undergarments and knowingly touched her breasts and genitals. [Victim 1] stated that the contact was sexual in nature and was not consistent with any legitimate medical diagnosis or treatment.” Pet. Ex. 2 at 6.

- c. Victim 1 did not consent to the contact and felt “she could not resist due to fear” because of Respondent’s size, “her vulnerable position on the treatment table, and her inability to call for help.” *Id.*
- d. Respondent gave Victim 1 a gift and “engaged in grooming-type behavior both prior to and following the incident, further demonstrating his sexual intent and his position of authority and trust” over Victim 1 as a student. *Id.*
- e. Respondent denied the contact was sexual but “admitted that his hand can slip during treatment and acknowledged circumstances consistent with” Victim 1’s account. *Id.*
- f. Respondent “stated he did not believe [Victim 1] was lying about the incident and indicated he did not want her to suffer from this incident.” *Id.*

5. On May 15, 2026, the Jasper County, Missouri, prosecuting attorney filed a criminal complaint in the Circuit Court of Jasper County, Case Number 26AP-CR00641, charging Respondent with two sexual offenses: Count I, sexual abuse in the first degree, a class C felony, in violation of Section 566.100, RSMo, by knowingly touching the vagina of Victim 2,⁴ who was incapable of consent to sexual contact; and Count II, sexual contact with a student on public school property, a class E felony, in violation of Section 566.086, by, as an employee of an entity that contracts with the school district to provide services, knowingly having sexual contact with Victim 2, a student of the school district, by touching her vagina. [Ex. 3 – Certified Records for Case No. 26AP-CR00641]

6. In the probable cause statement filed with the complaint in Case Number 26AP-

⁴ Petitioner’s complaint at Paragraph 22 identifies the victim in Case Number 26AP-CR00641 as Victim 2.

CR00641, Detective McMain detailed the following: [Ex. 3 – PC Statement]

- a. Victim 2 was a student at the high school and under the age of 18 at the time of the incident.
- b. Respondent removed Victim 2 from class under the pretense of providing treatment for a reported back injury. Respondent took Victim 2 to the training room where he was alone with Victim 2.
- c. Respondent touched Victim 2's thighs, "placed his hand underneath her shorts, and touched her private area/vagina." Pet. Ex. 3 at 6.
- d. Respondent's touching of Victim 2 was not consistent with legitimate or necessary medical treatment and was for Respondent's sexual gratification.

7. In both criminal cases, Detective McMain requested the issuance of an arrest warrant because he believed Respondent posed a danger to the community, particularly minor/juvenile students, in that Respondent used his employment-related access to student-athletes to isolate the victims in the training room under the guise or pretense of legitimate medical treatment. Further, the existence of more than one victim demonstrated a pattern of conduct and not an isolated event. [Ex. 2 at 6; Ex. 3 at 6]

Conclusions of Law

We have authority to hear this matter. Sections 334.102 and 334.715, RSMo Supp. 2020. Petitioner alleges in its complaint and motion for emergency suspension that there is cause for emergency suspension of Respondent's license under Section 334.102.1(1), (2), and (8), which provide:

1. The board may apply to the administrative hearing commission for an emergency suspension or restriction of a licensee for the following causes:

(1) Engaging in sexual conduct, as defined in section 566.010, with a patient who is not the licensee's spouse, regardless of whether the patient consented;

(2) Engaging in sexual misconduct with a minor or person the licensee believes to be a minor. **"Sexual misconduct"** means any conduct of a

sexual nature which would be illegal under state or federal law;

* * *

(8) Any conduct for which the board may discipline that constitutes a serious danger to the health, safety, or welfare of a patient or the public.

Pursuant to Section 334.102.3, the standard for emergency suspension is whether probable cause exists that the conduct described in Section 334.102.1(1), (2), and (8) occurred.

For purposes of civil law:

The Missouri Supreme Court has defined probable cause for the institution of a civil action to consist of: (1) the plaintiff's belief in the facts alleged, (2) based on sufficient circumstances to reasonably induce such belief by a person of ordinary prudence in the same situation, plus (3) a reasonable belief that under the facts the claim may be valid under the applicable law.

Holley v. Caulfield, 49 S.W.3d 747, 751 (Mo. App. E.D. 2001) (citations omitted); *see also State ex rel. Police Ret. Sys. of St. Louis v. Mummert*, 875 S.W.2d 553, 555 (Mo. banc 1994) ("probable cause for a civil suit means a reasonable belief in the facts alleged, plus a reasonable belief that the claim may be valid.").

In a recent Missouri Supreme Court case interpreting Section 334.102, the Court held the statute "does not require the 'cause' for emergent suspension to be presently occurring for [Petitioner] to seek an emergency suspension of [Respondent's] license. The only prerequisite is [Petitioner's] belief that [Respondent] has engaged in one of the prohibited activities listed in" Section 334.102.1. *Donaldson v. Mo. State Bd. of Reg'n for the Healing Arts*, 615 S.W.3d 57, 67 (Mo. banc 2020).

The common thread in these authorities is the requirement of a reasonable belief in the facts alleged and a reasonable belief that a claim is valid. We apply this probable-cause standard to determine whether Petitioner's evidence suggests there is cause to issue an emergency suspension of Respondent's license pursuant to Section 334.102.1(1), (2), and (8). Consistent with Section 334.102.2, Petitioner submitted certified court records as well as an affidavit confirming Respondent's licensure and an affidavit authenticating Petitioner's business records.

In accordance with Section 334.102.3, we reviewed the filings and information relating to the motion for emergency suspension. Based on the submissions, we determine that, for the reasons stated below, probable cause exists pursuant to Section 334.102.1 to enter an order emergently suspending Respondent's license. *Donaldson*, 615 S.W.3d at 65; Section 334.102.3.

Subdivision (1) – Sexual Conduct with a Patient

Petitioner alleges cause exists to emergently suspend Respondent's license pursuant to Section 334.102.1(1) because Respondent engaged in sexual conduct with a patient who is not Respondent's spouse, regardless of whether the patient consented.

Mercy Health contracted with the school district to provide athletic training services and employed Respondent as a sports trainer. Respondent provided athletic training services, including treatment, at the high school. Section 334.702(2), RSMo Supp. 2020, defines an athletic trainer, in part, as:

a health care professional who meets the qualifications of section 334.708 and who, upon the direction of a consulting physician licensed under this chapter, promotes health and wellness, provides injury and illness prevention, clinical evaluation and assessment, emergency care, first aid, treatment, or physical rehabilitation of injuries incurred by athletes, and oversees return to performance activity for athletes^[5] in the manner, means, and methods deemed necessary to effect care, rehabilitation, or function, and that are congruent with the athletic trainer's education, training, and competence.

Chapter 334, governing the licensure of athletic trainers and other health care professionals regulated by Petitioner, does not define "patient." When a term is not defined by statute, words used in the statute "are given their plain and ordinary meaning with help, as needed, from the dictionary." *Balloons Over the Rainbow, Inc. v. Dir. of Revenue*, 427 S.W.3d 815, 825 (Mo. banc 2014). "'Patient' is defined as (1) 'a sick individual esp. when awaiting or under the care and treatment of a physician or surgeon'; and (2) 'a client for medical service (as of a physician or dentist).'" *Devitre v. The Orthopedic Ctr. of Saint Louis, LLC*, 349 S.W.3d 327,

⁵ An "athlete" is "any person who engages in exercise, recreation, sport, or other activity requiring physical strength, agility, flexibility, range of motion, speed, or stamina[.]" Section 334.702(1).

333 (Mo. banc 2011), quoting WEBSTER’S THIRD NEW INT’L DICTIONARY (1993) (analyzing the term “patient” for purpose of a medical malpractice action pursuant to Chapter 538, RSMo. In *Crider v. Barnes-Jewish St. Peters Hosp., Inc.*, 363 S.W.3d 127 (Mo. App. E.D. 2012), a medical malpractice action, the court determined that a plaintiff was a patient and required to file a health care provider affidavit certifying the merits of the case based upon the definitions of the terms of a “health care provider” and “health care services.” Relying on the current statutes, a “health care provider” for purposes of Chapter 538 includes any person “that provides health care services under the authority of a license.” Section 538.205(6), RSMo Supp. 2020. “Health care services” are “any services that a health care provider renders to a patient in the ordinary course of the health care provider's profession[.]” Section 538.205(7).

We conclude that because Respondent provided health care services and treatment to student athletes as a licensed-athletic trainer, the student-athlete victims were Respondent’s patients for purposes of Section 334.102.1(1).

Respondent has been charged with criminal sexual offenses under Chapter 566. Section 334.102.1(1) adopts the definition of sexual conduct in Section 566.010, which provides:

(5) “**Sexual conduct**”, sexual intercourse, deviate sexual intercourse or sexual contact;

(6) “**Sexual contact**”, any touching of another person with the genitals or any touching of the genitals or anus of another person, or the breast of a female person, or such touching through the clothing, for the purpose of arousing or gratifying the sexual desire of any person or for the purpose of terrorizing the victim[.]

Section 566.010(5) and (6) (emphasis in original).

Based on the evidence presented, we conclude it is reasonable to believe the facts alleged are true and that the claim against Respondent may be valid. The evidence in the record establishes that, as an athletic trainer at the high school, Respondent provided athletic training and health care services and treatment to the victims as patients. Respondent used his employment-related access to the victims to isolate them in the training room, and, under the

guise of providing treatment, engaged in sexual conduct by touching the breasts of Victim 1 and genitals of both victims. Therefore, we find probable cause for emergency suspension pursuant to Section 334.102.1(1).

Subdivision (2) – Sexual Misconduct with a Minor

Petitioner alleges that Respondent engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor. “‘Sexual misconduct’ means any conduct of a sexual nature which would be illegal under state or federal law.” Section 334.102.1(2) (emphasis omitted).

Certified court records show that Respondent has been charged with four sexual offenses involving two students under the age of 18 who were student athletes: three counts under Section 566.086 and one count under Section 566.100. Although the term “minor” is not defined in Chapter 334, three of Respondent’s four criminal charges are under Section 566.086 for the class E felony of sexual contact with a student. We find guidance regarding who is a minor in Section 566.086(7), which describes that a “school-aged team” includes any group organized for sports activities engaged in by “any child under eighteen years of age.” *See also* Section 573.010(9), RSMo Supp. 2022, defining minor for purposes of pornography and related offenses as a person less than 18 years of age.

The court records establish that Respondent engaged in sexual misconduct with the two student victims when he knowingly touched and had sexual contact with the victims and that both victims were under the age of 18 at the time of the incidents. Respondent’s conduct would be illegal under Missouri law, as evidenced by the fact he has been charged with violating Sections 566.086 and 566.100. Therefore, we find probable cause for an emergency suspension of Respondent’s license under Section 334.102.1(2).

Subdivision (8) – Dangerous Conduct

Petitioner alleges Respondent engaged in conduct that constitutes a serious danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the victims and the public. We find probable cause to believe Respondent engaged in the conduct described in this order. In addition to Respondent’s sexual

contact and sexual misconduct with the victims, Respondent gave Victim 1 a gift and engaged in grooming behavior towards her. Respondent's conduct indicates there is probable cause that Respondent is a serious danger to the victims and public. Accordingly, we find probable cause for an emergency suspension of Respondent's license under Section 334.102.1(8).

Summary

We grant Petitioner's motion for emergency suspension. Respondent's athletic trainer license is suspended immediately upon service of this order and pending the conclusion of this case.⁶

Petitioner shall personally serve Respondent with this order and file proof of service with this Commission.

SO ORDERED on June 9, 2026.


AMY S. WESTERMANN
Commissioner

⁶ Within 45 days of the filing of Respondent's complaint, we must hold a hearing to determine if cause for discipline exists. Section 334.102.4(1). After the hearing, if we find no cause for discipline exists, a decision will be issued with our findings of fact and conclusions of law, and an order terminating the emergency suspension. Section 334.102.4(2). If cause for discipline exists, a decision will be issued, again with findings of fact and conclusions of law, and an order keeping the emergency suspension in place pending a disciplinary hearing by Petitioner. Section 334.102.4(3).