

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CREDENTIAL OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
ABEL ODERANTI : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 0708-204

At its meeting of September 16, 2010, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information received from the Office of Criminal History Review indicating that respondent Abel Oderanti was convicted in August 2010 of Criminal Attempt to Entice, Lure Child by Various Means and Criminal Attempted Aggravated Sexual Assault. As a result of the conviction, Oderanti was disqualified from public school employment pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* Oderanti currently holds a Substitute Credential which expires in July 2011.

Oderanti did not challenge the accuracy of his criminal history record before the Commissioner of Education. Upon review of the above information, the Board voted to issue Oderanti an Order to Show Cause at its meeting of October 28, 2010.

The Board sent Oderanti the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail on November 3, 2010. The Order provided that Oderanti must file an Answer within 30 days. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned. The regular mail copy was not returned. Oderanti did not file a response. Thereafter, on December 15, 2010, the Board sent Oderanti another notice by certified and regular mail providing him an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Oderanti did not respond to the second notice.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.7(e)*, on January 5, 2011, the Board sent Oderanti a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that it appeared that no material facts were in dispute. Thus, Oderanti 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 found just cause to take action against his credential. It also explained that upon review of the charges against him

and the legal arguments tendered in his defense, the Board would determine if his disqualifying offense warranted action against his credential. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Oderanti was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. Neither the certified mail copy nor the regular mail copy was returned. Oderanti did not file a response.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Oderanti's conviction and subsequent disqualification constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder. Since Oderanti failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause or the hearing notice, at its meeting of March 31, 2011, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. The Board determined that no material facts related to Oderanti's offense were in dispute since he never denied that he had been convicted of the offense charged. 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 Oderanti's conviction and resulting disqualification, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against his credential pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9-17.5*. The Board finds that they do.

In enacting the Criminal History Review statute, *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 et seq.* in 1986, the Legislature sought to protect public school pupils from contact with individuals whom it deemed to be a danger to them. Individuals convicted of crimes such as Criminal Attempt to Entice, Lure Child by Various Means and Criminal Attempted Aggravated Sexual Assault fall squarely within this category. This strong legislative policy statement is in accord with the Commissioner's long-standing belief that teachers must serve as role models for their students. "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. Clearly, Oderanti's actions here are not those of a role model.

The strong policy statement on the part of the Legislature set forth in *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1(b)* also offers guidance to the Board as to the appropriate sanction in this matter. An individual whose offense is so great that he or she is barred from service in public schools should not be permitted to retain the certificate that authorizes such service. Nor should a person who has been disqualified from teaching in a public school be permitted to continue to hold himself out as a teacher. Thus, because the Legislature considers Oderanti's offense so significant, the Board believes that the only appropriate sanction in this case is the revocation of Oderanti's credential.

Accordingly, on March 31, 2011, the Board voted to revoke Abel Oderanti's Substitute Credential. On this 12th day of May 2011 the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision and it is therefore ORDERED that the revocation of Abel Oderanti's credential be effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Oderanti return his 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 the provisions of *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-38.4*.