

NOTICE OF SUSPENSION
(Pending Appeal)

Case Nos. 98-6-GA; 98-22-FA

Lisa C. Watkins, P-41053, Pontiac, Michigan, by Attorney Discipline Board Tri-County Hearing Panel #79.

- 1) Suspension - 60 Days;
- 2) Effective February 16, 1999.

Respondent represented a client as conservator of the estate of two minor grandchildren whose parents were deceased. Approximately 10 months later, the client died. Respondent thereafter filed a Petition to Terminate or Modify Conservatorship on behalf of one of her client's daughters. The daughter was appointed as successor conservator of the children's estate. The panel found, by default, that respondent neglected the successor conservatorship and failed to maintain reasonable communication with her client.

Respondent was also retained to probate the estate of her original client. She filed a Petition for Commencement of Proceedings seeking the appointment of another of her client's daughters as personal representative of the decedent estate. Letters of Authority were issued and a bank account was opened for the decedent estate. Respondent requested that her client sign and deliver to her two blank checks on the estate account, and represented that the checks were for the purpose of paying the estate's outstanding bills. The panel found, by default, that respondent neglected the decedent estate; failed to maintain reasonable communication with her client; used the aforementioned checks to misappropriate \$6,798.20 from the estate account; and commingled estate funds with her personal funds.

Respondent's conduct was found to be in violation of MCR 9.104(1)-(4); and Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1(a)-(c); 1.3; 1.4(a); 1.15(a)-(c); 3.2; and 8.4(a)-(c). The panel took into consideration that respondent made restitution to the estate shortly after the grievance was filed, and ordered that she be suspended from the practice of law in Michigan for 60 days.

The Grievance Administrator has filed a petition for review seeking increased discipline. The parties also filed a stipulation modifying the effective date of the suspension to February 16, 1999. Review proceedings will be scheduled forthwith.