



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA LEGAL AID SOCIETY, INC.

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May 5, 2006

Virginia State Bar, Intake Office
707 East Main Street, Suite 1500
Richmond, VA 23219-2800

RE: Wade T. Compton, Esquire; Attorney Disciplinary Inquiry

To Whom It May Concern:

May this serve as a letter of inquiry regarding attorney Wade T. Compton. It is submitted pursuant to Rule 8.3 of the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct. As is described more fully below, it has been reported to me that Mr. Compton has engaged in improper conduct of a sexual nature with multiple female clients.

From October 1, 2002 until his termination on March 24, 2006, Mr. Compton was employed as a full-time, salaried, staff attorney on our Legal Aid staff. As such, he was engaged in the practice of law representing low-income clients. The overwhelming majority of his cases were family law related including divorce, custody, and family violence protective order cases.

Mr. Compton is presently employed by Compton & Compton, 111 West Main Street, P.O. Box 1000, Lebanon, VA 24266; telephone (276) 889-0100.

Below I have summarized the three instances of possible misconduct that have come to my attention:

Client 1: On Wednesday, March 22, 2006 I met with Shirley Forrester, the V-STOP domestic violence victim advocate employed by the Tazewell County Commonwealth Attorney's Office. The day before she had requested an appointment with me to discuss a confidential matter. Ms. Forrester advised me that she had spoken to the mother of a Legal Aid client being represented by Mr. Compton in a family law matter. The mother reported that this past fall, probably in October, Mr. Compton came to her home to pick up the daughter for the stated purpose of visiting a site relevant to the daughter's case. When the daughter returned she reported to her mother that she and Mr. Compton had engaged in oral sex while out together that day.

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Ms. Forrester reported to me that she had later confronted Mr. Compton concerning the possibility that he had engaged in improper conduct with a domestic violence victim, without identifying the name of the victim, and that he had admitted to her that such conduct had occurred. After admitting that he had engaged in the improper conduct he then asked Ms. Forrester to identify the client. When she did so he admitted that sexual conduct, but not intercourse, had occurred with the client.

Mr. Compton and I met in his office on the afternoon of March 22nd. He admitted to me that he indeed had engaged in sexual conduct with Client No. 1. He denied that he and the client had engaged in oral sex, but admitted to "petting". [Client No. 1 is not named in this letter for reasons of confidentiality – but both Ms. Forrester and I identified her when we had our conversations with Mr. Compton in which he admitted sexual conduct with this client.]

When I asked Mr. Compton if there were other clients with whom he had had a sexual relationship during the course of the attorney/client relationship he replied that there had been only one other.

I advised Mr. Compton that his employment with Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society was terminated. He was asked to spend the next two days doing case status memos for each of his client files so that his cases could be transferred to other staff attorneys.

Prior to the end of the day in Friday, March 24th, Mr. Compton called me at my office to discuss several matters concerning his termination from our program. In this conversation he clarified that this additional sexual relationship with a client to which he claimed had occurred prior to his being hired by Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society.

Client 2: On Monday, March 27, 2006, one of our legal assistants was assigned the task of informing each of Mr. Compton's Legal Aid clients that he was no longer with our program and that their case had been assigned to a new attorney. When we called Client No. 2 and advised her that Mr. Compton had left our program she reported to us that Mr. Compton had sexually harassed her while serving as her attorney. She indicated that his advances were uninvited and unwelcome, but she had been afraid to report them to anyone out of fear that she would then have had to complete her case without an attorney.

She related that on one occasion, early 2005 to the best of her recollection, while she and Mr. Compton were in a courthouse conference room awaiting a hearing, he grabbed her from behind and put his hand up under her dress in the area of her genitals.

Additionally she reports that Mr. Compton made many suggestive comments to her and asked to see her pierced navel as a part of his case preparation. On another occasion he

offered to personally pay for childcare expenses for her son so that the two of them could be alone in her apartment while they prepared for her case.

Client 3: ██████████. Ms. ██████████ is a current client of Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society and has given her permission for us to identify her and to disclose this otherwise confidential information. Ms. ██████████ was a Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society client in 2004. Mr. Compton represented her in a family law case that involved multiple court appearances. Ms. ██████████ reports on two occasions when she was at the courthouse alone in a conference room with Mr. Compton waiting to be called for her hearing, that he grabbed her and kissed her; on one occasion bending her back over the conference room table as he felt her breast.

She also reports that Mr. Compton said that he wanted to meet with her alone at her home to prepare for her case and that if she didn't have anyone to take care of her children that he would take her to a motel. Further, she reports that he gave her a "private" phone number and said that he didn't want his wife to know of their relationship. Twice, she reports, Mr. Compton came to her home, but she hid and did not answer the door.

Ms. ██████████ reports that these encounters with Mr. Compton were uninvited and unwelcome, but that she did not report them because she was afraid.

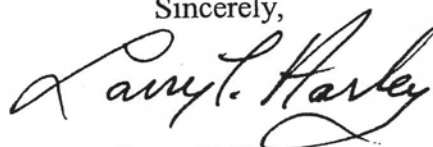
Ms. ██████████'s signed and dated statement is attached.

Contact Information: Contact information for Ms. Forrester and Ms. ██████████ is attached in a separate document.

Conclusion: I take no pleasure in submission of this inquiry. It is alarming, however, that Mr. Compton appears to be preying upon vulnerable female clients during the course of his representation of them. He has admitted to two instances of sexual conduct with clients and two others have thus far been reported to me by the clients themselves. If these allegations are true they raise a substantial question as to Mr. Compton's fitness to practice law. Additionally, Mr. Compton's actions may have damaged the viability of our Legal Aid program as well as our ability to fulfill our mission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,



Larry T. Harley
Executive Director