

SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA

In re Gantt, 305 Ga. 722

827 S.E.2d 683 (2019) · Decided April 29, 2019

SUMMARY

The Georgia Supreme Court accepted Lakeisha Tennille Gantt’s petition for voluntary discipline arising from delays and inadequate communication in an adoption matter. The Court imposed a Review Board Reprimand for violations of Georgia Bar Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Georgia
JURISDICTION	Georgia
DECIDED	April 29, 2019
DISPOSITION	approved
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Respondent attorney petitioned for voluntary discipline, requesting a Review Board Reprimand. The Supreme Court of Georgia accepted the petition and imposed a Review Board Reprimand.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed the record to determine whether the requested voluntary discipline and recommended sanction were appropriate.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published disciplinary opinion
PARTIES	Lakeisha Tennille Gantt v. State Bar of Georgia

TOPICS

adoption remedies family law

PRACTICE AREAS

legal ethics and professional responsibility attorney discipline adoption law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

- Whether the court should accept Gantt's petition for voluntary discipline based on her admitted violations of Georgia Bar Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.
- Whether a Review Board Reprimand was an appropriate sanction for the admitted misconduct.

HOLDINGS

1. The court accepted Gantt's petition for voluntary discipline after reviewing the record and her admissions concerning violations of Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.
2. A Review Board Reprimand was the appropriate sanction for Gantt's negligent failure to act with reasonable diligence and communicate adequately in representing her client.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In acknowledging that she failed to timely perform the necessary work on the adoption, causing a significant delay in the proceedings, and failed to adequately communicate with the client, Gantt admits to violations of Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.” (at 723)

“Having reviewed the record, we agree that a Review Board Reprimand is the appropriate sanction in this matter.” (at 725)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In 2014, a client hired Gantt to handle an adoption matter and paid her more than \$3,700. Although Gantt initially stated that she would complete the paperwork before April 2015, the adoption was not completed until March 2018. During that period, she repeatedly failed to respond appropriately or at all to the client's communications and failed to complete paperwork necessary for interim steps, including work required for a home visit.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Gantt admitted that she delayed an adoption matter, failed to complete necessary work promptly, and failed to communicate adequately with her client. She admitted violations of Georgia Bar Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5. The State Bar recommended acceptance of the petition and imposition of a Review Board Reprimand, which the court adopted.

DISPOSITION

approved

CASES CITED

- In the Matter of Gantt, 302 Ga. 3, 804 S.E.2d 336 (2017)
- In the Matter of Leslie, 300 Ga. 774, 798 S.E.2d 221 (2017)
- In the Matter of Jones, 299 Ga. 736, 791 S.E.2d 774 (2016)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

Per Curiam. **722This disciplinary matter is before the Court on the petition for voluntary discipline filed by respondent Lakeisha Tennille Gantt (State Bar No. 142126). Gantt, who has been a member of the Bar since 2005, admits that, in 2014, a client hired her for representation in

an adoption matter and paid her more than \$3,700. Gantt acknowledges that she initially informed the client that she would complete the adoption paperwork prior to April 2015, but that her failure to promptly complete the necessary work led to the adoption not being completed until March 2018.

Gantt points to numerous separate instances in the intervening period in which she failed to respond to the client's communications in a timely and appropriate manner, failed to respond to the client at all, or failed to complete and submit paperwork related to interim steps in completing the adoption, such as failing to complete the work necessary for a home visit to be completed.

In acknowledging that she failed to timely perform the necessary work on the adoption, causing a significant delay in the proceedings, and failed to adequately communicate with the client, Gantt admits to violations of Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

The maximum sanction for a violation of Rules 1.2 or 1.3 is disbarment, while the maximum sanction for a violation of Rules 1.4 or 1.5 is a public reprimand. In mitigation of discipline, Gantt asserts that she lacked a dishonest or selfish motive, and has in fact repeatedly apologized to the client and offered to refund her fee; that she was, during the relevant period, suffering from personal and emotional difficulties that required treatment and counseling; and that she has made a full and free disclosure, demonstrating a cooperative attitude towards the disciplinary proceedings.

Gantt requests that this Court impose a Review Board Reprimand. The State Bar's response notes, in aggravation, Gantt's substantial experience in the practice of law and her receipt of prior discipline. See *In the Matter of Gantt*, 302 Ga. 3, 804 S.E.2d 336 (2017). Nevertheless, the Bar recommends that this Court accept Gantt's petition and impose a Review Board Reprimand, as such a resolution is appropriate under ABA Standard 4.43, which provides that a reprimand is generally appropriate when a lawyer is negligent and does not act with reasonable diligence in representing a client.

Having reviewed the record, we agree that a Review Board Reprimand is the appropriate sanction in this matter. See *In the Matter of Leslie*, 300 Ga. 774, 798 S.E.2d 221 (2017) (imposing Review Panel Reprimand for violations of Rules 1.3, 1.4, and 3.2 related to delay in attending to client matter and failure to communicate); *In the Matter of Jones*, 299 Ga. 736, 791 S.E.2d 774 (2016) (imposing Review Panel Reprimand for violations of Rules 1.3, 1.4, and 9.3 related to failure to file and misleading client communications).

Accordingly, the Court hereby orders that Gantt receive a Review Board Reprimand in accordance with Bar Rules 4-102 (b) (4) and 4-220 for her violations of Rules 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5. Petition for voluntary discipline accepted. Review Board reprimand. All the Justices concur.