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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES THIRTEEN EMERGENCY SUSPENSION ORDERS**

*– Action taken against licenses of thirteen practitioners –*

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) today announced the Emergency Suspension Orders (ESO) of thirteen practitioners. The ESOs immediately suspend the practitioners' licenses to practice in Florida.

"I remain committed to identifying and investigating people who are illegally practicing medicine or revealing unbecoming conduct," stated State Surgeon General Dr. Frank Farmer. "By using the appropriate disciplinary tools, such as these Emergency Suspension Orders, we can ensure we protect public health."

Over the past week the following orders were issued:

- **Luke Hanson, Registered Nurse**, Riverview. Hanson violated Florida Statutes by being unable to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety to patients by reason of illness or use of alcohol, drugs, narcotics, or chemicals or any other type of material or as a result of any mental or physical condition.
- **Tiffany Richardson, Certified Nursing Assistant**, Avon Park. Richardson violated Florida Statutes by engaging in unprofessional conduct by testing positive for any drugs under Chapter 893 on her drug screen when she did not have a prescription and legitimate medical reason for using such drug.
- **Dara E. Croft, Certified Nursing Assistant**, Live Oak. Croft violated Florida Statutes by entering a plea of nolo contendere on two counts of passing a worthless check under \$150.00, a first degree misdemeanor; plea of guilty in 2009 to one count of petit theft, a second degree misdemeanor and one count of resisting a merchant, a first degree misdemeanor; plea of guilty in 2011 to one count of petit theft (second offense) and plea of guilty in 2011 to two counts of possession of a controlled substance, a third degree felony.
- **Charity Ann Price, Certified Nursing Assistant**, Silver Springs. Price violated Florida Statutes by entering a plea of guilty to one count of fraudulent use of personal identification information, a third degree felony and entering a plea of nolo contendere to one count of smuggling contraband into a detention facility, a third degree felony.
- **Tracy J. Sweat, Certified Nursing Assistant**, East Palatka. Sweat violated Florida Statutes by entering a plea of nolo contendere to one count of possession of cocaine, a third degree felony.
- **Nina Lee Tomlin, Registered Nurse**, Port Charlotte. Tomlin violated Florida Statutes by failing to enter into and complete the inpatient chemical dependency treatment program recommended in two IPN-facilitated evaluations and being unable to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety to patients by reason of alcohol dependence.

- **Steven N. Laslett, Certified Nursing Assistant**, Port S. Lucie. Laslett violated Florida Statutes by entering a plea of nolo contendere to three felony counts of sale or delivery of oxycodone; one felony count of possession of cocaine and one felony count of sale and delivery of cocaine.
- **Melissa Beth Cooper, Licensed Practical Nurse**, Vero Beach. Cooper violated Florida Statutes by being unable to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety to patients by reason of illness or use of alcohol, drugs, narcotics, or chemicals or any other type of material or as a result of a mental or physical condition.
- **Lourdes Eloi St. Cloud, Licensed Practical Nurse**, Coral Springs. St. Cloud violated Florida Statutes by entering a plea of nolo contendere to one third degree felony count of scheme to defraud.
- **Kitty Morlock, Licensed Practical Nurse**, Deland. Morlock violated Florida Statutes by engaging in unprofessional conduct by testing positive for cocaine, a drug under Chapter 893, for which she did not have a prescription and legitimate medical reason for using such drug.
- **Anthony Leonard Gage, Registered Nurse**, Orlando. Gage violated Florida Statutes by failing to comply with the terms in his Intervention Project for Nurses (IPN) monitoring contract, specifically failing to submit to required drug and EtG tests, attend facilitated nurse support group meetings, attend psychiatric appointments and failing to remain in contact with IPN and being unable to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety to patients by reason of alcohol dependence and major depression.
- **Jose Carlos Menendez a/k/a Jose Carlos Menendez Campos, Medical Doctor**, Casselberry. Menendez violated Florida Statutes by entering a plea of guilty to one felony count of conspiracy to traffic in Oxycodone (28 grams or more).
- **Ramiro J. Abaunza, Medical Doctor**, Miami. Abaunza violated Florida Statutes by failing to meet the prevailing standard of care by prescribing inappropriate or excessive quantities of controlled substances to patients, prescribing two immediate-release opioids medications to patients, failing to refer patients to receive consultations with other medical specialists, failing to employ alternative modalities for treatment regarding patients, failing to properly monitor patients, failing to adequately treat a patient regarding elevation of his liver enzymes, failing to treat the hypertensive conditions of patients; failing to obtain adequate patient histories, failing to justify the prescriptions of controlled substances to patients; failing to appropriately monitor patients who were high-risk for drug diversion and drug abuse and failing to conduct periodic reviews of the treatment of a patient; and failing to perform a physical evaluation on a patient prior to prescribing controlled substances.

**View the complete Order listed above on DOH's Online Newsroom at <http://newsroom.doh.state.fl.us/category/healthcare-licensing/>.**

Emergency suspension or restriction orders are not considered final agency action but are imposed as specified by section 456.074, Florida Statutes, for serious violations relating to the commission of crimes, standard of care, drug use, or for student loan defaults. The subject is entitled to a hearing before final action is taken by a regulatory board or by DOH.

To learn more about the Florida Department of Health visit [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us).

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*The mission of the Florida Department of Health and Medical Quality Assurance (MQA) is to protect and promote the health of all residents and visitors in the state through organized state and community efforts,*

*including cooperative agreements with counties. Working in conjunction with 22 boards and six councils, MQA regulates six types of facilities and more than 40 healthcare professions. MQA evaluates the credentials of all applicants for licensure, issues licenses, analyzes and investigates complaints, inspects facilities, assists in prosecuting practice act violations, combats unlicensed activity and provides credential and discipline history about licensees to the public.*