

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)
)
COUNTY OF HUGHES) DIVISION OF THE SECRETARY
) SOUTH DAKOTA DEPT. OF EDUCATION

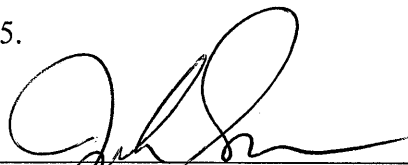
In re: Certification of)
MARIA LOVE) DSE 2025-06
) ORDER SUSPENDING
) EDUCATOR CERTIFICATE

Pursuant to the authority granted to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education by SDCL §§ 13-43-28.1, 13-42-9, and 13-42-15, following the receipt of a Complaint seeking suspension of a certificate from the South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission, and after review of the entire file herein, the Secretary enters the following ORDER:

1. The Secretary affirms and adopts the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law of the Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission (“Commission”). These Findings and Conclusions, attached as Exhibit A, are hereby incorporated into this Order by this reference as if set forth in full.
2. The Commission found clear and convincing evidence Love violated the following provision of the South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers—ARSD 24:08:03:02 (7).
3. Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the teaching certificate of Maria Love, Certificate #73595, issued on June 22, 2022, is hereby **suspended for a period of six (6) months**.
4. Although the Commission recommended Love’s certificate be suspended for one (1) year, the Secretary finds the following mitigating factors that justify a reduction in the suspension period:
 - a. Love took accountability of her actions and admitted to the violation of ARSD 24:08:03:02 (7).
 - b. Prior to the conduct that resulted in the violation of ARSD 24:08:03:02 (7), Love had no prior criminal history.
 - c. Love appears to be taking the necessary steps to address the underlying issues that contributed to the violation of ARSD 24:08:03:02 (7).
 - d. Superintendent Schonebaum’s testimony regarding Love as teacher and the district’s desire to retain her.
5. The Order and Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are a public record pursuant to SDCL § 13-42-17.1.
6. Notification of this revocation is to be placed on the NASDTEC registry and be placed in Love’s permanent certification file within the South Dakota Department of Education.

This constitutes final agency action and may be appealed to circuit court.

Dated this the 30th of July, 2025.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Graves', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Joseph Graves
Secretary
South Dakota Department of Education
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)	SOUTH DAKOTA PROFESSIONAL
SS	TEACHERS PRACTICES AND
COUNTY OF HUGHES)	STANDARDS COMMISSION
Philip Schonebaum, Superintendent, Elk Point-Jefferson School District,	PTPSC 2024-13
Complainant,	FINDINGS OF FACT,
vs.	CONCLUSION OF LAW,
Maria Love,	AND ORDER
Respondent.	

This matter came on for a hearing pursuant to the provisions of SDCL § 13-43-28 before the South Dakota Professional Teachers and Standards Commission. A private hearing was held on May 5, 2025, in MCR1, MacKay Building, 800 Governors Drive, Pierre, South Dakota.

The following members of the South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission ("Commission") were present at the hearing: Joy Robbins, Chair, Nichole Bowman, Caitlyn Graf, Christine Saltsman, and Kaye Wickard. Kendra Mulder-Mews, counsel for the Commission, and Hailey Spaid, Executive Secretary for the Commission, were also present. Complainant, Philip Schonebaum ("Schonebaum"), Superintendent, Elk Point-Jefferson School District was personally present, *pro se*. Respondent, Maria Love, was personally present, *pro se*.

Based upon the evidence presented and the hearing and the documents contained in the official file, the Commission makes the following Findings of Fact:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent, Maria Love ("Love"), is the holder of a valid South Dakota Teacher's Certificate, Number 73595. She was issued this certificate on June 22, 2022, and it is set to expire on July 1, 2027.
2. On or about November 4, 2024, Philip Schonebaum, Superintendent, Elk Point-Jefferson School District ("Schonebaum") filed a Complaint against Love.
3. The Complaint alleged that Love violated the following section(s) of the Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers which provides that in fulfilling their obligation to the public, educators shall act as follows:
 - a. ARSD 24:08:03:02(7) engage in no act that results in a conviction.



4. Love filed a Response to the Complaint on or about November 21, 2024.
5. A due and proper Notice of Hearing was served on the parties setting this hearing for May 5, 2025.
6. A private hearing was held on May 5, 2025.
7. Love admitted to the violation of ARSD 24:08:03:02(7) as alleged in the Complaint.
8. Love was an employee of the Elk-Point Jefferson School District ("District") for over a decade.
9. In April of 2024, Love and her husband got into a verbal altercation at their home. Love had been drinking and was suicidal. She attempted to leave the residence and when her husband blocked her from leaving, she slapped him twice.
10. Love's husband contacted law enforcement and Love was criminally charged with disorderly conduct.
11. As a result of the pending criminal incident, Love had a no contact order with her husband and was prohibited from returning home. Therefore, Love went to reside with her sister who was a therapist.
12. Love went to Cottonwood Tucson, a dual therapy location, to receive help for her drinking and mental health.
13. In August, Love was allowed to return home and she would split her time between there and her sister's residence.
14. On September 30, 2024, Love appeared in Magistrate Court before Judge Sorenson and entered a guilty plea to disorderly conduct with a domestic tag.
15. Love was granted a suspended imposition of sentence.
16. On October 14, 2024, Love knew her name was going to be in the local paper for the September 30th sentencing. With this stress she picked up a drink after maintaining sobriety for five and a half months.
17. Love testified that she was drinking and driving with the intention of committing suicide.
18. On October 14, 2024, Love was arrested for DUI 1st Offense.
19. A Petition was filed by a law enforcement officer with the Union County Circuit Court alleging that Maria was severely mentally ill and a danger to herself based on her actions and statements following the DUI arrest. An Emergency Order for Detention was granted on October 15, 2024.

20. Maria was sent to CORE in Yankton and was then transported to Avera Behavioral Health. While at Avera she was able to see a different doctor and she was put on the correct medication.
21. Love plead guilty to the DUI.
22. As part of her sentencing, she is required to wear a SCRAM bracelet until July of 2025, complete a mental health evaluation and follow the recommendations.
23. Love has completed the mental health evaluation it was recommended that she continue outpatient mental health therapy, and drug and alcohol therapy.
24. Love currently is seeing an IFS therapist, a therapist at Lewis & Clark for drug and alcohol therapy, attends a women's therapy group, attends individual therapy, and has a medical provider she meets with monthly to go over her medications.
25. Schonebaum was Love's superintendent for two years and testified that she was an outstanding employee.
26. Schonebaum testified that Love kept the District informed about her criminal cases and that they wanted to keep her on staff. With a second criminal offense, Schonebaum was advised by legal counsel to make the recommendation for termination at the next board meeting.
27. Schonebaum informed Love that he would be making that recommendation at the next board meeting and Love made the decision to resign.
28. Schonebaum testified before the Commission that between being a principal and a superintendent this is his ninth year in administration. He testified Love is a fantastic teacher and a fantastic person. He indicated that it is apparent to him that Love is getting the help she needs.
29. Schonebaum testified he hopes that the Commission gives Love a second chance in education, and he hopes she can be back in the classroom because she was one of their best.
30. The Commission received several letters from Love's colleagues, administration and former students. These letters portray how wonderful of a teacher Love is and that she is a vital asset to the profession.
31. Love has continuously taken accountability for her actions not only with the Criminal Court, with the District, with her Doctors, but also with this Commission.
32. Love has admitted, and the evidence presented to the Commission and all reasonable inferences therefrom demonstrate that Love violated ARSD 24:08:03:02 (7).

33. Love currently resides with her husband and her husband testified at the hearing regarding the change in his wife's behaviors since the underlying incidents.
34. The Commission, having the opportunity to consider Love's testimony and demeanor at the hearing, finds Love to be a credible witness and finds that she is taking all appropriate steps to address her mental health issues.
35. Love has not consumed any alcohol since her DUI offense.
36. Although a permanent revocation of Love's teaching certificate is not supported by the facts, a suspension for a period of one year is appropriate based upon Love's admitted conduct.
37. Love is addressing her mental health and addiction properly. However, this healing has only been taking place for just shy of a year. Therefore, suspension of her teaching certificate for a year is appropriate.
38. Any findings of fact improperly denoted as a conclusion of law is hereby incorporated as a finding of fact.

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Commission hereby issues the following Conclusions of Law:

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to SDCL §§ 13-43-28, 13-42-28.1, SDCL Ch. 1-26, and the Administrative Rules of South Dakota, Chapters 24:08:03 and 24:08:04:01.
2. The burden of proof in this matter as a contested case hearing is clear and convincing. *In Re: Setliff*, 2002 SD 58, 245 N.W.2d 601, 605.
3. The South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers provides at ARSD 24:08:03:02 that in fulfilling their obligations to the public, educators shall act as follows:
 - (7) engage in no act that results in a conviction.
4. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Love violated ARSD 24:08:03:02(7)
5. Any conclusion of law improperly denoted as a finding of fact is hereby incorporated as a conclusion of law.

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Commission hereby issues the following Order:

ORDER

ORDERED that this matter be referred to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education for proceedings to suspend the teaching certificate of Maria Love for a period of one year as provided for in SDCL § 13-43-28.1. It is further

ORDERED that a copy of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order be provided to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education for placement on the National Association of the State of Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse and that it remain with the Department's permanent certification file. It is further

ORDERED that a copy of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order be sent to the parties herein. It is further

ORDERED that the Department may release the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order to the certificate office of any state in which Respondent holds or applies for a certificate.

Dated this 23rd day of June, 2025.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS PRACTICES
AND STANDARDS COMMISSION

By: Joy Robbins
Joy Robbins, Chair