

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

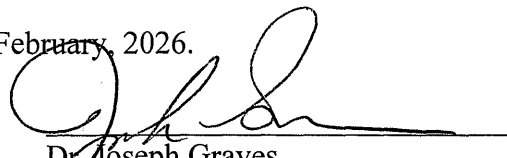
In re: Certification of)
STEPHEN DOLAN) DSE 2026-03
) ORDER REVOKING
) EDUCATOR CERTIFICATE

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 revocation of a certificate from the South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission, and after review of the entire file herein, and further providing an opportunity for all parties to submit additional evidence pursuant to SDCL § 13-43-28.1, 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 Dolan violated the following provision of the South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers—ARSD 24:08:03:01(5), (7), (9), (10); ARSD 24:08:03:02(7) and (8); and ARSD 24:08:03:03(13).
3. Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the teaching certificate of Stephan Dolan, Certificate #77844, issued on March 11, 2020, is hereby **permanently revoked**.
4. The Order and Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are a public record pursuant to SDCL § 13-42-17.1.
5. Notification of this revocation is to be placed on the NASDTEC registry and be placed in Dolan’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 19th day of February, 2026.


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

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)
 SS
COUNTY OF HUGHES)

SOUTH DAKOTA PROFESSIONAL
TEACHERS PRACTICES AND
STANDARDS COMMISSION

JASON THOMAS,
 Complainant,

vs.

STEPHEN DOLAN,
 Respondent.

PTPSC 2025-01

FINDINGS OF FACT,
CONCLUSIONS OF LAW,
AND ORDER

This matter came on for hearing pursuant to the provisions of SDCL § 13-43-29 before the South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission. A public hearing was held on June 30, 2025, in the Library Commons, 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: Chairperson Joy Robbins, Nichole Bowman, Caitlyn Graf, and Christine Saltsman. Kendra Mulder-Mews counsel for the Commission and Hailey Spaid, Executive Secretary of the Commission, were also present. Complainant, Jason Thomas was personally present with attorney, Megan Kruger. The Respondent, Stephen Dolan, failed to appear for the hearing despite proper notice.

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

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent, Stephen Dolan ("Dolan"), is the holder of a valid South Dakota Teacher's Certificate Number 77844. He was issued this certificate on March 11, 2020, and it expired on July 1, 2025.
2. In February of 2025, Jason Thomas filed a complaint against Dolan.
3. The Complaint alleged that Dolan violated the Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers.
4. The Complaint was served on Dolan on or about February 24, 2025
5. On or about March 10, 2025, Dolan filed a Response to the Complaint. The Response stated:



“To Whom It May Concern, Effective immediately, I surrender my teaching certificate. I have no plan on renewing my teaching certificate. 3/4/25. Stephen Dolan”

6. A due and proper Notice of Hearing was served on the parties setting a hearing for June 30, 2025.
7. The Department of Education received a message the morning of the hearing from Dolan in which he advised he had no intention of attending the hearing and would not be contesting the matter.
8. A public hearing was held on June 30, 2025.
9. As a result of Dolan’s failure to appear for the Hearing, the June 30, 2025, hearing was a default hearing.
10. Complainant, Jason Thomas, is an attorney with the Pennington County States Attorney’s Office.
11. Dolan was charged with solicitation of a minor. The Pennington County State’s Attorney Office ultimately offered a reduced charge of unauthorized use of phone due to statutory legal restraints because the victim didn’t meet the statutory framework for solicitation of a minor based on her age.
12. Dolan messaged a sixteen-year-old former student and the babysitter of his four minor children inviting her over to his house to sit on his face. He also told her he wanted to impregnate her, gave her his address, and asked her if she was still with her boyfriend.
13. This was not the first time that Dolan had messaged the victim. Earlier that year he had messaged the victim via Snapchat and asked her to come over to his house and fight naked in front of him. She deleted him from the app.
14. Dolan excused this behavior as being a byproduct of his drinking and sending an accidental text message. He asserts that he meant to message a different individual who is an adult, not the victim.
15. On October 29, 2024, Dolan appeared in Pennington County, Seventh Judicial Circuit Court and entered an Alford plea to Threatening or Harassing Contact, a Class 1 Misdemeanor.
16. The victim’s mother appeared at the sentencing to read a statement that the victim herself had written. The victim stated she hoped Dolan would get some time.
17. Dolan was the victim’s eighth grade history teacher.

18. The victim disclosed that she had a traumatic experience right before starting eighth grade, and upon meeting Dolan was able to take comfort in talking with him as if he was a counselor.
19. Dolan texted her despite knowing about this traumatic event and trusting her to care for his children.
20. Dolan was sentenced to three hundred and sixty days, one hundred and eighty of which were suspended and one-year probationary sentence.
21. Dolan subjected a student to conditions harmful to learning, physical and emotional well-being, health and safety.
22. Dolan exposed a student to unnecessary intimidation and embarrassment.
23. Dolan exploited a student for personal gain.
24. Dolan's actions resulted in a criminal conviction.
25. The evidence presented to the Commission and all reasonable inferences therefrom demonstrate that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:01 (5), (7), (9), (10) and ARSD 24:08:03:02 (7) and (8), and ARSD 24:08:03:03 (13).
26. Any finding 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

27. The Commission has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to SDCL §§ 13-43-28, 13-43-28.1, SDCL CH. 1-26, and the Administrative Rules of South Dakota, Chapters 24:08:03 and 24:08:04:01.
28. 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.
29. The South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers provides at ARSD 24:08:03:01, that in fulfilling their obligations to students, educators shall act as follows:
 - (5) conduct professional business in such a way that they do not expose the students to unnecessary intimidation, embarrassment, or disparagement.
 - (7) maintain professional relationships with students without exploitation of a student for personal gain or advantage.

- (9) maintain professional relationships with students in a manner which is free of vindictiveness, recrimination, and harassment.
 - (10) not engage in or be a party to any sexual activity with students including sexual intercourse, sexual contact, sexual photography, or illicit sexual communication.
30. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(5).
31. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:01(7).
32. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:01 (9).
33. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:01 (10).
34. 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 acts that result in a conviction.
 - (8) exemplify high moral standards by not engaging in or becoming a party to such activities as fraud, embezzlement, deceit, moral turpitude, gross immorality, illegal drugs or use of misleading or false statements.
35. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:02(7).
36. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:02(8).
37. The South Dakota Code of Professional Ethics for Teachers provides at ARSD 24:08:03:03 that in fulfilling their obligations to the profession, educators shall
- (13) perform duties in accordance with local, state, and federal rules and laws.
38. Clear and convincing evidence exists that Dolan violated ARSD 24:08:03:03(13).
39. Any conclusions of law improperly denoted as a Findings 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 referred to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education for proceedings to revoke the teaching certificate of Respondent Stephen Dolan 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 Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse and that it remains 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 the Respondent Stephen Dolan holds or applies for a certificate.

Dated this 11th day of February, 2026.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHER PRACTICES
AND STANDARDS COMMISSION

BY: Joy Robbins
Joy Robbins, Chair