



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
LANSING

MARLON I. BROWN, DPA  
DIRECTOR

April 23, 2024

Nichole VanNiman  
Beacon Specialized Living Services, Inc.  
Suite 110  
890 N. 10th St.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

RE: License #: AM590387872  
Investigation #: 2024A0622019  
Beacon Home At The Cottage

Dear Ms. VanNiman:

Attached is the Special Investigation Report for the above referenced facility. Due to the violations identified in the report, a written corrective action plan is required. The corrective action plan is due 15 days from the date of this letter and must include the following:

- How compliance with each rule will be achieved.
- Who is directly responsible for implementing the corrective action for each violation.
- Specific time frames for each violation as to when the correction will be completed or implemented.
- How continuing compliance will be maintained once compliance is achieved.
- The signature of the responsible party and a date.

If you desire technical assistance in addressing these issues, please feel free to contact me. In any event, the corrective action plan is due within 15 days. Failure to submit an acceptable corrective action plan will result in disciplinary action.

Please review the enclosed documentation for accuracy and contact me with any questions. In the event that I am not available and you need to speak to someone immediately, please contact the local office at (517) 284-9727.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Blasius', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Blasius, Licensing Consultant  
Bureau of Community and Health Systems  
611 W. Ottawa Street  
P.O. Box 30664  
Lansing, MI 48909

enclosure

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
 BUREAU OF COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SYSTEMS  
 SPECIAL INVESTIGATION REPORT  
 THIS REPORT CONTAINS QUOTED PROFANITY**

**I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION**

<b>License #:</b>	AM590387872
<b>Investigation #:</b>	2024A0622019
<b>Complaint Receipt Date:</b>	03/25/2024
<b>Investigation Initiation Date:</b>	03/25/2024
<b>Report Due Date:</b>	05/24/2024
<b>Licensee Name:</b>	Beacon Specialized Living Services, Inc.
<b>Licensee Address:</b>	Suite 110 890 N. 10th St. Kalamazoo, MI 49009
<b>Licensee Telephone #:</b>	(269) 427-8400
<b>Administrator:</b>	Nichole VanNiman
<b>Licensee Designee:</b>	Nichole VanNiman
<b>Name of Facility:</b>	Beacon Home At The Cottage
<b>Facility Address:</b>	1550 E. Colby Road Stanton, MI 48888
<b>Facility Telephone #:</b>	(989) 831-0625
<b>Original Issuance Date:</b>	01/30/2018
<b>License Status:</b>	REGULAR
<b>Effective Date:</b>	07/30/2022
<b>Expiration Date:</b>	07/29/2024
<b>Capacity:</b>	12
<b>Program Type:</b>	DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED MENTALLY ILL

## II. ALLEGATION(S)

	<b>Violation Established?</b>
Staff Nathan Combs was driving unsafe with residents in the car while on an outing.	Yes

## III. METHODOLOGY

03/25/2024	Special Investigation Intake 2024A0622019
03/25/2024	Special Investigation Initiated - Telephone
03/27/2024	Inspection Completed-BCAL Sub. Compliance. Interview with five residents, DCW Wernette, DCW Combs and Manager, Cheryl Shook. Documentation received.
04/22/2024	Exit Conference with administrator Suzanne Hunter.

**ALLEGATION: Staff Nathan was driving unsafe with residents in the car while on an outing.**

### **INVESTIGATION:**

On 03/25/2024, I received this complaint through the Bureau of Community and Health Systems online complaint system. According to the complaint, it was reported that two direct care workers (DCWs), Nathan Combs and Kennedy Wernette, took eight residents out in the community to go shopping. DCW Nathan Combs was driving, and it was reported that he was fishtailing the van, almost hit a curb and sign, was passing another car, and remained in the opposite lane way too long and said the following when another car did not see the van when backing up “fucking bitch, she shouldn't be fucking driving.”

On 03/25/2024, I interviewed Complainant via phone. The allegations were confirmed by Complainant, and she reported that she did not have any further information at that time.

On 03/27/2024, I completed an unannounced onsite investigation to Beacon Home at the Cottage. I interviewed manager, Cheryl Shook in person. She reported that she heard about the driving incident when the residents returned from their outing and Resident A came into her office to tell her about the trip and his concerns. Resident A stated DCW Combs' driving made him uncomfortable. Resident A described to Ms. Shook that DCW Combs was passing a car and stayed in the wrong lane way too long and another car was coming. Resident A also stated that DCW Combs stated the following: “that fucking bitch, doesn't deserve a fucking license” when a car almost hit the van. Ms. Shook also reported DCW Kennedy

Wernette also came into her office the same day expressing her concerns regarding DCW Combs' driving and explained the same concerns that Resident A shared. Ms. Shook reported direct care staff drive residents at least weekly, and the van can be difficult to drive if it's windy. Ms. Shook reported that she has not had any concerns with DCW Combs using substances and she did not suspect that DCW Combs was under the influence.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed DCW Kennedy Wernette in person. DCW Wernette stated that it was a little windy on the day of the outing, but she thought DCW Combs was fishtailing the van on purpose. She stated that while he was driving, he almost hit a curb and sign. DCW Wernette reported that on the way home, DCW Combs was passing a vehicle and he stayed on the other side of the road after he passed the car for about 45 seconds to a 1 minute. DCW Wernette reported that she told him to get back over, and she also heard a resident say something. She also stated that while they were in a parking lot, another car was backing up and didn't see the van and almost hit them. DCW Wernette reported that DCW Combs said the following: "This fucking bitch, shouldn't be fucking driving." She explained that he said it loud enough for some of the residents in the first row to hear him, but some of the residents were wearing headphones. DCW Wernette reported that she has rode with DCW Combs once or twice and never had any previous concerns.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed Resident A via phone, as he was not at the facility at the time of the unannounced onsite investigation. Resident A described the outing with DCW Combs as nerve racking. He stated that DCW Combs was on the wrong side of the road after passing someone and he heard another resident state: "get on the right side of the road, what the fuck?" Resident A reported that he was sitting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> row, and he felt it was the "most deadly ride, I have ever taken." Resident A described DCW combs as "on edge and having a rough day." Resident A also stated that he heard DCW Combs swearing a lot during the drive.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed Resident B in person. He explained that DCW Combs passed an elderly lady, and he stayed in the other lane too long. While in the other lane, Resident B reported that another car was coming, and he almost got them into a head on collision. Resident B reported DCW Combs kept saying that "I'm used to driving big vehicles." Resident B reported that he has rode with DCW Combs at least 10 times and has never had any major concerns before. Resident B reported no other concerns during their outing.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed Resident C in person. He stated that he had his headphones on for most of the drive. He explained that he was sitting in the second row in the van. Resident C explained that DCW Combs did drive in the wrong lane for about 45 seconds after passing the car. Resident C stated that a car was coming in the distance, and he felt "very nervous." He explained that he never said anything and did not hear anyone else say anything since he had his headphones on. Resident C explained that he has rode with DCW Combs many times and has not had any concerns before.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed Resident D in person. He reported that DCW Combs seemed very distracted that day and he called him an "idiot." Resident D stated DCW Combs was passing a car and he stayed in the wrong lane for 30 seconds too long. Resident D reported that he did say, "What's going on here?" Resident D explained that his heart was racing. He explained that he has rode with DCW Combs many times, but after today he does not feel that he should be driving.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed Resident E in person. He reported that DCW Combs reported that he was used to driving bigger cars with a trailer. Resident E reported DCW Combs was passing an "old lady" and stayed on the wrong side of the road too long. Resident E explained that everyone in the car yelled "Nate get over." Resident E also explained that when they were attempting to back up in a parking lot, he heard DCW Combs state: "You can see this damn thing moving." Resident A explained that he has rode with DCW Combs many times before but has not had many major concerns on previous ride.

On 03/27/2024, I interviewed DCW Nathan Combs via phone. He reported that he has worked at the AFC for 3.5 years and mainly works at the Cottage. He stated that he does drive at least once a week, sometimes twice a week. The home usually has a shopping day once a week. DCW Combs explained that he was driving their big van, that seats 15 people. DCW Combs explained that it was windy that day, but the roads were dry. He also stated that the van does pull some and you need to keep moving the steering wheel, which could have felt as if he was fishtailing the van. DCW Combs reported that he does not recall being close to hitting a curb or sign. DCW Combs explained that his co-worker, DCW Wernette did not want to drive, therefore he ended up driving. He explained he was fine with driving because he is used to driving heavy equipment. DCW Combs reported that he was in the Walmart parking lot and another car backed up close to the company van, and he stated the following: "what the hell." DCW Combs stated that he did pass another car on the way home. He explained that he let his co-worker know he was going to pass the car because they were going 45mph. DCW Combs reported that he could have stayed in the opposite lane too long, but the music was loud. He also stated that his co-worker told him it was okay to get back over, but he may have waited a few more seconds. DCW Combs explained that a truck was coming, but there was no risk of hitting the truck.

On 3/28/2024, I received documentation from Beacon Home at the Cottage. A valid driver's license was received for Nathan Combs. I confirmed that a valid Michigan Workforce Background Check was also on file for Nathan Combs. Beacon Home at the Cottage also has employees complete a driving test for driving a passenger van. A completed driving test was on file for Nathan Combs and was dated 11/27/2020.

<b>APPLICABLE RULE</b>	
<b>R 400.14304</b>	<b>Resident rights; licensee responsibilities.</b>
	<p>(1) Upon a resident's admission to the home, a licensee shall inform a resident or the resident's designated representative of, explain to the resident or the resident's designated representative, and provide to the resident or the resident's designated representative, a copy of all of the following resident rights:</p> <p>(o) The right to be treated with consideration and respect, with due recognition of personal dignity, individuality, and the need for privacy.</p> <p>(2) A licensee shall respect and safeguard the resident's rights specified in subrule (1) of this rule.</p>
<b>ANALYSIS:</b>	After interviewing five residents, two direct care workers and one manager, it was determined residents were not treated with dignity and respect during a recent outing while DCW Nathan Combs was driving erratically and swearing in the presence of residents.
<b>CONCLUSION:</b>	<b>VIOLATION ESTABLISHED</b>

#### IV. RECOMMENDATION

Contingent upon receipt of an acceptable corrective action plan, I recommend that the status of the license remains unchanged.

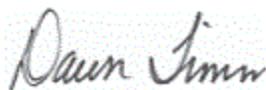


04/22/2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda Blasius  
Licensing Consultant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved By:



04/23/2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dawn N. Timm  
Area Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date