

IN RE: STEVEN DENNIS O'CONNELL

NO. BD-2017-032

S.J.C. Judgment of Disbarment entered by Justice Lenk on February 28, 2019.¹

On the respondent's default, he was disbarred following a felony criminal conviction.

SUMMARY²

The respondent Steven Dennis O'Connell was admitted to practice in Massachusetts on December 22, 1987.

On September 29, 2016, the respondent pleaded guilty in the Hingham District Court to four counts of possession of child pornography, in violation of G.L. c. 272, § 29C, a felony. The respondent was sentenced to eighteen months in the house of correction, suspended for three years on various probationary terms.

The respondent's conviction was based on the following facts. On March 8, 2009, the respondent brought his computer to a computer service for repairs. During the repair process, the technician identified several images of what he suspected was child pornography, and contacted the Hingham Police Department. The police obtained a search warrant and conducted a forensic analysis that showed that the respondent created and therefore possessed child pornography movies on four dates between September 2, 2008 and January 15, 2009. In each of the movies there were images of persons appearing to be under the age of eighteen engaged in acts of sexual conduct involving the sex organs of the child and the sex organs of another person. The respondent reasonably should have known that the person in the images was under age eighteen, and the respondent knew of the content and nature of the movies and images.

On April 23, 2018, bar counsel filed with the Board of Bar Overseers a petition for discipline based upon the respondent's conviction. The respondent failed to respond and was defaulted. On July 9, 2018, the board voted to recommend that the respondent be disbarred, retroactive to May 2, 2017, the date the respondent was temporarily suspended pending further disciplinary proceedings. The parties waived hearing before the Court and assented to disbarment as recommended by the board. On February 28, 2019, the Supreme Judicial Court for Suffolk County (Lenk, J.) so ordered.

¹ The complete order of the Court is available by contacting the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court for Suffolk County.

² Compiled by the Board of Bar Overseers based on the record filed with the Supreme Judicial Court.