

Circuit Court for Montgomery County
Case No. C-15-CV-24-004635

UNREPORTED

IN THE APPELLATE COURT

OF MARYLAND

No. 337

September Term, 2025

MARK L. HESSEL

v.

LINDSLEY WILLIAMS, ET AL.

Graeff,
Berger,
Kenney, James A., III
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

PER CURIAM

Filed: January 14, 2026

*This is a per curiam opinion. Under Rule 1-104, the opinion is not precedent within the rule of stare decisis, nor may it be cited as persuasive authority.

— Unreported Opinion —

Mark L. Hessel, appellant, appeals from the denial, by the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, of a “Motion to Vacate Order of Default” (hereinafter “motion to vacate”) in favor of Lindsley Williams and Linda Dodd-Major, appellees, and the denials of Mr. Hessel’s requests for reconsideration of the denial of the motion to vacate. For the reasons that follow, we shall affirm the judgment of the circuit court.

On August 23, 2024, appellees filed against Mr. Hessel a complaint alleging legal malpractice. On September 18, 2024, Mr. Hessel was served with process. On October 21, 2024, appellees filed a request for order of default. On November 6, 2024, the court declared Mr. Hessel to be in default and ordered that a hearing be scheduled on the pending default judgment.

On December 2, 2024, Mr. Hessel filed an answer to the complaint. Mr. Hessel also filed the motion to vacate, in which he contended, in pertinent part, that he “did not file a timely answer to the complaint due to personal matters that interfered with his ability to complete tasks in a timely manner.” On December 16, 2024, the court denied the motion to vacate.

On March 14, 2025, the parties appeared before the court for a “hearing to assess damages.” Mr. Hessel moved for the court “to reconsider its [decision] not to vacate the order of default.” The court denied the motion, stating: “You didn’t comply with the rules. There was no – saying that there were personal reasons is not sufficient grounds to vacate.” The court further stated: “[W]hat I concluded is that in order to say that the reasons for the failure to plead needs to be something more than personal matters interfered with your

ability to complete tasks in a timely manner. I think that falls far short of your burden. That's why the motion was denied. That's why the motion for reconsideration is denied."

The court subsequently received evidence as to damages. Following the close of the evidence, Mr. Hessel renewed the motion to reconsider, stating: "I acknowledge that I didn't file an answer in a timely manner. Okay. I've had emotional problems that I sought therapy for. It was the basis of me getting disbarred. And that tells you something about the reality of that problem I have." The court again denied the motion. The court subsequently entered judgment in favor of appellees and against Mr. Hessel in the amount of \$172,368.47.

Mr. Hessel contends that for numerous reasons, the court abused its discretion in denying the motion to vacate and requests for reconsideration. We disagree. Rule 2-613(d) states that a motion to vacate an order of default "shall state the reasons for the failure to plead." Here, Mr. Hessel summarily described the reasons for his failure to plead as "personal matters." This description is insufficient to satisfy Rule 2-613(d). We further note that in requesting reconsideration of the denial of the motion to vacate, Mr. Hessel failed to explain how his "emotional problems" or related "therapy" prevented him from filing his answer to appellees' complaint in a timely manner. In light of these circumstances, we conclude that the court did not abuse its discretion in denying the motion to vacate and requests for reconsideration.

**JUDGMENT OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY
AFFIRMED. COSTS TO BE PAID BY
APPELLANT.**