



Understanding Professional Boundaries

A simple definition

Professional boundaries are limits which protect a worker's professional power and their client's vulnerability.

Successful and ethical working relationships are based on a clear understanding of what the workers' role is – and just as importantly – what their role isn't.

Putting Professional Boundaries principles into practice

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| <p>Why do we need Professional Boundaries?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces “burn out” of support workers • Prevents the client becoming dependant on a particular support worker • Protects the client from potential harm – intentional and unintentional • Ensures we maintain our ethical standards • Increasing or unreasonable demands and expectations from the client or family • Difficulty setting limits and dealing with behaviour • Distress when relationships break down • Grief and loss for clients when workers leave |
| <p>Essential Professional Boundaries</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your family/home life private • Use professional language at all times • Do not pay for your client or let them pay for you • Whilst on shift do not attend to any personal business • Empower clients, don't make yourself irreplaceable • Do not accept gifts or buy gifts for your clients |
| <p>Signs of Professional Boundaries being over stepped</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that you are the only one who “understands” the client • Accepting money or expensive gifts from clients or their family • Asking clients or their families for “favours” with shift arrangements • Noticing feelings of friendship or sexual attraction towards clients or their family • Having clients or family members refer to you as “a friend” or a “part of the family” • Disclosing your own personal information with your clients or their family. • Visiting clients outside of your shift • Taking clients to your home or introducing clients to your family members or friends. • Staying at the clients home after your shift has finished |
| <p>Tips for maintaining boundaries</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not seek out a personal relationship with your clients, nor with their family, friends or support network • Do not have a sexual relationship with clients, their family, friends or people in their support network • Do not introduce clients to your own family, friends or support network e.g. don't invite people home for family gatherings etc. Work and home should be kept separate • Do not socialise with clients, their family or friends outside of work hours. Your work finishes at the end of your shift • Turn up on time for your shift. Don't arrive late and leave early • Do not smoke or drink alcohol in front of clients • Do not borrow, ask for or lend money to clients • Do not talk about your personal financial or other life problems with clients • Do not ask for money, gifts or special favours from your clients • Do not allow clients to drive your own/work motor vehicle • Respect confidentiality and privacy • Do not disclose personal information • Do not criticize, complain about or discuss issues relating to other workers, staff or your employer with your clients or their family • Do not give advice outside of your skills and expertise |

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