



Justice Center for the
Protection of People
with Special Needs

Professional Boundaries in a Care Setting

Establishing a Culture to Reduce Risk and Improve the
Quality of Care

Association for Community Living Management Symposium
May 7, 2019

Agenda

- Overview of Justice Center
- What are professional boundaries?
- Why are boundaries important?
- Role of staff providing direct services
- Challenges to maintaining effective boundaries
- Zone of Helpfulness
- How to develop & maintain boundaries to stay in the Zone of Helpfulness



Justice Center Vision

People with special needs shall be protected from abuse, neglect and mistreatment. This will be accomplished by assuring that the state maintains the nation's highest standards of health, safety and dignity; and by supporting the dedicated men and women who provide services.



State Oversight Agencies



Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

Office of Mental Health

Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

Office of Children and Family Services

Department of Health

State Education Department



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Abuse Prevention Work

- Abuse prevention practices at the Justice Center
- Identifying abuse prevention needs
- Justice Center web page
- Developing resources for stakeholders



Spotlight on Prevention



Agency Self-Assessments

These tools support program efforts to develop a comprehensive approach to prevent abuse and neglect.



Best Practices for an Abuse-free Environment

Strategies for creating abuse-free environments



Code of Conduct

Ethical guidelines for caring for individuals receiving services

Found at: www.justicecenter.ny.gov/prevent-abuse



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TOOLKITS

Spotlight on Prevention

The information contained in the Justice Center's Spotlight on prevention toolkits is offered as a resource for provider agencies and staff. These resources are intended to be used as a guide that may be modified as needed to apply to particular types of programs and specific age groups of vulnerable people.

Dangers of Being
Left Unattended in
Vehicles

Dangers of
Caregiver Fatigue

Maintaining
Professional
Boundaries

Reducing the Use
of Restraints

Found at: www.justicecenter.ny.gov/prevent-abuse



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Professional Boundaries



Boundaries

- Separation between two things
- Border
- Division
- Limit



What Are Professional Boundaries?

- Internal and external limits set by care providers and guided by agency standards and professional ethics, to maintain a safe and therapeutic environment.
- Professional boundaries help to provide a clear understanding of parameters of staffs role, responsibilities and relationship with people in care and with each other

Physical Boundaries

- Touch
- Personal property
- Privacy
- Personal space
- What is your agency policy?



Interpersonal Boundaries

- Topics of conversation
- Time in conversation
- Body language
- Dress code
- Social media
- What is your agency policy?



Emotional Boundaries

- Feelings and thoughts
- Staff personal triggers
 - Aggression
 - Sexual behavior
 - Power struggles
 - Disrespect
- Agency policy, resources, support?



Role of Staff Providing Direct Services

- Do staff know their role?
- Where are there gray areas?
- How are staff supported to navigate gray areas?



Continuum of Professional Behavior



Under-involved

Disconnected from others

Under-reacts to others and situations

Lacks warmth, compassion, interest in others

Carelessly breaches confidentiality

Unaware of persons needs, does not seek information when needed

Under-involved

Not present or responsive when needed

Doesn't provide needed support, supervision or assistance

Attends to personal matters, neglects responsibility to others

Lack of awareness of persons' safety and well-being

Over-involved

Undermines independence by doing 'for', instead of teaching supporting

Over extends self, risking quality and safety

Keeps secrets and tells secrets

Over protective and smothering, or overly-permissive

Over-involved

Over-involved with others

Over-reacts to others and situations

Disregards persons needs based on own feelings

Purposefully breaches confidentiality, disregards the right to privacy

Overly focused on one person, sexual overtones, engagement

Zone of Helpfulness

Connected to others

Reasonable reaction to others and situations

Shows compassion, warmth, interest in others

Aware of and upholds confidentiality requirements

Stays aware of persons needs, seeks information as needed



Zone of Helpfulness

Provides flexible support, promotes independence

Works as a team to ensure needs are met

Communicates clearly, fully & timely to ensure persons needs are met

Invested and aware of persons' safety and well-being

Am I in the Zone of Helpfulness?

- Did I involve the person in decisions and provide choices to the degree possible?
- Were my actions in the person's best interests?
- Did my actions improve the quality of care?
- Did I consult with supervisor and other team members as needed?



Importance of Professional Boundaries



Why Are Boundaries Important?

- Maintain safety of people in care and staff
- Maintain a therapeutic environment for personal growth and development
 - Role modeling, corrective experiences, empowerment, structure and learning
- Staff job satisfaction and career development



Challenges to Maintaining Boundaries

- Vicarious trauma/trauma triggers
- Inadequate training
- Inadequate supervision and peer support
- Unclear guidance and policies
- Inadequate physical environment
- Agency culture



Risks of Unprofessional Boundaries

- Abuse, neglect and/or mistreatment of people in care
- Damages the therapeutic relationship
- Traumatizes, re-traumatizes, causes relapse
- Removes opportunity to learn and develop healthy boundaries with others
- Legal consequences for staff



Sexual Abuse Engagement Process

- Victim selection
- Develop trust
- Gain access
- Topics
- Touch



How to Support Use of Professional Boundaries

- Training/coaching staff on boundaries
- Provide clear description of staff role & responsibilities
- Ensure staff understand individual treatment plans, needs and triggers
- Train and refresh staff on the crisis management plan
- Spend time in the milieu to observe and understand boundary needs and issues

Case Scenarios



Scenario 1

- Mike is a part-time maintenance worker at a community living program who volunteered to paint one apartment interior.
- Mike knows the residents living in this apartment, including Jenn.
- While painting Mike often starts conversations with Jenn - about her day, her interests etc.
- Mike knows Jenn likes coffee and brings her coffee one day. As he gives it to her, he tells her he likes her new blouse and asks her if she has a boyfriend.

Scenario 2

- Esther is a new registered nurse working at an outpatient mental health clinic. She's worked in this field for 40 years in her country of origin and recently moved to the U.S.
- Mark recently started coming the clinic for services and met Esther, who greeted him with "Good morning, baby" and a hug. Mark fel uncomfortable but he kept quiet.
- When leaving the clinic, he ran into Esther again and she kissed him on the cheek and said, "Buenos noches, mi amor"

Scenario 3

- Daniel is a 24 year old male who lives in a supportive apartment.
- Daniel remembers Nicole, a new residence counselor, from college and knows they are friends on Facebook.
- Daniel mentions to Nicole that he saw on her Facebook page that she attended her friend's party the previous weekend.
- Daniel commented that he could tell she was drunk in the picture and that she looked “hot” in the dress she was wearing.



Scenario 4

- Jane is a case manager who supports Ethan, an elderly man receiving residential services
- Jane visits Ethan, but is preoccupied about her teenage son.
- Ethan says he hasn't been feeling well and has been questioning why he's even alive anymore since his family never comes or calls.
- Jane replies, 'I've got the same problem with my son. He won't give me the time of day anymore, and who knows what he's up to! Consider yourself lucky you don't have a teenager to deal with.'



Justice Center Spotlight on Prevention web-page

Professional Boundaries Resources

Spotlight on Prevention

Partnering to Protect People with Special Needs

Professional Boundaries:

The NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs (Justice Center) is committed to supporting and protecting the health, safety and dignity of people with special needs and disabilities. This Spotlight on professional boundaries provides information about professional boundaries and tools to support maintaining professional boundaries in the provision of care.

Establishing and maintaining professional boundaries is fundamental to a safe and therapeutic environment for people receiving services.¹ While boundary crossing is clear when acts of an aggressive, sexual or verbally abusive nature occur, other behaviors that may be perceived as "helpful" and "supportive" may also cross professional boundaries and contradict the goals of the care environment.

Relationships between staff and people receiving services are complex. Staff are often relied upon to assist people in their care in many personal areas of their life including activities of daily living, personal development, learning life skills and medical care. Staff may also have access to sensitive and personal information about people receiving services. Training on professional boundaries and ongoing coaching and support can help staff understand the vulnerabilities of people in care, and to effectively manage their care giving relationships for the good of both parties.²

Establishing agency culture and conditions that promote appropriate workplace boundaries reduces the risk of mistreatment and improves quality of care. Maintaining professional relationships requires being person-centered, self-aware and following professional ethical standards.

The information provided in this toolkit will help educate people receiving services, self-advocates, direct care providers, agency administrators, friends and family members on the importance of professional boundaries in the provision of care.

Continuum of Professional Behavior:

Staff interactions with people receiving services can be viewed on a continuum.^{3, 4} Staff can use the continuum below as a guide to help identify when their thoughts, feelings and interactions are within therapeutic and professional parameters. Therapeutic relationships provide opportunities for learning and personal development while maintaining focus on safety, support and respectful interactions.

This continuum provides a frame of reference to evaluate staff interactions with people receiving services and effectiveness in maintaining healthy and supportive boundaries.

Continuum of Professional Behavior



Under Involvement	"In the Zone" Boundaries	Over Involvement
Disconnected from others and the surroundings	Connected to others and mentally present	Over-involved, imposes personal interests & values
Under-reacts to others and situations	Reasonable reaction to others and situations	Over-reacts to others and situations
Lacks warmth, compassion and interest in others	Shows compassion, warmth & interest in others	Overly focused on a select person(s), sexual overtones
Carelessly breaches confidentiality by not attending to agency rules	Aware of and upholds confidentiality requirements	Purposefully breaches confidentiality, disregards the right to privacy
Unaware of treatment plans, does not seek information or clarification when needed	Follows treatment plan, seeks information and clarification as needed	Disregards treatment plan based on personal feelings and reactions
Not present or responsive when needed	Provides flexible support, promotes independence	Undermines independence by doing for, not with
Doesn't provide needed supervision or support	Provides support to co-workers, team focus to ensure needs are met	Over extends self, risking quality and safety
Attends to personal matters on duty and fails to effectively communicate	Communicates clearly, fully and timely manner to ensure care needs are met	Keeps secrets and tells secrets to people receiving services
Lack of awareness of persons' safety and well-being	Invested and aware of persons' safety and well-being	Over protective and smothering or overly-permissive

Partners in Prevention: What You Can Do
Remember: We all play a role in establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries.

Agencies	Caregivers, Staff	People receiving services, Advocates, Families & Friends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a mission statement that emphasizes a commitment to a safe and therapeutic environment. Ensure that informed consent for treatment has been obtained. Provide training to all staff on professional and therapeutic relationships and trauma informed care. Provide clear policies and direction to all staff on the use of social media at or about work. Provide training for people in care on professional boundaries. Set clear expectations that it is always staff's responsibility to use professional boundaries. Develop policies and practices to address violations of professional boundaries. <p>Report: Report Abuse or Neglect to the Justice Center</p> <p>24/7 Statewide Toll-Free Hotline Call 1-855-373-2122 TTY 1-855-373-2123</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate that your position includes being a role model by maintaining professional boundaries with co-workers and people in care. Always remain aware of your profession's code of ethics and the Justice Center Code of Conduct. Build a strong personal support system that includes professionals, supervisors and others who share your ethical standards of maintaining healthy boundaries. Attend training on trauma informed care. Be aware of warning signs of crossing boundaries. Do not allow personal bias to interfere with a person in care practicing their religion, faith, spiritual and cultural beliefs. <p>Report: Report Abuse or Neglect to the Justice Center</p> <p>24/7 Statewide Toll-Free Hotline Call 1-855-373-2122 TTY 1-855-373-2123</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn the agency's policies and practices on how staff are to develop and sustain professional boundaries. Participate in programming and treatment to learn how to use healthy boundaries in a variety of situations. Where possible, request and review agency policies regarding the use of social media and how social media can impact boundaries. Become educated about personal boundaries regarding your relationships with staff. Speak up or ask someone to speak for you if you feel someone has crossed your boundaries. <p>Report: Report Abuse or Neglect to the Justice Center</p> <p>24/7 Statewide Toll-Free Hotline Call 1-855-373-2122 TTY 1-855-373-2123</p>

Questions?



Contact Information

Report Abuse or Neglect: 1-855-373-2122

Individual and Family Support: 1-800-624-4143

General Information and Resources: 1-800-624-4143

Email: supportcoordinator@justicecenter.ny.gov

Website: www.justicecenter.ny.gov



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