



# 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

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

Further information is available by contacting Jane Nielsen or Cathy Henry at M<sup>C</sup>Arthur Aged Care

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