

## Guidance for Developing a Professional Boundary Policy 2018

A professional boundaries policy provides a framework for agencies to effectively promote and manage ethical conduct and interpersonal expectations to maintain a safe and therapeutic environment for people receiving services. The complexity and wide range of direct care provided by human services professionals requires thoughtful and clear guidance on their day to day work. Below are topics to guide agency development of effective professional boundary policies and practices:<sup>i,ii,iii</sup>

### Purpose of the Policy:

- Clearly define physical, emotional and social boundaries, and how each relates to the role of staff providing care.
- Explain how boundaries impact people receiving services, staff, and the overall environment.
- Recognize the increased vulnerability of people receiving services and their need for well-defined professional boundaries in the care environment.
- Include expectations for staff interactions with people receiving services and ongoing support for staff to maintain healthy boundaries.
- Provide guidance on maintaining boundaries after services end.

### Use of Social Media:<sup>iv</sup>

- Restrict contact between people receiving services and staff on social media and how to manage situations when a person receiving services contacts staff on social media.
- Restrict the use social media for personal purposes while at work and discussing work on social media.
- Prohibit staff from searching for information regarding a person receiving services on social media.
- Refer to the Spotlight on Prevention "Guidelines for Staff Education on Social Media" tool for further information.

## Staff Self-Awareness about Professional Boundaries:

- Emphasize the use of supervision and team meetings to better understand staff strengths and weaknesses with setting and maintaining healthy boundaries.
- Call for staff to seek out supervisory support about boundary concerns.
- Require agency training for supervisors to develop skills necessary to coach and support staff development of professional boundaries.
- Provide examples of boundary issues.

## Resources to Staff on How to Address Boundary Concerns:

- Provide clear guidance for staff on what to do when they encounter boundary issues, when and where to report observed boundary crossing.
- Provide information about resources for personal support such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Provide guidance on how to handle situations where there is an existing relationship or knowledge of a person who enters care, or their family.

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from policies and procedures reviewed in the course of Justice Center work.

<sup>ii</sup> Adapted from: *National Council State Boards of Nursing, A Nurse's Guide to Professional Boundaries*. Retrieved November 19, 2018, from: [https://www.ncsbn.org/ProfessionalBoundaries\\_Complete.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/ProfessionalBoundaries_Complete.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> Adapted from: Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services and University of Wisconsin Oshkosh CCDET, *Professional Boundaries for Caregivers - Facilitator Guide*, March 2010. Retrieved November 15, 2018. from: [http://www.uwosh.edu/ccdet/caregiver/Documents/Keys/ProfBoundariesCaregivers\\_FacilitatorGuide.pdf](http://www.uwosh.edu/ccdet/caregiver/Documents/Keys/ProfBoundariesCaregivers_FacilitatorGuide.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> The Spotlight on Prevention "Guidelines for a Social Media Policy and Staff Education 2018" document offers additional guidance on social media.