

Professional Boundaries for Caregivers

Type of Boundary Crossing	Staying In-bounds
<p>Sharing Personal Information: It may be tempting to talk to your resident or their family members about your personal life or problems. Doing so may cause the resident or family member to see you as a friend and ally instead of seeing you as a health care professional. As a result, the resident may take on your worries as well as their own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use caution when talking to a resident or family member about your personal life. • Do not share information because you need to talk, or to help you feel better • Remember that your relationship with your resident must be therapeutic, not social. • Do not talk about other staff members to residents or family members.
<p>Not Seeing Behaviour as Symptomatic: Sometimes caregivers react emotionally to the actions of a resident and forget that those actions are caused by a disorder or disease (symptomatic). Personal emotional responses can cause a caregiver to lose sight of his/her role or miss important information from a resident. In can also escalate a resident's behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware that a resident's behaviour is the result of a disease or disorder. • Know the resident's care plan! • If you are about to respond emotionally or reflexively to the negative behaviour of a resident, step back and re-approach the resident later. • Note that the resident may think their action is the best way to solve a problem or fill a need. • Ask yourself if there is a way to problem solve and help the resident communicate or react differently.

<p>Nicknames/Endearments: Calling a resident ‘sweetie’ or ‘honey’ may be comforting to a resident, or it might suggest a more personal interest than you intend. It might also point out that you favour one resident over another. Some residents or their family members may find the use of nicknames or endearments offensive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using terms like honey and sweetie. • Ask your resident how they would like to be addressed. Some may allow you to use their first name. Others might prefer a more formal approach: Mr., Mrs., Ms, or Miss. • Remember that the way you address a resident indicates your level of professionalism.
<p>Touch: Touch is a powerful tool. It can be healing and comforting or it can be confusing, hurtful, or simply unwelcome. Touch should be used sparingly and thoughtfully.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use touch only when it will serve a good purpose for the resident. • Ask your resident if he/she is comfortable with your touch. • Be aware that a resident may react differently to touch than you intend. • When using touch, be sure it is serving the resident’s needs and not your own.
<p>Unprofessional Demeanour: Demeanour includes appearance, tone and volume of voice, speech patterns, body language, etc. Your professional demeanour affects how others perceive you. Personal and professional demeanour may be different.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents may be frightened or confused by loud voices or fast talk. • Professional attire/approach sends the message that you are serious about your job. • Off-color jokes, racial slurs, profanity are never appropriate. • Body language and facial expressions speak volumes to residents and their family members.

<p>Gifts/ Tips/Favours: Giving or receiving gifts, or doing special favours, can blur the line between a personal relationship and a professional one. Gifts can lead to a sense of obligation on the part of a staff member. Accepting a gift from a resident might also be taken as fraud or theft by another person or a family member.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow your facility's policy on gifts. • Practice saying no graciously to a resident or family member who offers a gift that is outside your facility's boundaries. • It's ok to tell residents and family members that you are not allowed to accept gifts, tips. • To protect yourself, report offers of unusual or large gifts to your supervisor
<p>Over-involvement: Signs may include spending inappropriate amounts of time with a particular resident, visiting the resident when off duty, trading assignments to be with the resident, thinking that you are the only caregiver who can meet the resident's needs. Under- involvement is the opposite of over-involvement and may include disinterest and neglect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the needs of those in your care, rather than personalities. • Don't confuse the needs of the resident with your own needs. • Maintain a helpful relationship, treating each resident with the same quality of care and attention, regardless of your emotional reaction to the resident. • Ask yourself: Are you becoming overly involved with the resident or resident's family members? If so, discuss this situation with your supervisor.

<p>Romantic or Sexual Relationships: A caregiver is never permitted to have a romantic or sexual relationship with a resident.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it may be normal to be attracted to someone in your care, know that it is never appropriate to act on that attraction. • Do not tell sexually oriented jokes or stories. It may send the wrong message to your resident. • Discourage flirting or suggestive behaviour by your resident.
<p>Secrets: Secrets between you and a resident are different than resident confidentiality. Confidential information is shared with a few others members of a team providing care to a resident. Personal secrets compromise role boundaries and can result in lack of consistency and impact resident care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not keep personal or health-related secrets with a resident or their family members. • Remember that your role is to accurately report any changes in your resident's condition.

How Do I Know? - Questions to ask Yourself about Boundary Crossings:

Is the behaviour in the best interests of the resident?

Does the behaviour negatively impact other residents?

Does the behaviour follow respectful workplace guidelines?

Is this a behaviour I would want other people to know I have engaged in?

How would I feel if my supervisor was aware of my actions?