

Professional boundaries



Professional boundaries are guidelines for support staff at work. Staying within those boundaries will result in better outcomes for you and those you support.

To stay 'in bounds', staff should be mindful of the following.

- **Sharing personal information**
Do not provide your private contact details to a consumer. Use caution when talking about your personal life.
- **Emotional responses**
Practise treating each consumer with the same quality of care and attention, regardless of your emotional response.
- **Nicknames / endearments**
Avoid using terms such as 'honey' or 'sweetie'. Ask each consumer how they would like to be addressed.
- **Tone of voice**
The tone and volume of your voice are reflections of your emotions. Adjust your tone of voice to convey comfort and caring.
- **Gifts / favours**
Practise saying 'no' graciously to a consumer who offers you a gift that is outside your organisation's boundaries.
- **Clothing**
Think about what message you might be communicating with your choice of clothing.
- **Unscheduled time**
Spending unscheduled time with a consumer may indicate that boundaries are getting blurred.
- **Symptomatic behaviour**
Remember that the behaviour of a consumer may sometimes be directly related to their mental health issue. Take a moment to collect yourself when you recognise that you are about to respond emotionally or reflexively.
- **Touch**
Be aware that a consumer may interpret your touch in a way other than how you intended it. When touching a consumer, be sure it is serving their needs.
- **Romantic and sexual relationships**
Avoid and discourage flirting or suggestive behaviour with consumers. If you feel that you are becoming attracted to someone in your care, seek help from your manager or other trusted professional right away.
- **Secrets**
Do not keep a consumer's personal or health related secrets that you consider relate to health or safety issues.