

<b>Title</b>	<b>ACIA 029 - Maintaining Professional Boundaries for Support Workers Delivering Services in the Community</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Support Workers are expected to display the highest standard of professional and personal conduct in serving the needs of Service Users and stakeholders at all times.
<b>Background</b>	<p>One of the key issues for Support Workers is to be able to recognise when they may be crossing the invisible line or boundary which separates a Service User from a worker, and which defines the relationship as professional.</p> <p>In the course of delivering services for a Service User, a Support Worker may be at risk of breaching professional boundaries. This risk is potentially higher for long-term services when the Support Worker and Service User have worked together for a long period and the professional relationship can be compromised by overfamiliarity</p> <p>It is important that Support Workers and their managers understand the importance of maintaining a professional boundary with Service Users and being able to identify and report when they or a colleague may be at risk of crossing their professional boundary.</p> <p>This guideline aims to assist the Service Provider in identifying and addressing the risk of a breach in professional boundaries when delivering services to the Service User, carer and family.</p> <p>It is an expectation that all Support Workers are trained in their organisations requirements for ethical conduct which is outlined in their Code of Conduct. Training should be provided at induction and regularly scheduled on an ongoing basis.</p>
<b>Scope</b>	This guideline applies to the provision of paid support and nursing services delivery in the community.
<b>Disclaimer</b>	This guideline is provided to help guide best practice in the community service and support industry and does not in any way replace legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements. Users of this document should seek appropriate expert advice in relation to their particular circumstances. ACIA does not accept any liability on the use of this guideline.
<b>Desired Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assist Service Providers to guide their Support Workers in maintaining professional boundaries when delivering support services</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Workers understand how to conduct themselves in accordance with the Service Providers Code of Conduct and values at all times</li> <li>• To maintain a quality and safe standard of service delivery</li> </ul>
<p><b>Definitions and Supporting Information</b></p>	<p><b>Behaviour</b> is the way that somebody acts especially towards other people.</p> <p><b>Breaches</b> an act of breaking or failing to observe a law, agreement, or code of conduct.</p> <p><b>Carer</b> is a person that provides supports to the Service User at no cost (generally family or friend).</p> <p><b>Conduct</b> is the manner in which a person behaves, especially in a particular place or situation.</p> <p><b>Community Supports and/or Services</b> is defined as the provision of paid supports and services in a Service User’s home or community.</p> <p><b>Conflict of Interest</b> is a situation in which a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity</p> <p><b>Compliance</b> is the action or fact of complying with a wish or command.</p> <p><b>Ethical Behaviour</b> is acting in ways consistent with what society and individuals typically think are good values. It is doing the right thing, even when no one else is around to witness it.</p> <p><b>Obligation</b> is an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound, a duty or commitment.</p> <p><b>Professional Boundaries</b> can be described as rules and limits that define the nature of the relationship between a Service User and the person delivering the service.</p> <p><b>Professional Conduct</b> is the high standard that you expect from a person who is well trained in a particular job.</p>

	<p><b>Service Providers</b> are an organisation or a person who are funded for the delivery of supports and services to Service Users.</p> <p><b>Service User</b> means the client, consumer or person receiving the nursing or support.</p> <p><b>Stewardship of Resources</b> is the act of taking care of or managing something.</p> <p>A <b>Support Worker</b> is an individual who is paid to assist or supervise a Service User to perform tasks of daily living to support and maintain general wellbeing and enable meaningful involvement in social, family and community activities in the person’s home and community.</p>
<p><b>Guideline/ Policy</b></p>	<p>All Support Workers have an obligation and duty of care to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comply with industry related standards of equity, justice, fairness and compassion in dealing with others within and beyond the organisation</li> <li>• Perform all duties in a responsible and professional manner, with due regard for organisational policies and other legal requirements / obligations and the Service User’s needs and choices</li> <li>• Act appropriately when a conflict arises between themselves and the Service User, escalating their concerns immediately in line with the Service Providers process.</li> </ul> <p>Some examples of unacceptable behaviours or practices relating to professional boundaries include but are not limited to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying back after the shift has been completed</li> <li>• Physical contact which is not essential to the delivery of the support task</li> <li>• Arranging and meeting a Service User socially</li> <li>• Disclosure of personal information (including discussion of personal issues) by the Support Worker</li> <li>• Exchanging of gifts and financial transactions between the Service User and Support Worker</li> <li>• Expression of sexual attraction to or from a Service User</li> <li>• Expressions of strong attachment to or from a Service User</li> <li>• Expression of strong feelings of dislike for a Service User</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging with the Service User on social media e.g. connecting with the Service User on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter etc.</li> <li>• Or any other behaviour that may be deemed by the Service User, family or other parties to compromise professional boundaries.</li> </ul> <p><b>Behaviour:</b></p> <p>All Support Workers are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat everyone with courtesy, respect, kindness, consideration, and display sensitivity towards them in relation to their rights</li> <li>• Refrain from all forms of harassment and discrimination based on gender, race, religious belief, political affiliation, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation or illness</li> <li>• Always act honestly, in good faith, and be respectful of the trust placed between themselves and Service Users</li> <li>• Respect the Service User’s rights to privacy and keep personal information in confidence</li> <li>• Respect the Service User’s rights to take risks with due regard to the scope of their own role</li> <li>• Consider the impact of their decisions and behaviour on the well-being of others</li> <li>• Refrain from any personal relationship with the Service User and maintain professional boundaries at all times</li> <li>• Seek advice from an appropriate supervisor where a colleague’s behaviour is perceived to be in breach of the Code, and report any suspected breach of professional boundaries, corruption, criminal or unethical conduct to a member of the Management Team</li> <li>• Seek advice from an appropriate supervisor where there is any uncertainty about their own relationship or interactions with a Service User in relation to the maintenance of professional boundaries.</li> </ul>
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**Professional Conduct:**

All Support Workers are expected to:

- Perform their duties diligently, impartially, conscientiously, with integrity, and to the best of their ability
- Take responsibility for the health and safety of themselves, the Service User and others when carrying out their duties
- Strive to always achieve the highest service and professional standards
- Comply with any relevant legislative, industrial or administrative requirements including observance and application of anti-discrimination policy
- Comply with the principles of environmental responsibility
- Foster teamwork and collegiality among all employees, and always give due credit to the contributions of others
- Maintain adequate documentation to support any decisions made
- Take no improper advantage of any official information gained in the course of their employment
- Refrain from allowing personal political views and/or affiliations or other personal interests to influence the performance of duties or exercise of responsibilities
- Refrain from providing their personal details to the Service User including personal contact details
- Not contact the Service User outside of their rostered hours, unless directed to do so by the service provider
- Refrain from behaving in any other way that could be perceived as compromising professional boundaries.

**Dealing with Conflicts of Interest**

All Support Workers are expected to:

- Ensure that any financial and other interests and actions do not conflict or seem to conflict with the obligations and requirements of the Service Provider
- Ensure that they do not advance their own financial or other interests over those of the Service User /Service Provider

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid any financial or other interest or undertaking that could directly or indirectly, compromise the performance of their duties, including the witnessing of legal documents</li> <li>• Take all suitable measures to avoid or deal appropriately with any situation in which they may have or been seen to have a conflict arising out of our relationship with a Service User</li> <li>• Notify their management team, as appropriate, of the existence of any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest</li> <li>• Declare their relationship when participating in decisions affecting another person with whom they have a personal relationship.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service Providers should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that they have a documented Code of Conduct that meets legislative, contractual and industry standards that is accessible to all staff at anytime</li> <li>• Maintain policies / procedures for reporting breaches in the maintenance of professional boundaries, particularly where they apply to legislative contractual and industry standard requirements</li> <li>• Provide training for all staff at the commencement of employment in the organisations Code of Conduct and the importance of understanding the relevance of professional boundaries in the community setting. It is recommended that refresher training is provided every 12 months</li> <li>• Give consideration to awareness training for the Service User, carer and family in the importance of professional boundaries for Support Workers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resource Documents</b></p>	<p>Australian Community Industry Standards (ACIS) 2018</p> <p>NDIS Code of Conduct  <a href="https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2018-07/NDIS%20Commission%20-%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20Summary%20for%20workers.pdf">https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2018-07/NDIS%20Commission%20-%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20Summary%20for%20workers.pdf</a></p> <p>The Department of Health  <a href="https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/drugtreat-pubs-front11-fa-toc~drugtreat-pubs-front11-fa-">https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/drugtreat-pubs-front11-fa-toc~drugtreat-pubs-front11-fa-</a></p>

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