

Partners in Quality Care

- October 2017 -

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Association for
Home & Hospice Care
of North Carolina

Professional Boundaries and professional working relationships

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing has defined professional boundaries as:

- "...the limits of the professional relationship that allow for a safe therapeutic connection between the professional and the client."
(includes nurse, nurse aide, others).

Having a good relationship with your clients is rewarding when providing care in the home. Providing care in a setting that enables you to provide one- to- one care for your client offers opportunities for the client to be able to stay in their home and for you to build strong relationships with the client and family.

These relationships certainly feel good to both the client and the In-home aide. While having that positive and caring relationship is important to the client's care, it is also important to remember that as an employee of an agency and as a health care provider in the home, certain standards need to be upheld. These standards help you to maintain a professional relationship with the client and family. Most agencies will have policies about maintaining professional relationships with clients.

The policies will most likely address issues such as receiving gifts from clients, changing the assigned tasks at the client or family's request without checking with the supervisor, not reporting changes in the client's condition, discussing the client's care outside of the allowed discussions under privacy laws (such as with friends, church members, Facebook, and others). Policies may also address a certain dress code that you need to follow in order to maintain a professional appearance (including wearing a name badge to identify you).

How you appear in the way you dress and speak sets the tone for a caring, professional relationship and first impressions are important. Professional attire sends the message that you are serious about your job.

These policies are in place for a reason and help to protect you in a situation where there could be a misunderstanding, such as accepting money, jewelry, and other valuable items from a client as a "bonus" which could later be considered by others as stealing from the client. Adhering to your agency's policies help protect your good name as an aide – which in itself is a gift not only to others, but to yourself! You may need help from your supervisor in maintaining boundaries, please don't hesitate to reach out for help.

Always act in the best interest of the client

Learning objectives:

The importance of professional boundaries in client care

Ways to maintain appropriate boundaries

Definition of ethics and professionalism

Many agencies establish their own set of guidelines for ethical behavior. Often times it will be outlined in a policy. It is helpful for the home care aide to become familiar with their agency's mission or vision, as well as their code of ethics.

Professional Boundaries - What you need to know- October 2017

Nurses and In-home Aides, especially in home care, are at daily risk for crossing professional boundaries. In the hospital or other settings, such as a nursing home, roles are more clearly defined, and clients' expectations of staff may be clearer. When we enter someone's home, those boundary lines become blurred and sometimes are at risk of disappearing altogether.

Boundary Crossing

From the onset, the aide supervisor and aide must define the relationship with the client as professional and based on common goals as defined in the plan of care. Boundary crossings are actions or interactions outside a professional relationship. The distinction is often difficult to make. Be aware of your feelings and behaviors and always act in the best interest of your clients.

Examples of when you are crossing the professional boundary!

- * giving personal information about yourself (excessive self-disclosure, discussing personal problems with your client)
- * certain types of touch
- * visiting clients after discharge from your agency
- * running errands for the client on your days off
- * calling clients for reasons not related to your duties
- * lending personal items or taking loans from the client, giving or receiving gifts
- * introducing client's to your family or friends
- * giving the client a home telephone or personal cell phone number
- * flirtations or off colored jokes, using offensive language
- * keeping secrets with the client (ex. don't tell anyone about me falling)

Special tips for home care:

Say what agency you are from and why you are there.

If you are greeted at the door by a family member, introduce yourself to the family member and then repeat your introduction when you meet the consumer.

Wait to be invited into the home.

Wait to be invited to sit and talk.

Ask for permission to use the bathroom to wash your hands.

- ✔ Professionalism means working in a professional way, or always doing your best work. As a professional, you show pride in yourself and your work. And you also show respect for the consumer. You show professionalism in the ways you look, talk, and act; and by being on time and ready to start work from the moment you arrive.
- ✔ Good communication skills and using professional language are important and go a long way in helping us avoid "boundary" problems.
- ✔ Home care aides, like any other health care professional, must follow all agencies' legal and ethical policies and/or protocol.
- ✔ Ethics deal with right and wrong. It is having a sense of duty and responsibility toward others and situations and guides us to do what we SHOULD do. An ethical person feels that they always try to do the right thing. ***See the In-home aide code of ethics on page 4 of this newsletter as guide to think about with ethics.***

"Boundaries are present in many aspects of our daily lives. Speed limits, office hours, dress codes, joke-telling, and eye contact are all examples of boundaries. In interpersonal relationships, boundaries serve to maintain one's identity, protect one's personal space, and allow for harmonious interactions with others.... Professional boundaries are essential to protect the client's comfort level and sense of safety, ***and to ensure the client's best interests always remain the overriding consideration. When professional boundaries are violated, clients may experience confusion, shame, self-doubt, anger, sadness, or mistrust.***" Minnesota Board of Physical Therapy Newsletter, January, 2006.

Professional Boundaries-Developing Friendly, Professional Working Relationships with Home Care Clients- October 2017

In order to build successful working relationships with clients, home care aides should possess the following skills:

- ✔ The ability to recognize and accept the values and norms of clients
- ✔ The ability to communicate and deal with clients at their own level of understanding
- ✔ The ability to convey a genuine sense of concern for clients
- ✔ The ability to follow the aide assignment and deliver competent, compassionate care
- ✔ The ability to convey a professional image
- ✔ The ability to follow agency policy
- ✔ The ability to accurately document care
- ✔ The ability to respect the clients home and property
- ✔ The ability to communicate with supervisors and others on the team
- ✔ The ability to recognize the valuable role in-home aides play in client care

Let your client know that you have to follow your agency policy if you are asked to do anything outside of what you have been assigned to do. It is ok to let a client know that you have to speak to your supervisor first. Notify your supervisor if you feel like the client or family member is asking you to do anything that is not allowed in the agency policy or if you are unclear about your agency policy.

What kinds of relationships are appropriate for you to establish with your Home Care Clients?

- ❖ **Respectful relationships** for the client and their home and belongings as well as respect for yourself as a healthcare provider in wanting to provide quality home care services
- ❖ **Friendly relationships** with your clients in which you are able to build a caring relationship and provide care that is appropriate and that involves the client's wishes and is part of the plan of care and your assignment
- ❖ **Dependable relationships** in which you arrive at the client's home when you are assigned to arrive or you notify your supervisor or the client according to your agency policy
- ❖ **Clinical relationships** in which you provide the care and tasks that you have been assigned to provide so that the client can have the best health outcomes possible
- ❖ **Trusting relationships** in which you properly protect the client's health information and privacy and their belongings

“Integrity: The single most important quality of a professional is integrity. It means complete and total honesty in all actions. It's what the public expects of us: Our actions must be above reproach -- whether we're on duty or not. If your partner pockets a client's cash, that's a boundary violation. If you keep it to yourself, that's a boundary violation as well.”

Professional Boundaries: Where they are & why we cross them;
W. Ann Maggiore, JD, EMT-P

Remember – you are a “gift” to the health care system and that is a wonderful image to have and keep!

Resources: Home Care Compass Home Care Modules- Association for Home & Hospice Care of NC; Professional Boundaries in the Home Care Setting, Home Healthcare Nurse, February 2002. Home Health Aide- Guidelines for Care, Marelli. Professional Boundaries and Self Care- Michelle White, RN June 2010; Maintaining Boundaries- Jan Helsper; National Council of state boards of nursing; Life Quality Institute- Professional Boundaries: Discerning the line in the sand. Providing Personal Care Services to Elders and People with disabilities; module 2- PHI national.org; NC Personal and Home Care Aide State Training (PHCAST) phase IV module II.



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THE IN-HOME AIDE CODE OF ETHICS © AHHC

In-home aides play a vital role in serving NC's chronically ill, disabled and aging populations. Often having the most contact with the patients, these individuals are usually "closer" to patients than any other home care discipline. Often referred to as the backbone of the long-term care system, they are uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of our aging and ailing populations.

As an in-home aide, I solemnly pledge myself to the following code of ethics:

The primary duty of the in-home aide is to assist in the care of patients and clients; to ease suffering; to promote health; to do no harm; and, to encourage the quality of in-home aide care.

The in-home aide provides services with respect for human dignity no matter the nationality, race, creed, age, religion or status of patients/clients and provides patient centered care.

The in-home aide adheres to the Patient/Client Bill of Rights.

The in-home aide adheres to standards of personal conduct and obeys all laws of the state and country.

The in-home aide respects and holds in confidence all health care information obtained in the course of work.

The in-home aide maintains competence; is aware of personal learning needs; and, will pursue needed education by alerting the agency supervisor.

The in-home aide provides services in accordance with the patient's plan of care and reports appropriate patient/client findings to the supervisor, including ethical issues involving the patient.

The in-home aide refuses to participate in illegal/unethical actions and will expose such conduct of others through appropriate agency channels.

The in-home aide assumes responsibility for his/her actions and upholds the laws that affect the licensed home care agency including providing care and recording the care as necessary for agency licensure, quality improvement and payment.

The in-home aide works responsibly and in harmony with other members of the health care team being sensitive in all verbal, non-verbal and written communications with team members, patients and families.

The in-home aide demonstrates caring behavior and yet maintains appropriate boundaries.

The in-home aide supports, to the extent possible, patient/client independence and assists patients/clients in reaching their full potential of self-care.

Aide Signature: _____ Date: _____

Post Test-Professionalism and Ethics in the workplace- October 2017

Name _____ Date: _____

1. Ethics deal with right and wrong. It is having a sense of duty and responsibility toward others and situations and guides us to do what we should do.

True False

2. The relationship between the In-home aide and their client is the same as the In-home aide's relationship with their personal friends.

True False

3. Nurses and In-home aides especially in home care are not at risk of crossing professional boundaries.

True False

4. Professional boundaries are essential to protect the client's comfort level and sense of safety, and to ensure the client's best interests always remain the overriding consideration.

True False

5. The In-home aide supervisor has a responsibility to the In-home aide to provide clear instructions about how to care for their client.

True False

6. The In-home aide does not have any responsibilities to their employer.

True False

7. The ability to follow the aide assignment and deliver competent, compassionate care is a skill an In-home aide needs to possess.

True False

8. The In-home aide should notify the nurse supervisor of any tasks they do not know how to perform.

True False

9. Correct documentation is a key role of an In-home aide.

True False

10. Home Care clients have certain rights and the In-home aide should know what they are to ensure they are upholding the client's rights.

True False