

PDH Academy

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Boundary Issues in Social Work: Recognizing and Reducing Your Risk

Course Abstract

Social workers sometimes find themselves in situations that blur professional boundaries. This course reviews professional boundaries in the context of social work practice; case examples and interactive exercises are included to reinforce learning. The course will examine both the benefits of healthy boundaries and the potential risks to clients, practitioners, and the profession when boundaries are crossed or ignored. Learners will review their ethical role as social workers, the difference between boundary crossings and boundary violations, and potentially dangerous situations. The course also provides guidance for evaluating different boundary-related issues and implementing risk prevention strategies.



"This program is Approved by the National Association of Social Workers (Approval #886745725-8915) for 2 continuing education contact hours."

Learning Objectives

- Describe the risks and challenges in maintaining professional boundaries with clients and others.
- Differentiate between non-harmful boundary crossings, harmful boundary crossings and boundary violations.
- Recognize potentially dangerous situations and problematic boundary-related behaviors.
- Identify best practices for establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.

Timed Agenda/Outline

1. Introduction: (5 min) 30 min
 - a. Professional boundaries in the context of social work practice (5 min)
 - b. The importance of boundaries for the client, social worker and profession (5 min)
 - i. Benefits
 - ii. Consequences of poor boundaries
 - c. Boundary issues that are problematic vs. those that are not (5 min)
 - d. Activity: Examples for self-reflection (5 min)
 - e. Review Questions (5 min)

2. Challenges to the maintenance of professional boundaries	30 min
a. Personal issues that impact boundaries (15 min)	
i. Emotional and dependency needs	
ii. Impairment	
b. Relationships and Professional Boundaries (10 min)	
i. The power of imbalance	
ii. Transference & countertransference	
c. Review questions (5 min)	
3. Problematic Boundary Issues – Intimate Relationships	45 min
a. Sexual Relationships (5 min)	
b. Non-sexual physical contact/touch (5 min)	
b. Other boundary issues (30 min)	
iii. Self-disclosure	
iv. Gift giving	
v. Special treatment/accommodations	
vi. Use of technology	
c. Review questions: scenario-based (5 min)	
4. Decreasing Risk: Reinforcing and building boundaries in your practice	13 min
a. Communication (3 min)	
b. Self-care (3 min)	
c. Supervision/consultation (5 min)	
d. Documentation (2 min)	
5. Summary	2 min
Total Time	120 min

Delivery Method

Correspondence/internet self-study course, including a provider-graded final exam. To earn continuing education credit for this course, you must achieve a passing score of 80% on the final exam.

Course Author Biography

Ms. Ledford is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Board Certified Behavior Analyst with over 30 years' experience managing child and adult mental health, residential treatment, child welfare programs. In addition to extensive experience in social services, she has worked as both a Trainer and Project Manager for Prosync, Inc. (now The Paxen Group), a nationally recognized leader in customized training and performance contracting. Currently Director of Behavioral Health Quality for Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS) she leads statewide quality improvement activities for behavioral health programs, trauma-informed practice development and statewide trauma training initiatives. She also serves as the Statewide Trainer for CHS' Category III Trauma Recovery Initiatives (TRI) grant project.

René is a graduate of the Florida State University Harris Institute Infant Mental Health program and is trained in trauma-informed interventions including Child Parent Psychotherapy, TF-CBT and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy. She has developed and/or presented numerous

continuing education programs and among other trauma-informed curricula, is an Experienced Trainer of NCTSN's Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit (CWTTT). René was also a contributor for the revised CWTTT and Trauma-Informed PS-MAPP curricula. Additionally René is a Council on Accreditation (COA) Peer Reviewer and the 2015 Past-President and 2016 Director of Social Media for the Association for Talent Development, Central Florida Chapter.