Archdiocese of Hobart

Policy Document

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY		Document # AOH-BP016	Print Date N/A
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A Professional Boundary refers to a limit of behaviour within which a client and worker can interact safely in relation to the emotional, psychological, intellectual, social and physical space of the client and worker.
The Archdiocese of Hobart requires all workers to provide safe and effective services to all Archdiocesan clients by establishing and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between themselves and clients.

The rights and needs of clients must be respected at all times. However, by the very nature of some Archdiocesan services, the relationship between the client and worker is not one of equal balance. Workers must recognise and understand that they are in a position of power, which must not be abused at any time.

It is essential therefore, that all interactions between clients and workers must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Because there is a potential for positions of power to be abused and professional boundaries broken, the Archdiocese makes it clear that the responsibility to maintain professional boundaries rests with each individual worker. This responsibility is not diminished even in circumstances where a client initiates the boundary violation. There must be no opportunity for confusion between a professional relationship and a personal relationship.

In no sense does this policy detract from the need a worker may have to establish rapport with a client in order to be able to provide friendly and accessible services.

For the purposes of this policy, a worker means any person, including professional persons, administrative staff and volunteers, who is under the direction of the Roman Catholic Church Trust Corporation of the Archdiocese of Hobart and who interacts with a client in any capacity as part of their workplace duties.

Where it can be established that a worker has breached this policy, it will be regarded as a breach of the Workplace Behaviour Policy and may lead to disciplinary action.

GUIDELINES

In maintaining professional boundaries, workers should not:

- Seek out a personal relationship with a client, or with their family, friends, or support network. A worker should have a balanced work and home life so their personal needs are met outside of work.
- Develop an intimate relationship with a client, their family, friends or anybody in their support network, even after the client has exited the program.
- Introduce clients to the worker's own family, friends, or support network. Work and home should be kept separate.

- Socialise with clients, their family, or friends outside of work hours. A worker should not meet clients outside of working hours for recreational activities or accept such invitations from them.
- Purchase or consume alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances while in the company of clients, either during work hours or afterwards.
- Smoke in front of clients, or join clients in the smoking area. Workers should encourage healthy lifestyle choices.
- Talk about their personal, financial or other life problems with clients.
- Borrow, ask for or lend money to clients. A worker should not seek to obtain gifts, or special favours from a client.
- Give clients casual lifts or ever allow a client to drive a worker's own/work motor vehicle.
- Give advice outside of the worker's skills and expertise – e.g. financial, marital, relationship, medical – a client should be referred to qualified professionals for any support needed.
- Discuss information about clients with family or friends. Talk to colleagues and use peer supervision and respect client's confidentiality and privacy.
- Disclose personal information to clients e.g. private telephone numbers, address, email, marital information.
- Criticize, complain about or discuss issues relating to other workers, or the employer with clients or their family. Work related issues and complaints need to be dealt with in the workplace.

Workers should consider whether clients have guardians to assist with personal decision making or administrators to assist with financial decisions and encourage them to consult these persons as necessary.

There may be circumstances in some programs where the boundaries are less clear; in these instances the worker will discuss the issues with the program coordinator who will retain written notes of the discussion and the outcome.