Journey of an Unregulated Profession:
Professional Boundaries

June 25, 2013

Session Evaluation

Please access the Survey Monkey Questionnaire by:

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Journey of an Unregulated Profession:

Professional Boundaries

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Learning objectives

Participants will leave the workshop with:

1. an awareness that Developmental Services Workers are working toward greater professionalization in the field;

2. a foundational understanding of the complex relationships between paid workers and service recipients and the need for defining professional boundaries; and

3. key information to develop their toolkit of strategies, around professional boundaries, to utilize in their unique work environments

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Session Outline

- The Changing Role of a developmental services worker/ direct support worker/ direct support professional

- Professional Boundaries: What are they? And why are they Important?

- Challenges in maintaining professional boundaries

- Strategies to build and maintain professional boundaries

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Roles

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Meaning of Developmental Services Worker (DSW)

A Developmental Services Worker is an individual who has graduated with a Developmental Services Worker Diploma in the province of Ontario, or equivalent. Equivalency would include a post secondary degree or diploma in a related area plus direct work experience in developmental services.

Developmental Services Worker Standards of Practice 2011 – published by the Developmental Services Special Interest Group of the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities (O.A.D.D.)
http://www.oadd.org/docs/DSW_Standards_of_Practice_June_2011.doc
OADD Website: http://www.oadd.org/

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DSWs right now

- Currently DSWs
  - Have varied educational backgrounds and experience
  - Are not a regulated profession
  - Have no college or governing body
  - Have no universal job description/ expectations

- The general public does not know what a DSW does or what to expect from them

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Core Competencies

- The Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy (DSHRS), a partnership between the Provincial Network on Developmental Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, continues to make significant strides in positioning employment in the developmental services sector as a **career of choice in Ontario**

- A key component of the DSHRS is the introduction and piloting of specific **Core Competencies** for the Ontario Developmental Services Sector: for Direct Support Professionals, Direct Support Supervisors, Specialized Support Staff, Clinical Specialists, Managers, Directors and Executive Directors.

- Core Competencies Dictionary
  http://www.ontariodevelopmentalservices.ca/sites/default/files/Core%20Competency%20Dictionary%20October%201%202009.pdf
  (October 2009)

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Developmental Services Worker Program Standard, 2012

- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities approved program standard, mandated for use in DSW Programs in community colleges across Ontario

- *DSW Standards of Practice 2011* are incorporated into mandated Program Standard for Developmental Services Worker Program

- Developmental Services *Core Competencies* are embedded in the Program Standard

http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/audiences/colleges/progstan/humserv/edevserw.pdf

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Professionalizing

- Possess a specific body of knowledge and work specific skill set

- Managed by an organization with a mandate to provide care to people with developmental disabilities

- Formalized written documents including laws and government regulations granting their authority

- Work within limits of rules and standards laid down by their organization

- Provision of service to the public in area of expertise

- Held to higher standards of behaviour than those not providing care

(Betts, 2008, p 47-50)

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Scope of Practice

- Other professionals have clear scopes of practice (doctors, OTs, Social Workers, etc.)

- Regulated by colleges and legislation *(Regulated Health Professions Act)*

- These regulations lay out clearly what <u>are acceptable</u> and <u>not acceptable</u> practices and behaviour

- These regulations make setting and maintaining boundaries clearer

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Scope of Practice

- DSWs provide services to individuals in non profit organizations, schools, commercial organizations, family homes, their own homes, and the community

- Services can be characterized as **activities which improve or maintain the self-defined quality of life** of that individual including, but not limited to: **facilitating community participation** such as education, employment or recreation; teaching; **optimizing physical and mental health**; **supporting expression** of the spiritual and creative self; and **advocating** on behalf of the individual or the broader group of service recipients.

(Developmental Services Worker Standards of Practice 2011)

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How does this apply to DSWs?

- Many times <u>we are asked</u> to work outside of our scope of practice.
  - ◦ Signing consent forms
  - ◦ Counselling families

- Many times <u>we choose</u> to work outside of our scope of practice.
  - ◦ Taking people to our homes for Christmas

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How does this apply to DSWs?

- DSWs are very involved in people's lives
  - ◦ Personal care
  - ◦ Emotional support
  - ◦ Activity co-ordinator
  - ◦ Sometimes a DSW is the only person the service recipient may see for days!

- This can make it hard to set and maintain boundaries.

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Friendly, Not friends!
Professional Boundaries

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What Are Boundaries?

Boundary:

Something that **indicates** or **fixes** a limit or extent.

(Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary)

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Why Boundaries are Important:

- Boundaries establish ***who we are*** *in relation to **other people***

- Boundaries enable us to ***function*** according to our ***commitments***

- Boundaries protect us from ***compromising*** our core values as a person and as a professional

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Professional Boundaries

- Limits that protect the space between the professional's power and the service recipient's vulnerability

- Involves issues of power, influence and control

- Can be blurred and ambiguous

- Difficult to identify and easy to cross!

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Professional Boundaries

"It is always the responsibility of the worker to ensure that the relationship remains a professional one and that the service user understands the worker's role in their life."

Professional Boundaries Guidance for Social Workers, United Kingdom
www.scie–socialcareonline.org.uk/repository/fulltext/122181.pdf

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Challenges in Maintaining Professional Boundaries

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I Am the Only Person that Cares

The role of a Professional Support Worker is to "build, support and strengthen the existing social, family, and community network of a person with a disability… Workers may find this difficult as clients are often isolated, lonely and in need of friends, but it is the role of the worker to build friendships, **not to be the friendship."**

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/behaviour/professional/boundaries_pro.pdf
Resource for Professionals: *How to Build Good Boundaries in Support Work*
©The State of Queensland (Queensland Health) 2011
Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service PO Box 6053 Buranda 4102

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Professional Relationship Boundaries Continuum

- Balanced: authentic, caring, conscious of boundaries, aware of power dynamic, professional judgement and self-reflection
- Entangled: self-disclosure, unnecessary touch, personal favours, over extending self and responsibilities
- Rigid: own agenda, inflexible, condescending, not attending to the unique needs of the client, lack of sensitivity.

Entangled   Balanced   Rigid
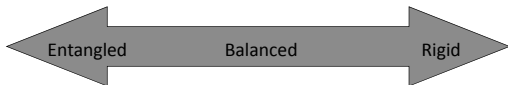
(Davidson, 2005, p 519)

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PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR CONTINUUM

Under involved   Zone of Helpfulness   Over involved

Journal of Nursing Management August 2000 Pg 30

Journal of Nursing Management, Aug. 2000
BD

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Power Imbalance

"The client's need for help, willingness to share and reliance on the professional, make giving and receiving help possible; they also make the client especially susceptible to the professional's authority and influence."

(Kagle, 1994, p 216)

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Power Imbalance

"This power imbalance should not be regarded negatively, but should be acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of such relationships…The existence of this power imbalance should be a central consideration when workers form and manage their relationships…"

Professional Boundaries Guidance for Social Workers, United Kingdom
www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/repository/fulltext/122181.pdf

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Why Power Imbalance Occurs

- Individual is not always free to decide to engage with worker
- Worker has access to intimate knowledge
- Worker is working with individuals where intervention is present
- Working may be making decisions for service recipient
- Service recipient places confidence in professional

Professional Boundaries Guidance for Social Workers, United Kingdom
www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/repository/fulltext/122181.pdf

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Personal Boundary Vulnerabilities

- Influence of Past and Current Experiences: opportunity for self-reflection, commitment to value of professional accountability
- Developmental Process of Professional Boundaries: ability to recognize when a shift in boundaries is occurring
- Identify Personal Areas of Vulnerability: identify when you are more likely to function in a less balanced way

(Davidson, 2005, p 522)

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Signs of Boundary Problems

- Disclosing personal information
- Discussing personal problems
- Visiting service recipients outside of work
- Inviting service recipients to meet friends/ family members
- Staying for longer lengths of time after shift ends
- Worrying about service recipients when you are home
- Having service recipients and their family members refer to you as a 'friend' or 'part of the family'

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/behaviour/professional/boundaries_pro.pdf

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Examples of Blurred Boundaries

- Personal Care: dressing, bathing, etc.
- Outings and activities
- Putting on seat belts
- Dancing
- Hugging
- Holding hands
- Phone calls
- Compliments
- Interest in personal life

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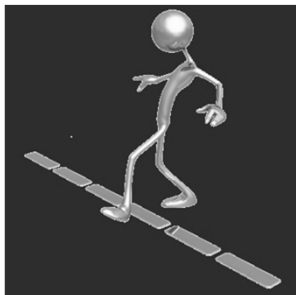## The Impact of Crossing Boundaries

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Impacts of Crossing Boundaries – on People Supported

- Increased dependence on DSWs
- Unrealistic expectations from the service recipient and his/her family
- Distress when relationship breaks down
- Grief and loss when worker leaves service reicipient
- Potentially explosive
- Satisfying the worker's needs
- Decreased self-determination
- Increased opportunities for abuse

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Impacts of Crossing Boundaries – on the Direct Support Professional

- Increased expectations of service recipients and their families
- Inability to provide objective support
- Difficulty setting limits
- Cross ethical boundaries
- Impaired judgement
- Inaccurate assessments
- Vulnerability to burn out
- Short term feelings of satisfaction

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Strategies to Build and Maintain Professional Boundaries

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Strategies to Build and Maintain Professional Boundaries

- Be alert to potential conflicts of interest
- Explore reasonable remedies for these conflicts, and inform colleagues
- Consult policies and supervisors
- Design a plan to address boundary issues and protect the parties involved
- Document steps taken to address issues
- Develop a strategy to monitor/ reflect on behaviour

(Reamer, 2003, p 130)

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Use Self Reflection

- Am I treating this service recipient differently than I do others?
- Which of my emotions are being triggered?
- Is this relationship meeting my own personal needs?
- Would I be comfortable if my colleagues hear about this gift/action?
- Is this in the service recipient's best interest?
- Whose needs are being served?
- Will this have an impact on quality of service?
- Does this action benefit me?

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Knowledge and Skills to Assess Boundaries

- Ability to identify boundary violations

- Ability to apply critical thinking skills to professional client-worker relationships

- Ability to heighten awareness of self and others

- Ability to initiate change in behaviour

(Davidson, 2005, p 514).

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Ethics

- Always work in the best interest of the service recipient

- Follow behavioural expectations

- Use professional judgment in situations in which expectations and interest of service recipient are unclear

- Identify a range of boundary violations

- Be aware of self and others???

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Express your Boundaries to the Service Recipient

- Clearly communicate your boundaries

- Consistently reinforce your boundaries

- Explain why you need boundaries – use examples from the previous slides

- Don't ignore boundary issues – address them head on so the people you support learn from these moments.

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Case Study 1:

- John has been a DSW for Rick in a group home for the past three years. John just bought a new cottage and wants to invite Rick to the cottage with his family for the July long weekend.

  a) What boundaries might be crossed here?
  b) What are the ethical considerations?
  c) What could the impact be on Rick?

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Case Study 2:

- Roxanne is a DSW in a day program that Judy attends. Roxanne arrived home and checked her Facebook page and there is a friend request from Judy.

   a) What boundaries might be crossed here?
   b) What are the ethical considerations?
   c) What could the impact be on Judy?
   d) How should Roxanne handle this?

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Building and Maintaining Boundaries

- Use this guidance as an aid to reflect on professional boundary issues

- Seek appropriate support and supervision

- Initiate and engage in discussions of ethical issues with colleagues and supervisors

- Regularly reflect on your work behaviour and attitude

- Be aware of the power imbalance

- Ensure that you are aware of standards and policies. For example: confidentiality, dress code, electronic communication, lone working, out of hours working, physical contact, risk management, etc.

   www.scie–socialcareonline.org.uk/repository/fulltext/122181.pdf

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Continuously Revisit Topics

- Professional relationship boundaries

- Boundary violation impacts

- Personal boundary vulnerabilities

- Blurring boundary indicators

- Risk minimizing strategies

(Davidson, 2005, p 517)

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Building and Maintaining Boundaries

- Communicating clear boundaries to service recipients

- Strategies to communicate concern to a co-worker

- Assessment of service recipient's interpretation of boundaries

- Education for service recipient about boundaries

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Don't Forget to Take Care of YOU!

- Don't make work your whole life; have a range of activities outside of work
- Plan regular breaks and holidays
- Be aware of signs of tension and stress
- Make sure you have someone to talk to (a supervisor or someone outside of work)
- Take care of your general health (sleep, exercise, etc)
- Set limits on how long you work, and recognize you can't do it all
- Boundaries are most often crossed when worker is feeling emotionally vulnerable: overlooking one's own needs creates space to overlook others' needs

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/behaviour/professional/boundaries_pro.pdf

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Questions?

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