

**Journey of an Unregulated Profession:
Professional Boundaries**

October 22, 2013

Session Evaluation





Please access the Survey Monkey Questionnaire by:

- a) scanning this matrix barcode with your smartphone/ iPod/ iPad; OR
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<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2JH2K86>

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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 navigating professional boundaries, to utilize in their unique work environments


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Session Outline

- The Changing Role of a developmental services worker
- 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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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 are acceptable and not acceptable practices and behaviour
- These regulations make setting and maintaining boundaries clearer

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Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA)

“The public has to be protected from unqualified, incompetent and unfit health care providers to the extent possible...”

Alan Schwartz

Appointed in 1982 as Co-ordinator of the Health Professions Legislation Review

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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 we are asked to work outside of our scope of practice.
 - Signing consent forms
 - Counselling families
- Many times we choose 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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Case Study #1:

Joe's being released from hospital after a surgery, back to his group home. The discharge order states that staff are required to perform wound packing.

- a) What boundaries are being crossed?
- b) As a developmental services worker, is this within your scope of practice?
- c) Working within your scope of practice, what are your next steps?

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**Friendly, Not friends!
Professional Boundaries**



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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
- Involves issues of power, influence and control

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Case Study #2:

Rhonda is a DSW in a group home where Richard and three other people with complex medical needs reside. Every time Rhonda gives Richard a shower, he grabs her head and tries to kiss her.

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

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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 BEHAVIOUR CONTINUUM



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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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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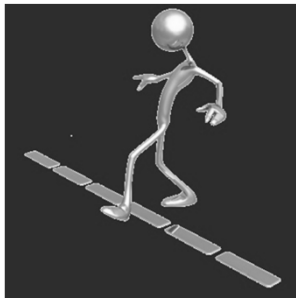
Case Study #3:

Sheila is a DSW in a high support group home where she provides supports to Angela. Sheila is getting married this summer and has been excitedly talking about it at the workplace with her co-workers. Angela gets very agitated when Sheila talks about her wedding and has asked repeatedly if she can attend.

- a) What boundaries might be crossed here?
- b) What are the ethical considerations?
- c) What could the impact be on Angela?
- d) How should Sheila handle this?
- e) How can Sheila avoid this happening in future?

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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 recipient
- 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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Case Study #4:

Jordan is a DSW supporting Bill in a group home setting. One Sunday, Jordan is at home watching football with his friends when Bill arrives at the door with snacks saying “I heard you at my house saying you were having some friends over to watch the game. Here I am!”

- a) What boundaries might be crossed here?
- b) What are the ethical considerations?
- c) What could the impact be on Bill?
- d) How should Jordan handle this?
- e) How can Jordan avoid this happening in future?

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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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Case Study #5:

Julia is accompanying Georges to the physician's office. Georges has been complaining of pain when voiding and seems to be urinating more often. They are escorted from the waiting room to the an examining room where they need to wait yet again. Upon the doctor's entering the room, Julia starts complaining about the wait time and then proceeds to tell the physician that Georges has a urinary tract infection and needs antibiotics.

- a) What boundaries are being crossed here?
- b) What are the ethical considerations?
- c) What could the impact be on Georges?
- d) How should Julia handle this?
- e) How can Julia avoid this happening in future?

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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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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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Questions?

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