

# External Stakeholder Communication & Professional Boundaries Protocol

## External Stakeholder Communication

In an effort to initiate an effective communication approach with families, conservators, ISC’s, MCO’s, medical providers and all other persons directly indicated in the care of persons supported, we would like to offer the following statement:

All concerned parties, who wish to share issues of concern, require clarification, or are seeking other additional information, should be directed to the Program Director or Executive Director to resolve these issues. It is our desire to eliminate the sharing of misinformation, which can be potentially damaging to the person served, employee and employer, as well as families and other community supports. All persons sharing in the distribution of such information will be subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including termination.

Discussing other people supported, management, or engaging in gossip about co-workers with external stakeholders is considered unacceptable performance for any Core Service employee.

When supporting people who live in with their family, employees of Core Services will refrain from becoming personally involved with the family. Employee’s should not share their own personal problems, accept gifts, or make themselves at home. Picking up and dropping off a person at their home should be completed in 10 minutes.

## Policy on Professional Boundaries and Relationships

Boundaries are emotional and mental limits that we naturally create to protect ourselves. Establishing professional boundaries in our lives enables a distinction between what we are thinking and feeling from the thoughts and feelings of others that we work with. Boundaries are useful and effective because they help define responsibilities and expectations of team members in the workplace. We all have boundaries, whether we are aware of them or not. We have limits as to how we allow others to treat us, and how we as professionals treat others.

As an employee of Core Services our allegiance must always be to the people that we support; all other activities and functions should flow from this allegiance. Professional boundaries define effective and appropriate interaction between Core employees, the people they support, and the friends and families of those individuals. Boundaries exist to protect both the employee and persons served. What is in the best interest of the person served can become confused and blurred when professional boundaries are crossed.

In the role of a Core employee you will often interact frequently with friends and family of the individuals that you support. It is natural to form relationships with these individuals. Relationships that cross professional boundaries include:

* friendships where you socialize with the family after your work hours
* engaging in business relationships not related to your employment, (including borrowing, selling or buying items)
* joining a church, club or organization at the recommendation of the friends, family, individual that involves after hours contact
* engaging in gossip with the friends, family, and/or individual about co-workers, other persons supported or the agency

If you find yourself in a situation where a professional boundary has been crossed consult your supervisor. Your supervisor can help you evaluate if a conflict of interest exists for your current assignment.

It is permissible for family members, friends, or romantic partners to work together so long as their personal relationship does not create a hostile work environment\*, negatively affect the life of person(s) supported, negatively affect one or more of the involved party’s job performance, or involve a superior/subordinate role. An employee of Core Services may not directly supervise someone that they are related to or involved in romantic relationship with. Core Services discourages DSPs from forming romantic relationships with co-workers but understands that this will occasionally occur within the workplace. ***\*A Hostile Work Environment claim will be evaluated by Core Services management as guided by legal requirements for a hostile work environment.***

Personal friendships between supervisor and subordinate are strongly discouraged and if it is determined that such a relationship is affecting the job performance of either party, negatively affecting person(s) supported, creating a hostile work environment, or the employee is being given unfair treatment due to this relationship, Core management reserves the right to reassign one or both parties to avoid such a conflict.

Staffing assignments, including direct co-worker arrangements, home assignments, or person-supported/DSP matching, are at the discretion of Core Services’ management and are subject to change as management deems necessary for any reason.

It is a priority for our agency to maintain staff consistency and to move/transfer/reassign DSPs at a minimum; only when necessary and when the change is deemed to be beneficial. However, we recognize that occasionally a DSP is not a good fit for a particular home or person supported for a variety of reasons. We evaluate these assignments on an ongoing basis in order to find the most suitable DSP/Person-supported relationship. For this reason among others, Core Services’ employees work for the agency as a whole and are not permanently assigned to any home, shift, or person supported.

DSPs may support family members so long as their personal relationship does not create a hostile work environment, negatively affect the life of any person(s) supported, negatively affect one or both of the involved parties’ job performance, or provide unfair treatment due to the nature of their relationship.

I have reviewed and understand the policy on external communication and professional boundaries:

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