

SUBJECT: STAFF RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONSUMERS

EFFECTIVE  
DATE: 01-11-10 (replaces 03-31-05)

APPROVED BY:

Reviewed (no changes): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Executive Director

POLICY

It is the policy of McIntosh Trail CSB to avoid staff relationships with current/former consumers in which there is a potential or perceived conflict of interest, unfair advantage, or restriction of consumer access to service as a result of such relationships. Staff will refrain from dual relationships with consumers, always being aware to preserve staff-to-consumer boundaries. These boundaries are a set of rules that establish the staff-to-consumer relationship as separate from other relationships (friendships, for example) and protect the consumer from harm. Boundaries imply professional distance and respect (even if you are a paraprofessional or administrative/support staff).

When an employee or employee's family member receives our service, staff must be especially sensitive of confidentiality, respect and professional boundaries. The principle of doing no harm to the consumer is paramount to this policy. Difficulties arise when a staff member wishes to be helpful to a consumer or to relate to a consumer as a "friend", instead of as a professional, paraprofessional, or administrative/support staff. Boundary violations can be prevented and the key is to treat all consumers equally. Taking a walk with a consumer, giving them hugs, or doing other "special" things for a consumer will raise a red flag and may give your consumer the sense that your relationship is more than professional. Be aware of your own feelings when dealing with consumers. Other examples of boundary violations include, but are not limited to:

1. Personal or social relationships with consumers outside job responsibilities.
2. Any or all romantic/sexual relationship behaviors.
3. Serving as 12-Step sponsor for any agency consumer.
4. Buyer/seller or other business relationships.
5. Loaning or borrowing money or other personal possessions.

It is the responsibility of the employee to use reasonable efforts to determine whether an individual is a current/former consumer of McIntosh Trail services.

PROCEDURE

If you find yourself in one of the above or a similar situation, consultation with your supervisor is important; check it out with someone else. If left unexamined, a minor boundary violation can lead to false allegations or situations more serious that are difficult to defend.

It is the responsibility of each employee to follow this policy and to notify his/her direct supervisor of any direct knowledge of policy violation by self or co-worker.

Alleged violations will be reviewed, investigated, and if determined valid, can result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, and/or criminal charges.