



Policy Name:	1.3 Policy to Report Boundary Violations	Date Revised:	9/2017
Purpose:	Protocol for Boundaries	Board Approval:	9/2017

1.3 Policy to Report Boundary Violations

Interim Policy Regarding Social Networking Websites

While social networking websites create a great way to build community and stay in contact with friends, family, colleagues and others, they pose many potential professional boundary issues with clients and former clients. We are researching “best practices” for maintaining boundaries and honoring confidentiality when using social networking websites, such as Facebook and MySpace. These policies will expand upon the current policies found in sections 1.3 to 1.6 below. Until the expanded policies are finalized, all staff are being asked to read these sections with the social networking applications that you use in mind.

(This box is continued below with examples.)

Many of the clients served by GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. have histories of abuse and sexual exploitation that place them at high risk for repeating aspects of their traumatic histories. The possibility of such behavioral reenactments of hurtful early experience places these young people at grave risk for re-victimization. Sometimes these re-enactments are attempted with GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. staff members. For this reason, maintenance of a genuinely therapeutic setting requires extraordinary attention to subtle invitations to cross boundaries and develop relationships with clients which may become inappropriate or work against their treatment. To insure that clients are protected from victimization and that staff members are protected from allegations, it is important that we work together in a community of respect in which we hold each other to the highest standards of professionalism and thoughtfulness.

For these reasons GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. staff members are required to report any concerns that they have regarding boundary violations by coworkers to the appropriate supervisor and to their program director. The supervisor/director will follow up this verbal report with an incident report. The supervisor/director will also take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the client and will design a supervision/training plan for the employee in question.

Please note: if the person committing the boundary violation is a supervisor or program director, then the report may be made to that individual’s supervisor, to the Associate Executive Director or to the Executive Director. The administrator receiving the report will write the incident report.

1.4 Staff-Client Relationships Policy

Youth placed at GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. often become strongly attached to the adults who care for them. In order to maintain a therapeutic environment that stresses both nurturing and concern as well as clear expectations and boundaries, the following policies are outlined:

Personal Information

- A. Staff shall not take youth to their private homes or involve them in their private lives. Staff shall not become personally involved with parents of clients. Staff should never tell a client where they live or give out their home phone number or personal pager or mobile phone numbers.

Interim Policy Regarding Social Networking Websites - continued

Scenario: A client asks you to join his/her network on a website such as Facebook.

As this has happened to staff and will continue to occur, be prepared for this scenario. The best way to handle denying his or her request would be to talk to him or her about it in person. By reaffirming what your role is in his or her life, you will be bringing clarity and most likely building trust in your relationship.

(This box is continued below.)

- B. It is difficult to determine how much, if any personal information a staff person should share with a youth or client. Below are some guidelines and vehicles to use in making decisions about this:
- Use the Treatment Team: In determining what information is to be shared with clients, it is important to use the treatment team as a decision-making group and as a place to receive feedback. Certainly there are situations in which sharing personal information can serve as role modeling for a youth. An important guideline here is to ask: “How is it helpful to the client for me to share this information?” “How will it help to meet his/her treatment needs?” and “Why is the youth asking me this question? What is underlying this question?”
 - Be Aware of Your Role: The role a staff person plays in a client’s life is based on the position she/he holds. A teacher will have a different relationship with a youth than a counselor, and these role differences must also be considered. It is important to understand the distinctions that exist based on your position, and how this will impact your relationship with clients, and how much you may/may not disclose.
 - Use Supervision: It is essential to use supervision as a mechanism to get feedback with regard to your relationship with clients. If an unusually strong attachment is forming between yourself and a client, or you are unclear about your role, use the forum to discuss these issues so that you can get the necessary support and feedback. In addition, you will often find that your own value system will affect your interventions and relationships with clients. Getting supervision on these issues will only improve the therapeutic process and allow the youth to take advantage of their relationship without building unrealistic expectations.

Interim Policy Regarding Social Networking Websites - continued

What will your clients or their family members find out about you by searching the web?

Take the time to become aware of what information you are sharing and with whom you are sharing it. Any site where you have a profile that identifies you and you posted information, made comments, etc. - or someone else has and referred to you – all of this information is potentially public and found by a simple search. For example, if you are on Facebook and have not changed your privacy settings, anyone can perform a simple web search and find:

- Your profile picture, friends, and likes,

- Your status, photos, and posts
- Bio and favorite quotations
- Family and relationships

You can reduce the amount of information they see on Facebook by changing your privacy settings to “Friends Only” or customizing it. After doing this, everyone will still be able to see: your profile picture, friends, and likes. And this is just Facebook.

(This box is continued below.)

C. Gift Giving and Receiving:

It is GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. ’s policy that personal gifts from staff to youth not be given, but that gifts purchased with Greater New Beginnings Youth Services, Inc. funds may be given at birthdays, holidays, etc. Clients and client families will sometimes bring gifts as expressions of gratitude for the worker’s efforts. These gifts may also be presented as part of an observance of a holiday.

- A. It is recognized that these situations are often challenging and require that the staff use good manners as well as good professional behavior.
- B. The response to such gifts should take into consideration the nature of the gift, the nature of the relationship with the client and the culture of the client.
 - a. In general, gifts which can be received as a gift to the entire team or to the setting in which the child is placed are less likely to cause future difficulties.
 - b. Gifts such as gift cards or certificates are potentially more problematic and should be accepted only if they can be framed as a contribution to the program.
- C. When the staff member has some uneasiness with the gift or feels that it may represent a possible boundary crossing or violation then the client should be thanked for their thoughtfulness and kindness and a polite refusal of the gift should be made.
- D. These suggestions are offered as guidelines. The underlying considerations in these situations should always be a combination of gracious good manners and attention to possible future boundary risks.

Contact between Former Staff and Current Clients

GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. encourages staff to develop and maintain relationship with clients and it is of the utmost priority that clients’ safety and boundaries are respected. Due to concern for potential abuse of boundaries (by clients or staff) in a relationship outside of GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. , there are clear protocols in place to help determine if unsupervised contact between a former staff person and a current client will be allowed to occur.

- A. Former staff may have unsupervised contact with clients, if all of the following criteria are met:
 1. Approval from Program Director
 2. Approval from Ed Team
 3. Approval from CWW/Legal Guardian
 4. The contact must be incorporated into the treatment plan.
 5. Role of the former staff person will be defined and discussed in the treatment team
- B. Former staff may have supervised contact with clients (i.e.: attend an event within the program, like a birthday party), if all of the following criteria are met:
 1. Approval from Program Director

2. HIPAA agreement is signed by the former staff person prior to contact.

Contact between GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. Staff and Former Clients

In that our work is based on relationship and engagement there is often a wish on the part of staff members and clients to continue contact after a client's departure from the Greater New Beginnings Youth Services, Inc. . We recognize that sustaining relationships with our clients in this way can be very helpful to them and that it is consistent with the real bonds that develop in the course of long-term work. At the same time it is important to recognize that such contact constitutes a boundary crossing or transition in which it is extremely important to maintain professional conduct and appropriate oversight. The following policies address these issues:

- A. GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. staff may have supervised contact with former clients, if all of the following criteria are met:
 1. Approved by Program Director
 2. Approved by CWW/Legal Guardian
 3. Role of the staff person will be defined and discussed in the treatment team prior to discharge, if possible
 4. Role of the staff person will continue to be monitored and discussed in supervision
 - i. If the contact takes place through letters, the letters shall be mailed using a GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. address and will be monitored through a supervisor (this would be explained and approved by the former client and CWW/legal guardian).
 - ii. With program director approval, the contact could take place at a GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. location
- B. GREATER NEW BEGINNINGS YOUTH SERVICES, INC. staff may have unsupervised contact with former clients, if all of the following criteria are met:
 1. After six months of supervised contact between the staff person and the former client, if the client requests unsupervised contact (visiting in the home/community), then the following criteria would need to be met:
 - i. Approved by Program Director
 - ii. Approved by Ed Team
 - iii. Approved by CWW/Legal Guardian
 - iv. Role of the staff person will continue to be monitored and discussed in supervision
 - v. Contact shall be documented by the staff person, and kept on file at the program site from which the client was last enrolled. This documentation will be reviewed in supervision of the staff person.

Interim Policy Regarding Social Networking Websites - continued

How would you respond to a former client asking you to join his/her network on a website?

Becoming part of a client's social network on a website would be a boundary crossing or transition and, as stated above, "it is extremely important to maintain professional conduct and appropriate oversight." You would need to follow the approval process above in order to create this sort of contact with a former client.