

STAFF AND PERSON'S SERVED RELATIONSHIP POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to assist both persons served and staff in developing and maintaining relationships, which contribute to the health and well being of all. In this policy the word “staff” covers all personnel of Reach of Washington County, including contract employees, and board of directors and volunteers.

The purpose of staff/persons served relationships is to empower persons served to function at the highest possible level and to become integrated into the community to the greatest extent possible. Because Reach of Washington County promotes relationships that focus on similarities among people and encourages mutuality of giving and receiving, relationships between persons served and staff can become complex. Therefore it is very important to maintain clear boundaries. Some of the guidelines and limitations necessary to safeguard trust and protect against the potential for exploitation of persons served are explained below.

Standards of Conduct

All personnel shall conduct themselves as role models in performance of their job activities, striving for exemplary attitude and work habits, clear communication and personal appearance appropriate to the work setting. Staff/person served interactions at Reach of Washington County or away from Reach of Washington County should be consistent with professional conduct.

Equitable Treatment

All persons served should be treated equitably and fairly, without giving special privileges or developing special relationships from which other persons served feel excluded. Agreeing to keep information confidential from the team or others who need to know is an example of creating special privilege.

Appropriate Boundaries

Staff and persons served are expected to respect the boundaries of a collegial work relationship. Staff are expected to seek and use supervisory, peer and person served feedback to monitor feelings and actions (such as developing an over attachment to a particular person served). Personal sharing should be limited and intentional, always in the best interest of the person served rather than to meet the needs of the staff person. Staff is expected to limit expression of affection between staff and persons served to that which is minimal and appropriate to the situation and the person served. Dating and physical intimacy are prohibited. Although there may be acquaintance friendships between persons served and staff in the community, staff may not maintain personal friendships with persons served or use persons served as part of their emotional support network. Staff may not have a living arrangement together with a person served.

Boundaries Specific to Substance Abuse Recovery

Staff may transport and accompany a person served to an AA or NA meeting in the beginning to help them feel comfortable. However, staff who attend such meetings for themselves should not

routinely transport persons served and go to the meetings together. Staff may not agree to be a substance abuse sponsor for a person served.

Participation in Community Support Groups Together with Persons Served

Staff who participate in therapeutic or self-help groups for their own personal needs should whenever possible seek to participate in groups which persons served by Reach do not attend. However, Reach acknowledges that living in the same community may result in persons served and staff becoming consumers together in community support groups, e.g. AA, Weight Watchers, Smoke-Enders, etc. In these situations, problems for the person served or the staff person may arise from self-disclosure. Reach staff are encouraged to bring such concerns to the Reach Executive Director for problem solving. It is appropriate to maintain the group's confidentiality agreements unless information revealed during the meeting indicates danger to the persons served or others. If this occurs, the Reach staff is expected to report this danger to the Reach Executive Director by the next business day.

Appropriate Dress

Staff is expected to dress in clothing which is neat, clean and appropriate for work. Provocative clothing should be avoided, (e.g. skintight pants, short shorts, transparent or low cut blouses).

Private Financial Transactions Prohibited

Reach staff or their families may not enter into any of the following private financial transactions with a person served by Reach or a family member of a person served:

- giving or accepting tips;
- providing bail money;
- giving or accepting loans;
- buying or selling real estate;
- being named as the beneficiary of a will, life insurance policy, or any other source of benefits of a person served by Reach of Washington County;
- being designated as "power of attorney" or being a trustee for any type of financial arrangement with a person served by Reach of Washington County.

In the event that a staff person becomes the unknowing beneficiary of assets, the staff person will decline any benefits to prevent even the appearance of a conflict of interest. Exception to this is made when an actual family relationship exists between the staff and the person served.

Solicitation for sales or fundraising between staff and persons served is prohibited. In general, staff and persons served are discouraged from selling or buying a specific item or services from each other. Persons served and their families may contribute to Reach of Washington County as an organization, but not to a specific staff person. Financial assistance and transactions for persons served should be handled through appropriate procedures specified by the organization, i.e. crisis intervention or case management procedures.

Exchange of small gifts (value less than \$5) may be appropriate between staff and persons served keeping in mind such factors as finances, the meaning of the gift to a particular person served, favoritism issues, etc. For evaluation and review purposes, staff is required to report to the Executive Director if they receive multiple small gifts from the same person served.

Any exception to the above private financial transaction policy requires review and approval from the Reach Executive Director. This approval should be in keeping with the intent of maintaining healthy relationships and avoiding exploitation.

Responsible Conduct of Duties

Reach of Washington County personnel shall, in all interactions with or activities on behalf of persons served by Reach of Washington County, respect the dignity of these persons. All activities between staff and persons served must be consistent with the mission and values of Reach. Drug or alcohol abuse, involvement in illegal activity, (e.g. stealing) misusing the funds of a person served, irresponsible, abusive or neglectful behavior endangering the physical or mental health of a person served by Reach of Washington County, or involving a person served in any of the above are considered serious misconduct. Anyone who feels that such misconduct has occurred should report the behavior to the Reach Executive Director who will evaluate the allegation and take the appropriate actions.

Consequences of Violations

If a staff person violates the Relationships between Staff and Persons Served policy, appropriate steps shall be taken depending on the nature and circumstances of the violation. See Discipline and Employee Termination Policies for appropriate action steps.

As a staff member/board member/volunteer (circle one) of Reach of Washington County acknowledge by my signature below that I have read, understand and have had the opportunity to ask questions about this policy.

Signature of Staff/Board/Volunteer

Date

Signature of Executive Director

Date