

Professional Boundaries and Dual

Professional Boundaries and Dual Relationships

1. Introduction

- Professional boundaries are the limits that define a safe, therapeutic provider-patient relationship.
- Maintaining them protects patients from harm and preserves objectivity.

2. Key Concepts

- **Boundary:** the line separating professional conduct from personal involvement.
- **Boundary crossing:** a minor, often harmless deviation that may still warrant caution.
- **Boundary violation:** a harmful breach that exploits the patient.

3. Dual Relationships

- A dual relationship exists when a provider has another connection with a patient, such as friend, business partner, or relative.
- These can impair judgment and create conflicts of interest.
- They risk exploitation due to the power imbalance in care.

4. Common Risk Areas

- Accepting significant gifts or financial dealings with patients.
- Social media contact and self-disclosure beyond therapeutic need.
- Romantic or sexual involvement, which is strictly prohibited.

5. Maintaining Boundaries

- Recognize warning signs and seek supervision when unsure.
- Refer patients elsewhere when a conflict cannot be avoided.
- Follow professional codes that define acceptable conduct.