

Boundary Scenario Cards

Professional Ethics & Boundaries • Theme 1B • THW Continuing Education

SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUT

Boundary Scenario Cards

For Small Group Discussion

Using These Scenarios

If using in a group: divide into small groups of 4-5 people, assign 1-2 scenarios per group, allow 7-10 minutes for discussion, then share key insights. If working alone, write out your responses to each discussion question before reviewing the teaching points at the end of this handout.

SCENARIO 1

The Gift

You've been working with Marcus for three months. He's made significant progress in his recovery and credits you with much of his success. At your last meeting, he hands you a gift bag containing an expensive watch. "I saw this and thought of you," he says. "You've done so much for me. Please accept it."

Discussion Questions:

- Is this a boundary crossing or violation? What factors inform your decision?
- How might accepting the gift affect your peer relationship with Marcus?
- How might declining the gift affect Marcus?
- What would you say to Marcus in this moment?
- What should you do after this interaction?

SCENARIO 2

The Transportation Dilemma

Sarah is a single mother you've been supporting. She has an important appointment at the Social Security office tomorrow that could affect her disability benefits. Her car just broke down, and there's no bus route to that location. She asks if you could give her a ride. Your organization doesn't have a policy about this, and you have the time available.

Discussion Questions:

- Is this a boundary crossing or violation? What factors inform your decision?
- What questions would you want to consider before making a decision?
- What are the potential benefits of providing transportation?
- What are the potential risks?
- How might you handle this differently if it became a regular request?

SCENARIO 3

Small Town Challenges

You work as a peer supporter in a small rural community. At your daughter's soccer game, you see James, someone you've been supporting through his mental health recovery. He's there with his family. He waves enthusiastically and starts walking toward you. Several other parents are watching.

Discussion Questions:

- What are your concerns in this situation?
- What did you discuss with James about public encounters when you started working together? If nothing, why is this important?
- How do you balance James's right to privacy with natural community interactions?
- What would you do in this moment?
- How would you follow up on this at your next meeting with James?

SCENARIO 4

The Facebook Friend Request

You receive a Facebook friend request from Maria, someone you've been supporting for two months. Looking at her profile, you can see she's posted about having a really hard week. You're concerned about her. Your organization doesn't have a clear social media policy.

Discussion Questions:

- Should you accept the friend request? Why or why not?
- What are the risks of connecting on social media with people you support?
- How might you address the concerning posts you saw without accepting the request?
- What conversation should you have with Maria at your next meeting?
- What should you suggest to your organization regarding social media policy?

SCENARIO 5

When to Report

During your support session, David mentions that he "taught his son a lesson he won't forget" last night after the boy talked back. When you ask what happened, David says he "gave him a whipping he deserved." David says this is how he was raised and it's "no big deal." You notice David seems defensive when you try to explore this further.

Discussion Questions:

- What are your initial concerns?
- What additional information would help you understand the situation?
- When does physical discipline cross the line into reportable abuse?
- What are your mandatory reporting obligations in Oregon?
- How do you balance your peer relationship with David and your legal obligations?
- What should you do next?

SCENARIO 6

Sharing Too Much

You're meeting with a new peer, Jessica, who is early in recovery from opioid use disorder. She asks about your story, and you begin sharing. You find yourself going into detail about a particularly traumatic relapse you experienced years ago. Jessica's eyes are wide, and she's gripping her chair. You suddenly realize you've been talking for ten

minutes.

Discussion Questions:

- What went wrong in this interaction?
- What impact might your story have on Jessica?
- What guidelines should you follow for self-disclosure?
- How can you recover this situation?
- What will you do differently next time?

SCENARIO 7

The Dual Relationship

You've been assigned to support a new client. When you meet, you realize it's Tom, who attends the same AA meeting you do. You've heard Tom share personal things in meetings that he might not want his "peer supporter" to know. Tom seems equally surprised but says, "Well, this is awkward, but I guess you already know everything about me!"

Discussion Questions:

- What are the ethical concerns in this situation?
- Can you ethically continue as Tom's peer supporter? What factors would you consider?
- What conversation do you need to have with Tom right now?
- What do you need to discuss with your supervisor?
- If you continue working with Tom, what boundaries need to be established?

SCENARIO 8

The Documentation Dilemma

You're documenting your session with Angela. During the meeting, she shared that she's been having thoughts of self-harm but has not acted on them. She begged you not to tell anyone because she doesn't want to be "locked up." You also learned she got a new job this week and is excited about it. Your supervisor will review your notes.

Discussion Questions:

- What must you include in your documentation? What should you leave out?
- How do you document concerns about self-harm appropriately?
- What are your confidentiality obligations versus your duty to warn?
- What conversation should you have had with Angela in the moment?
- What are your next steps regarding Angela's safety?

Key Teaching Points

Review after working through your responses.

Scenario	Key Teaching Points
1. The Gift	Gift acceptance policies vary; always consult supervisor. Consider value, intent, and impact on the relationship. Document any gifts received.
2. Transportation	Transportation can be a crossing or violation depending on context. Consider: frequency, alternatives, whose needs are met, supervisor consultation.
3. Small Town	Small community encounters require proactive planning. Discuss expectations upfront. Let the peer lead on acknowledgment. Protect confidentiality.

4. Facebook Friend	Generally decline social media connections. Organizations need clear policies. Address concerns through appropriate channels, not social media.
5. When to Report	Mandatory reporting: Ask clarifying questions. When in doubt, consult supervisor. Report if abuse suspected. Duty to report overrides confidentiality.
6. Sharing Too Much	Self-disclosure must be purposeful, brief, and processed. Watch for signs of distress. Focus stays on the peer. Share healed wounds, not open ones.
7. Dual Relationship	Dual relationships common in peer work. Acknowledge openly. Consult supervision. Consider transfer if needed. Establish clear role boundaries.
8. Documentation	Document facts objectively. Self-harm thoughts require safety assessment and communication with treatment team. Always discuss limits of confidentiality upfront.

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