

Partners in Quality Care



Objectives:

Review importance of professionalism

Review concepts with Home Care professionalism

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References:

NCDHHS/DHSR/HCPEC | Home Care Aide Curriculum | July 2021 Module 10. Relationships with Patients and/or Family.

Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others, Module 6: Tips for Setting Healthy and Safe Boundaries to Reduce Stress.

https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-102/pdfs/TrainersGuide_6_2_015-102.pdf - accessed 3/19/2026

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism for an In-home aide encompasses many facets including following required standards of care, providing care that is rooted in honest, ethical behavior, and ensuring competence through proper training and ongoing education to provide care that is assigned. Balancing professionalism and caring with providing services in the home requires thoughtful based actions daily. As an In-home aide you may be providing care to a client for a long time, and you may be referred to as “part of the family”. That term can be confusing if taken out of context in the requirements to be a professional in your work. In-home aides, like any other health care professional, must follow all agencies’ legal and ethical policies and/or protocol. Professionalism in home care means consistently delivering high-quality care to clients by being competent, reliable, punctual, compassionate, and respectful. Professionalism also means maintaining professional boundaries. Prioritizing the client's needs and respecting their privacy and dignity is a way to be a professional in Home Care. As an In-home aide, you may be assigned to care for the same client for an extended period. It is essential that you build a trusting and caring relationship with the client and all others involved with care. By the nature of home care, relationships can often be long lasting and close. Learning how to maintain boundaries is extremely important to ensure a professional In-home aide-client relationship. Having a good relationship with home care clients can be rewarding. Providing care in a setting that enables one- to- one care offers opportunities for the client to be able to stay in their home and for the In-home aide to build strong relationships with the client and family. These relationships can feel rewarding to both the client and the In-home aide. But keep in mind that relationships with your clients are different from relationships with your family and friends. Ask your agency supervisor for help with developing professional relationships with clients and families. Your agency will need to be involved to help set the professional expectations from the beginning of care delivery. Most agencies will have policies about maintaining professional relationships with clients. Developing rapport with clients is an important part of the In-home aide’s role. “Rapport” refers to one’s relationship or connection to another person. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication. It is important to have good rapport with each client both for the comfort of the client, and to allow the In-home aide and client to better understand each other. As an In-home aide you have a unique relationship with clients. Being with a client with an illness or disability and working closely with both the client and the client’s family can be a close and emotional experience. Sharing in the family’s hope, pain, and grief can make you feel close to the family. Appropriate relationships with Home Care Clients include:

- Respectful relationships for the client and their home and belongings as well as respect for yourself as a home care provider in wanting to provide quality home care services.
- Friendly relationships with your clients in which you can build a caring relationship and provide care that is appropriate and that involves the client’s wishes and is part of the plan of care and your assignment.
- Dependable relationships in which you arrive at the client’s home when you are assigned to arrive, or you notify your supervisor and the client per policies.

PROFESSIONALISM

Healthy and Safe Boundaries include: (discuss these with your supervisor and review your agency policies)

- Coming to work without friends or family.
- Do not discuss your life problems that might worry or concern clients.
- Do not give out your phone number to clients per agency policy.
- Never take money or gifts from clients. Do not ask clients for money. Notify Your agency if the client would like to provide a gift to you. Your agency may have an employee appreciation program where the client can give you a good review.
- Notify your supervisor if a client is treating you in ways that are stressful to you.
- Do not work hours you are not paid for. Report concerns to your supervisor.
- Do not perform tasks you are not trained to do. Ask for training and tools you need.

Professional standards protect you and the client, set the standard at the beginning of care

Educational Needs

As we go through our education and training in our field, we learn information related to our field of study, but we do not always have all the competencies required for all tasks assigned. As an example, you may have learned basic information about mechanical lifts (e.g., Hoyer lifts), but, if you do not use the lifts regularly, you may need a refresher in how to use them safely for client transfers. Mechanical lifts are different and are not alike, add that to the client's environment, (crowded space to use a lift, etc.,) client's physical size (relative to the size of the lift), and other safety factors, and this is one example of how imperative it is that you are competent and confident in this skill. You can transfer this concept to other skills as well, especially related to client transfers or other tasks that could potentially be dangerous for the client or yourself. Other educational opportunities may be related to chronic diseases such as heart failure, COPD, Diabetes, Dementia (Alzheimer's), end of life care, falls prevention, mental health, caring for older or younger clients. Reach out to your supervisor and ask for more education as needed based on the type of client you are caring for in the home, especially if it is a new condition or an age of a client you are caring for that is not familiar to you with your previous training, such as pediatric care.

It is important to remember that boundaries are established to protect the *client and the In-home aide*. Other ways to maintain professional relationship boundaries include:

- Do not engage in outside/personal relationships with clients and do not invite clients to your home.
- Never date or have any type of sexual relationship with your clients or any of their family members.
- Remain neutral and do not interfere in a client's personal relationships.
- Always act in the best interest of the client, if you find yourself wanting to do something because of your own personal gain, it is best not to continue the planned action and speak to your supervisor.
- Do not visit a client when not working or assigned to that client.
- Avoid discussing topics such as religion and politics with clients or their family and friends.
- Do not smoke in a client's home, there are laws in certain states such as in NC that prohibit smoking in a client's home. It goes without saying, never use any mind-altering substance including alcohol while on the job, or go to work impaired. It does not matter if certain substances are legal in your state, this poses a danger to the client and yourself.

- Appropriately interacting with clients and their families can make a difference in both the In-home aide's and the client's satisfaction with services. Always follow the plan of care, be clear and polite, and use your supervisor for support and guidance in questionable situations.
- In-home aides cannot trust that a client/family will know professional boundaries. An In-home aide must have the knowledge, training, and supervisory support to prevent or correct boundary crossings.
- It is a good rule of thumb that if a situation does not feel right, it probably is not.
- Report any inappropriate behaviors or statements to your supervisor.

PROFESSIONALISM

Examples of Professionalism in Home Care include:

Competence- Being competent means properly or sufficiently qualified or capable or efficient. If you are competent, you have the necessary ability or skills to do something. (vocabulary.com dictionary). Being aware of your learning needs and communicating those to your agency supervisor is a professional responsibility. Being competent for all assigned tasks is part of professionalism. As an In-home aide, your education and training may not have covered every task you might encounter in your work.

Communication- Open communication with your supervisor is an important component of professionalism. Communication must be a two-way process between you and your supervisor. As an In-home aide, you should ask questions and seek clarification for any assigned tasks or other issues that you need to discuss with your supervisor (i.e. safety issues in the home, situations that make you uncomfortable in the home, etc.). You may also need help from your supervisor in maintaining boundaries. Please don't hesitate to reach out for help. Good communication skills and using professional language are important and go a long way in helping to avoid "boundary" problems with clients and families. Let your client know that you must follow your agency policies if you are asked to do anything outside of what you have been assigned to do. It is ok to let a client know that you must speak to your supervisor first. Notify your supervisor if you feel like the client or family member is asking you to do anything that is not allowed in agency policy or according to the plan of care, or if you are unclear about your agency policy.

Social media- Most people use some form of social media - Facebook, Instagram, and others. Keep in mind that it is a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) law violation to post any information or pictures about your clients (even if you don't use the client's name in a description, it can be figured out who the person is). Never post pictures of clients or pose with clients for pictures on social media. Know what your agency guidelines and policies are concerning social media. Sharing pictures or selfies from your client's homes, with identifiable information in the picture is another way to breach confidentiality (even if it's not a picture of the client or with the client, it is possible to see information in the background that can identify the client). Do not mix your personal and professional life with social media. Common myths with social media are that a post is private and accessible only to whom it was sent to (in reality, the content once posted can be sent to others). There is also a mistaken belief that content deleted from a site is no longer accessible (in reality, once posted it lives on a server). In NC and federally, the definition of abuse includes abuse facilitated or enabled through the use of technology (and abuse is a reportable allegation).

Overstep of responsibilities- Most people who are in the business of caring for others are by nature caring and compassionate people who want to make a difference in the lives of those to whom care is provided. As an In-home aide, providing caring, quality and competent care according to the client's plan of care is your responsibility. There may be times when your caring extends to areas outside of your responsibility and that is when professional boundaries may get crossed. As an In-home care provider, you will see needs of the clients you care for in other areas of their life such as social (relationships with friends, family, spouse), environmental (house repairs needed, pests in home, etc.), economic (if there is enough money for food, medications, housing, etc.). As an In-home caregiver, you may want to help your clients in these areas. As a professional, the way to help a client with issues you observe in the home are to report client needs to your supervisor. With the client's permission there are ways your agency can help by making referrals and coordinating other services to meet the client's needs. There are services that can help with home repairs, pest eradication, help with buying medications, food, counseling and other types of assistance programs.

Dress code- How you appear by the way you dress and speak sets the tone for a caring, professional relationship and first impressions are important. Professional attire sends the message that you are serious about your job. Your agency may have a certain dress code in place and require a name badge or other type of identification.

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