



# Volunteering and Boundaries

Essential guidelines for creating safe, respectful, and effective volunteer environments



# What Are Boundaries?

## Guidelines & Limits

Rules that identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways to interact with others

## Acceptable Behavior

Set parameters of what is and is not acceptable in professional settings

## Legal & Cultural

Important for privacy, confidentiality, workplace culture, and self-care



# Three Key Boundary Relationships

## Volunteer & Clients

Empathetic and professional relationships focusing on client wellbeing.



## Volunteers & Volunteers

Peer relationships balancing social connection with professional conduct.

## Volunteers & Cancer Society

Supportive relationships maintaining professional standards and duty of care.

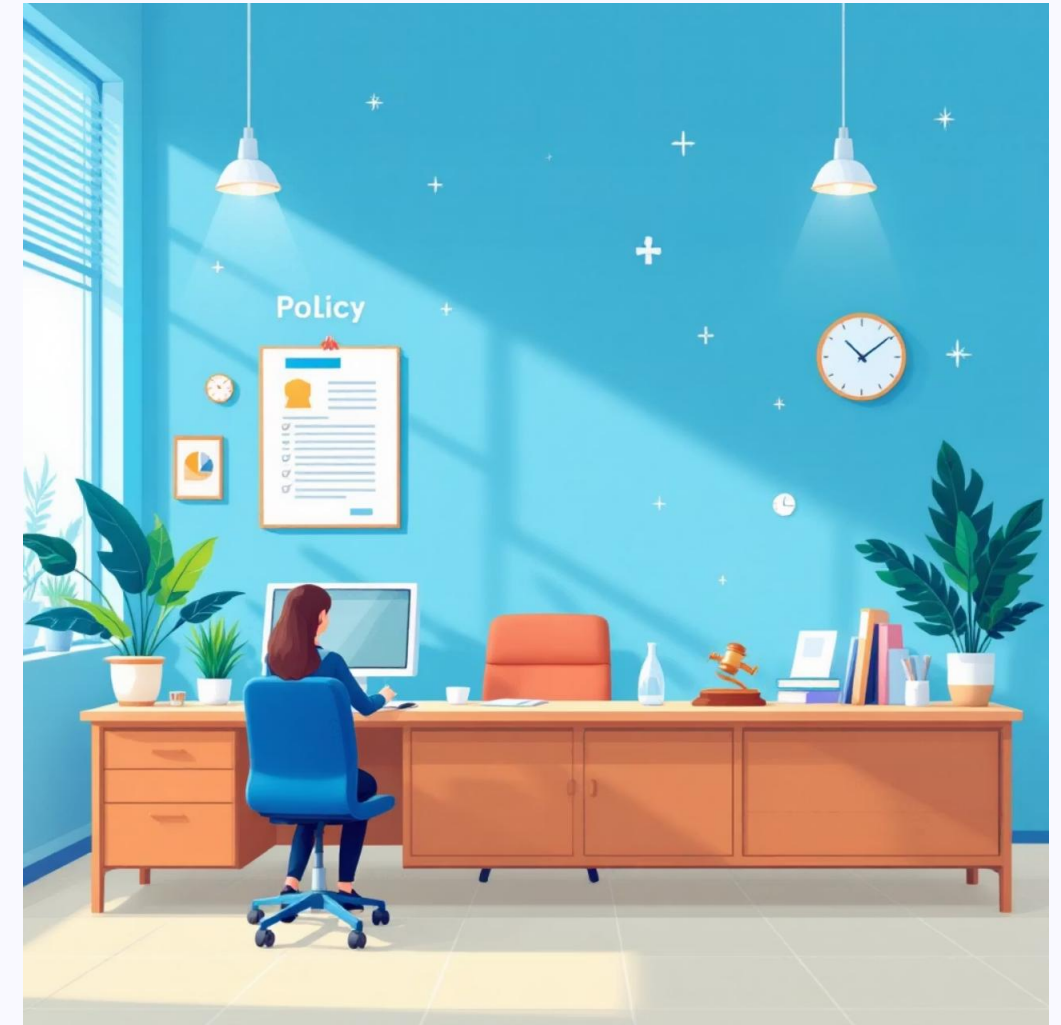
# Personal vs Professional Boundaries

## When Boundaries Conflict

Organisational boundaries are in place to ensure:

- Consistency of service and experience
- Emotional wellbeing of clients and volunteers
- Physical wellbeing of clients and volunteers
- Privacy and confidentiality laws

**Example:** Volunteer drivers are asked not to run additional errands with clients. This is to prevent setting of non sustainable expectations and preserve health and safety.





# Volunteer-Client Boundaries

## Emotional Boundaries

Limit personal life sharing while maintaining empathy and caring attitude

## Physical Boundaries

Respect personal space and follow organizational gift policies

## Role Boundaries

Work within position description and agreed duties for wellbeing and safety reasons.

## Privacy Boundaries

Maintain confidentiality of client information and limit sharing of personal details.

# What Boundaries do the Cancer Society Ask Volunteers to Uphold?

Only carrying out driving assignments requested from Cancer Society, please do not accept requests for transport directly from clients.

Decline request from clients to run other errands or make significant detours on route to hospital or home.

Refrain from giving medical or other advice to clients. Encourage client to seek support at hospital or contact Cancer Society.

Politely decline any gifts from clients or invites into the client's home.

Protect your privacy, do not give out personal details to clients or over share your personal experiences with cancer or the health system.

# What Boundaries do the Cancer Society Ask Volunteers to Uphold?

Only providing support requested by the Cancer Society, if a client requests additional support please check in with Cancer Society team member.




Decline request from clients to support them with any financial or legal matters.

Refrain from giving medical or other advice to clients. Encourage client to seek support at hospital or contact Cancer Society.



Politely decline any gifts from clients.

Protect your privacy, do not give out personal details to clients or over share your personal experiences with cancer or the health system.

# Communicating Boundaries Effectively

-  Establish and be clear about your own boundaries
-  Be assertive and honest and learn when to say 'no' if your boundaries are crossed.
-  Honor personal boundaries based on individual values, culture, and experience.

## Sharing of ideas...

-  How do we manage these boundaries with clients?
-  What are some responses you may have used?

# Volunteer-to-Volunteer Relationships

## Benefits & Challenges

Volunteering offers great social opportunities to meet like-minded people and make friends, at various stages of life.

However, professional working relationships must be maintained to ensure everyone feels safe and welcome.

## Key Considerations

- Maintain privacy and confidentiality
- Respect those not seeking social connections
- Prevent harassment and bullying
- Balance friendship with professionalism

# Volunteer - Cancer Society Dynamics

1

## Natural Relationships

Relationships with Cancer Society team members aid service effectiveness and team cohesion.

2

## Professional Standards

Relationships must respect boundaries and align with client service compliance requirements.

3

## Duty of Care

The Cancer Society has a responsibility to protect volunteers' physical and mental wellbeing.



# Friendly, Not Friends

A simple framework for appropriate volunteer boundaries across all relationships.

## ✓ Friendly Approach

Harmonious volunteering relationships that are warm, respectful, and conducive to good teamwork.

## ✗ Friend Relationships

Personal friendships that may compromise professional judgment and appropriate service delivery.

# Protecting Everyone Through Boundaries

Boundaries take on particular significance when serving vulnerable populations including children, elderly, and disadvantaged individuals.



## Volunteer Safety

Clear boundaries protect volunteers from overextension and inappropriate requests




## Client Protection

Professional boundaries ensure consistent, appropriate service delivery



## Organizational Integrity

Following policies and procedures maintains compliance and workplace culture

 **Remember:** If boundaries are crossed or you're asked to act beyond your role, always refer issues to your Volunteer Manager or supervisor.

If this presentation has raised any questions or concerns for you please be sure to reach out to your local Community Coordinator.

Content sourced from:

Volunteering Australia (2021) - <https://volunteeringhub.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Volunteering%20and%20Boundaries.pdf>

Cancer Society - Southern Volunteer Driver Handbook (2024)