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## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

<Organization Name> is committed to ensuring its employees have a safe and professional workplace and to maintaining high service standards for its clients. With this in mind, this Personal Relationships Policy has been established to provide guidelines for employee behaviour and the required disclosure for personal relationships in the workplace. This policy outlines expectations for maintaining professional boundaries with clients and guidelines for employees who are romantically or sexually involved with colleagues.

DEFINITIONS

**Professional boundaries** are the limits to the relationship between employees and a client, allowing for a safe connection between them, thus protecting them both.

**Boundaries** are the lines that separate a professional from a non-professional relationship.

**Sexual harassment** is “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job‑related consequences for the victims of the harassment.”

**Employee dating** includes consensual romantic relationships and sexual relations.

POLICY

<Organization Name> understands that personal relationships may develop in the workplace. <Organization Name> expects employees to consider potential conflicts of interest before dating a colleague as outlined in the Code of Conduct and requires them to disclose personal relationships in the workplace.

<Organization Name>, however, has zero tolerance for employees and volunteers starting or having relationships that exceed or trespass our professional boundaries with clients.

**Professional Boundaries**

The distinction between **personal** and **professional relationships**:

* In a professional relationship, the employee is paid to provide care or service, or in the case of a volunteer, is in a volunteer agreement. A personal relationship does not pay.
* The professional relationship is intended to provide care and activities rather than pleasure and shared interest.
* Employees and volunteers have more power because they have authority, knowledge, and access to confidential client information. In a friendship, power tends to be fairly balanced.

Employees are responsible for building and maintaining relationships professionally, whereas friends share this responsibility.

Employees are required to:

* Clearly establish the nature and scope of their professional relationship with <Organization Name>’s clients.
* Consistently document all interactions with clients and ensure that these records are kept up-to-date and kept confidential in accordance with privacy legislation.
* Protect the confidentiality of all client treatment and any related client information.
* Develop professional relationships based on mutuality, respect, client motivation, capacity, and opportunities for change.
* Ensure their actions, decisions, and practices focus on helping, supporting, and serving the client's needs.
* Protect clients' dignity, respect their individuality, and maintain all related client human rights.
* Inform their supervisor or manager in the event that they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation with a client or they have noticed an inappropriate interaction between a client and another employee.

Boundaries of Employee-Client Relationships

* Employees and volunteers shall be trained on this policy.
* Employees and volunteers are encouraged to discuss issues with professional boundaries during employee meetings.
* Employees should limit their relationships with clients to a professional capacity only.
* Employees are strictly prohibited from giving any form of gifts to or receiving from the clients or individuals or groups associated with their clients, such as but not limited to relatives, friends, and colleagues.
* Communication between clients and employees is preferably completed in an in-person (face-to-face) setting.
  + In the event that other forms of communication are required, all forms of interactions must be transmitted through <Organization Name>’s official business communication channels (phone, email, video calling, etc.). Personal contact details and personal information, such as but not limited to an employee’s contact number, email, social media account, etc., must not be shared with clients at any time or under any circumstance.
* Personal relationships with clients or clients’ family members outside of company premises and outside work hours or duties are strictly prohibited.
* All clients must be treated equally. Favouritism and the provision of “special” attention to specific individuals are not permitted and will be subject to investigation.
* Employees shall not entertain, address, suggest, or create intimate attraction and/or any form of such a relationship with a client, a client’s family, or a colleague's client.
* Employees may not promise to keep secrets or any private information for clients. All interactions must be documented.

Documentation

* <Organization Name> must keep track of all forms of interactions, including but not limited to discussions, consultations, and communications, between and among its Employees and clients.
* If boundary issues arise, <Organization Name> must document all discussions, consultations, supervision, and any other steps to address the identified problems/issues, including investigations.
* All inputs shall be used to mitigate risks of similar or related problems in the future.

**Workplace Relationships**

<Organization Name> expects professional conduct in the workplace, including respectful treatment of colleagues, avoiding romantic advances, and respecting others' time and choices.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour relating to romantic relationships in the workplace include (but are not limited to):

* Arguing in the workplace.
* Kissing or touching inappropriately in the workplace.
* Exchanging an excessive number of instant messages or calls during working hours.
* Oversharing with others in the workplace concerning a romantic relationship.
* Violating the Code of Conduct, Human Rights Commitment, Harassment or Violence Policies, or any other <Organization Name> policy concerning the romantic relationship.

Unwanted Employee Advances

Flirting and/or persistent romantic advances that disrupt work duties are prohibited. Employees should first ask the person to stop and report to their supervisor or management if they continue. There is zero tolerance for sexual harassment, and any such behaviour will be investigated once known.

Employees Dating in the Same Position Level

<Organization Name> respects employees' private lives unless their behaviour affects workplace professionalism and productivity. Personal issues and discussions should be kept out of the workplace, and employees should speak with their manager for guidance if dating a colleague affects their work.

Dating Situations involving a Member of the Management

Supervisors are prohibited from dating their direct reports or those who report to their team to avoid accusations of favouritism and the possible abuse of authority. Managers are also not permitted to date those below their job title, even if they’re in another department. Violations may result in disciplinary action or termination.

If a relationship is discovered without disclosure, employees will not face demotion or any other detrimental effect on their employment. Managers will be subject to disciplinary action. Repeated violations of this policy may result in termination of employment.

Note: Existing relationships that were disclosed prior to this policy being finalized are not subject to this portion of the policy, but all other behaviour expectations apply. However, relationships that <Organization Name> management knows prior to [INSERT DATE THIS POLICY GOES INTO EFFECT] are legacied into this policy.

Hiring

Employees may not participate in hiring another person who is in a relationship with them, whether familial or romantic. Should a romantic partner or family member apply for a position, employees must disclose their relationship with the applicant and separate themselves from all hiring decisions.

**Breaches of Policy**

Employees who fail to comply with any of this policy’s provisions will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. If an employee or manager breaches this policy, they must disclose the breach as soon as possible to management. Disclosure (or lack thereof) will play a factor in the eventual corrective action and any possible mitigation of the consequences.