


Woodward Academy Policy Manual		Chapter	
		Policy Number	
Subject: Employee – Student/Client Relationships		Effective Date	9/10/2015
		Reviewed	01/01/2026
		Revised	01/01/2026
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		Approved by (sign): 	
Approved by (name): Shawn Hollenkamp			

Policy and Purpose:

It is the policy of Woodward Academy that all employees create a therapeutic relationship and maintain appropriate boundaries while working with our students and clients. Woodward Academy strictly prohibits staff from encouraging, soliciting or permitting a personal (including romantic or sexual) relationships with any current or former student or client. Any staff member who violates this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Woodward Academy reports criminal conduct to the authorities and fully cooperates in the criminal prosecution of offenders. This will be achieved through open communication between managers and employees and on-going employee training.

The purpose of this, define behaviors expected of all employees to ensure that treatment is provided in a safe and therapeutic environment, and to prompt employees to take appropriate and immediate action if boundary violations are suspected or known.

Definitions:

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

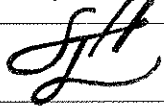
Professional Behavior: Professional behavior is consistent conduct and behavior that conveys respect for the dignity of clients.

Boundary: A limit or margin established to ensure that the relationship between residents, clients and employees remains appropriate by professional standards.

Boundary Violation: The failure to maintain a boundary and become involved in a manner that has the potential to compromise care. Boundary violations may be emotional, physical, spiritual or sexual in nature and may be brief, extended, accidental, situational or intentional.

Therapeutic Relationship: A professional relationship that ensures that the needs of the student or client, as described by their treatment plan, are met and allow for a safe, therapeutic connection between the employee and resident or client.

Grooming: When employees engage in behaviors where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of a child and manipulate that relationship so sexual, physical or emotional abuse can take place.

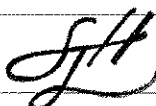
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Procedure


Introduction: Many of our students and clients have difficulty forming healthy relationships with others. This may be due to past abuse or neglect, distrust of adults, attachment issues, or a lack of interest in relationships due to a developmental disability. Therefore, it is our responsibility to educate and model positive relationship-building skills for our residents and clients, to assist them in improving their interactions with family, peers and society. To promote this goal, employees must recognize and understand that they are in a position of power which must not be abused at any time. It is essential that all interactions between employees and students and clients must be seen in terms of a professional relationship.

I. Guidelines:

- a. No personal relationship should be developed between an employee and a student or client and special favors should not be provided to particular students or clients when other students or clients do not receive the same treatment.
- b. Employee relationships with students or clients should be limited to their defined treatment roles during scheduled work hours and should not continue post discharge or after employment termination or discharge. Employees shall maintain clear boundaries with students and clients in treatment. The employee’s therapeutic role is best described as “supportive adult” not “friend.” **All exceptions to this rule require a high level of disclosure, i.e. permission from Executive Director, Case Worker, or Parent/Guardian.**
- c. Personal information of any kind shall not be divulged by employees to clients (e.g. details of marital status, family issues, phone numbers, addresses, personal facts, email addresses, and etc.).
- d. Employees shall not add/follow current or past students or clients on any form of social media sites, such as “My Space,” “Facebook,” “Instagram,” “Tik Tok,” “LinkedIn,” etc.
- e. If an employee is contacted by a student or client after discharge, the employee shall notify their direct supervisor for further guidance.

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- f. Employees should not discuss other employees or facility business with or around students or clients.
- g. Employees must ensure that working relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect students and clients at a time when they may be vulnerable. It will also protect employees from the risk of potential false allegations due to the misinterpretation of their actions.
- h. Employees shall not call or write students or clients at their homes while on home visits or upon discharge without prior **written authorization from the Executive Director, Case Worker, or Parent/Guardian.**
- i. Employees shall not buy or give students or client gifts of any sort without prior authorization from **Executive Director, Case Worker, or Parent/Guardian.**
- j. Special attention and favors shown to a student or client may be construed by other employees as being part of a grooming process.
- k. All employees should avoid being alone with a student or client. Always keep one shoulder outside a bedroom doorway. Employees working in a one-to-one situation may be more vulnerable to allegations of misconduct. Employees should recognize this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Avoid meetings with students or clients in remote, secluded areas of the facility. All interactions with students and clients should be in a rooms with visual access by other staff, or in open areas of the facility. At times, transportation off of campus will require one to one supervision and this must be approved by supervisors.
- l. Never indulge in horseplay, tickling or fun fights with students or clients.
- m. It is not uncommon for a client to develop a heterosexual or homosexual infatuation with an employee. An employee’s actions may be misinterpreted and they may be falsely accused. Professionalism involves using appropriate judgment for individual situations. **ALL** situations should be immediately reported to a supervisor and a therapist so appropriate action can be taken to avoid hurt or distress for all concerned.

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- II. Reporting responsibilities:** Overstepping boundaries is problematic emotionally, psychologically and legally. It is the duty of every employee to keep students and clients safe and to protect them from harm.
- a. Any employee who becomes aware of an actual or potential boundary violation between a student or client and another employee, **MUST** report this information to their supervisor, the Executive Director or Woodward Academy’s Compliance Hotline.
 - b. Woodward Academy will report any suspected abuse or misconduct to the appropriate law enforcement and licensing bodies. All employees are to cooperate fully with internal, as well as external investigations by providing all pertinent information they may have. Full cooperation requires truthfully responding to questions. Any employee who fails to cooperate fully or who hinders an investigation is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
 - c. Any sexual behavior by an employee with or towards a client is both inappropriate and illegal and will be reported to the appropriate state agency. A conviction of child abuse is punishable by imprisonment and registration on the Sex Offender Register. For licensed employees, a report will also be made to the appropriate licensing regulatory body.
 - d. Always report any situation which you feel might compromise the program or your own professional standing.