

 ALBERTA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

All of our clients have emotional, developmental, and or behavioral disabilities. Most have backgrounds of neglect and abuse often at the hand of care giving adults such as adult family members, family friends, etc. Developmentally significant relationships have been disrupted through separation, abandonment, change of placement, and even death. Care givers have often been inconsistent and/or excessively harsh in their discipline. Neglect may have included not providing proper meals or a clean healthy resident.

Such experiences can lead to a persistent anger towards and mistrust of all care givers, poor internal control over behavior and emotions, lowered sense of self esteem, poor personal hygiene, unwillingness to accept responsibility for ones actions, and difficulty delaying immediate gratification for future rewards.

- Their expectation is understandable one of a social environment that will be unpredictable, unfair, and punitive which offers only further abuse, neglect, and abandonment by care giving adults.
- They may believe that the abuse and neglect they have received in the past was deserved on their part.
- They are quick to perceive events in a manner that confirms this view of the world and will actively misperceive events rather than give up their model of how things are.
- They may attempt to recreate the chaos, abuse, and neglect in their current residential setting that they experienced in their past settings.
- As with all children they express their emotions through their behavior.
- They may set up "tests" to see if you can be trusted to not abuse them and to live up to your promises or if you are going to be like past care givers and harm them physically or emotionally through harsh punishment, cruel words, or not following through on your commitments.

Therefore, it is your task as a care giver to first establish and maintain a structured setting in which your clients feel safe and respected. You must begin to develop a relationship of trust with your clients by communicating with them in an open and straightforward manner. They must come to believe that unlike past care givers, you can be depended upon to:

- protect them from physical and emotional harm
- respond to their concerns in a straightforward and honest manner
- live up to your commitments to them
- discipline them fairly in a dispassionate and non confrontational way
- recognize and reward accomplishments
- provide them with a clean and healthy residence
- establish an orderly, predictable environment
- respect their privacy and individuality

You must teach your clients by your own behavior towards them what it means to respect another person. They will not respond to a requirement that you be respected because of your status as an adult. Unfortunately, many adults they have known have not been worthy of respect.

**In order to accomplish these goals:**

Clients must be provided a safe, clean and well structured residential setting.

They must be closely supervised at all times. This means knowing where they are, who they are with and what they are doing.

Communications with you clients must be uncomplicated, straightforward and honest. Listening to your clients allows them to feel worthwhile and encourages them to use words to express themselves not just behavior. Lecturing your clients only allows you to feel worthwhile.

Their concerns must be addressed not dismissed nor put off indefinitely. It is up to them to define what is important to them, not you.

Your commitments made to them must be kept. If they are not, the client deserves an explanation, an apology, and amends just as you expect such from them. Remember that privileges earned are commitments made.

They must be personally respected at all times and never be put down nor disrespected not even through jokes or nick names. This is true no matter how disrespectful they are of staff. Staff must never horseplay nor exchange verbal jabs with clients whose self esteem is so fragile and who are lacking in internal controls. Please remember who is the adult in the relationship.

They are to be taught through positive interactions not controlled through negative ones. Your time will be much better spent rewarding clients who are engaged in appropriate behavior than it is punishing inappropriate behavior.

Discipline must be given impersonally through applying professionally accepted consequences for unacceptable behavior. It is not appropriate to raise your voice to speak to a client in harsh tones as a form of intervention. Applied Negative Consequences can only consist of such interventions as loss of points, loss of privileges, extra chores, and brief room time. Such punitive or aversive actions as physical punishment, unnecessary physical escorts or physical restraints, name calling, harassment, yelling, calisthenics, and meaningless work including writing sentences, etc. is strictly forbidden by Agency policy and in most cases by state law.

Your client's personal space is to be respected just as you wish yours to be. Your touching of them should only be welcomed gesture of nurturance, a gentle encouragement, or a necessary therapeutic intervention to protect property or people's safety.

It must be clear to them at all times whether the behavior they are presently displaying is socially acceptable. They are entitled to consistent and immediate feedback regarding both their unacceptable and acceptable behavior.

Clients should be encouraged to appropriately present their grievances to those with power over their lives. To do otherwise continue the sense of powerlessness that has led to their frustrations and aggression. Clients always have the option of presenting grievances to the Agency Director either in person or in writing.

Your clients are to be allowed choices from safe and healthy alternatives and experience the consequences of these choices whether they are positive or negative. You must accept that an individual given a true choice may not make the choice you preferred. Granting a client takes more time and patience but is always preferable to issuing commands or initiating a “confrontation”. Adolescence is a time of learning as result of the increased choices that society allows and making such choices is a natural and healthy expression of a young person’s need to be individual.

Changing human behavior is a time-and energy consuming endeavor. As a staff member of Alberta Professional Services, it is expected that your time and energy will be spent supervising and interacting with your clients in a therapeutic manner by following these basic principles. Decisions regarding the care and supervision of clients must be made on the basis of what is in their best interest not what is convenient for the staff. Please remember that because they are under our care they have more rights not fewer and that no one in our organization is more important than our clients.

As you continue your employment with our Agency you will have opportunities to discuss client issues and the application of these and other guidelines with your supervisors. Please do not hesitate to ask questions when it comes to your demanding task of helping our clients to become healthier and happier individuals.

Eric Krohn, Ph.D.  
Director

I agree that I have read the Director’s Statement and understand it.

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Employee Signature

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Date