



# APPENDIX A: GUIDE FOR MANAGING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND BOUNDARIES

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Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists must treat patients with sensitivity while respecting the boundaries of a health care relationship. Care must be taken to recognize potential violations of professional relationships and to maintain appropriate behaviour.

## BACKGROUND

The College's Position Statement on Professional Relationships and Boundaries sets out the dynamics of the treatment relationship and outlines the various constraints on boundaries when treating patients. The following is intended to provide guidance respecting how audiologists and speech-language pathologists can manage relationships that may be crossing professional lines.

## WARNING SIGNS WHICH MAY INDICATE THAT PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES MIGHT BE CROSSED:

- Deliberately scheduling patient sessions to take place at a time when others are likely to not be present such as early or late appointments, particularly when this has not been requested by the patient or is unrelated to therapeutic needs
- Deliberately and consistently extending therapeutic sessions beyond the scheduled time
- Conversations with the patient outside of the therapeutic environment unrelated to the patient's treatment
- Excessive self-disclosure to a patient
- Exchange of expensive or personal gifts with patient
- Deliberately meeting or attempting to meet socially with the patient
- Experiencing feelings of mutual or one-sided attraction to the patient
- Lends money to the patient or vice versa
- Extending credit to the patient beyond the member's customary practice

- Providing preferential treatment to the patient to the detriment of other patients (e.g. cancelling appointments to “fit-in” the patient )
- The patient asks the member to do something that may be unethical or illegal (e.g. provide a false receipt for services)
- Offering to help a patient with something outside of the therapeutic relationship or to provide therapeutic services beyond the member’s knowledge and skills

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists should examine the nature of the professional relationship with a patient if any of these or other warning signs are present. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists must be aware of behaviours and situations that could lead to or be perceived as crossing professional boundaries.

## MANAGING BOUNDARIES

When the actions fall out of what is typical, the audiologist/speech-language pathologist needs to reflect upon the following questions prior to engaging in the atypical activity:

- Am I doing something that my patient needs to achieve our agreed upon treatment goals?
- Do my actions have the potential for confusing the patient and could they be perceived to be inappropriate in a therapeutic relationship?
- Will my actions cause the patient to expect more services than are routinely provided or beyond my treatment mandate?
- Can other resources be utilized to meet this need?
- Would I tell a colleague about this activity?
- Are my behaviours similar to those of other practitioners in the same circumstances?
- Who benefits the most from performing these tasks?

Is the third party payer (e.g. insurance company) aware that an audiologist or speech-language pathologist is performing these activities? Would the payer fund them as part of the plan of care?