UCP United Cerebral Palsy™
of Central Pennsylvania

Life without limits for people with disabilities™

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Professional Boundaries Training Objectives

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🔍	Define and identify professional boundaries
🧠	Understand the importance of establishing professional boundaries
⚠️	Describe common situations where boundaries can be blurred
🎁	Review UCP's Conflict of Interest and Gift Acceptance Policies

WHAT are Professional Boundaries?

❑ Guidelines for maintaining a positive and helpful relationship with participants, families, any customer or co-worker.

❑ The space between the professional's power and the participant's vulnerability.
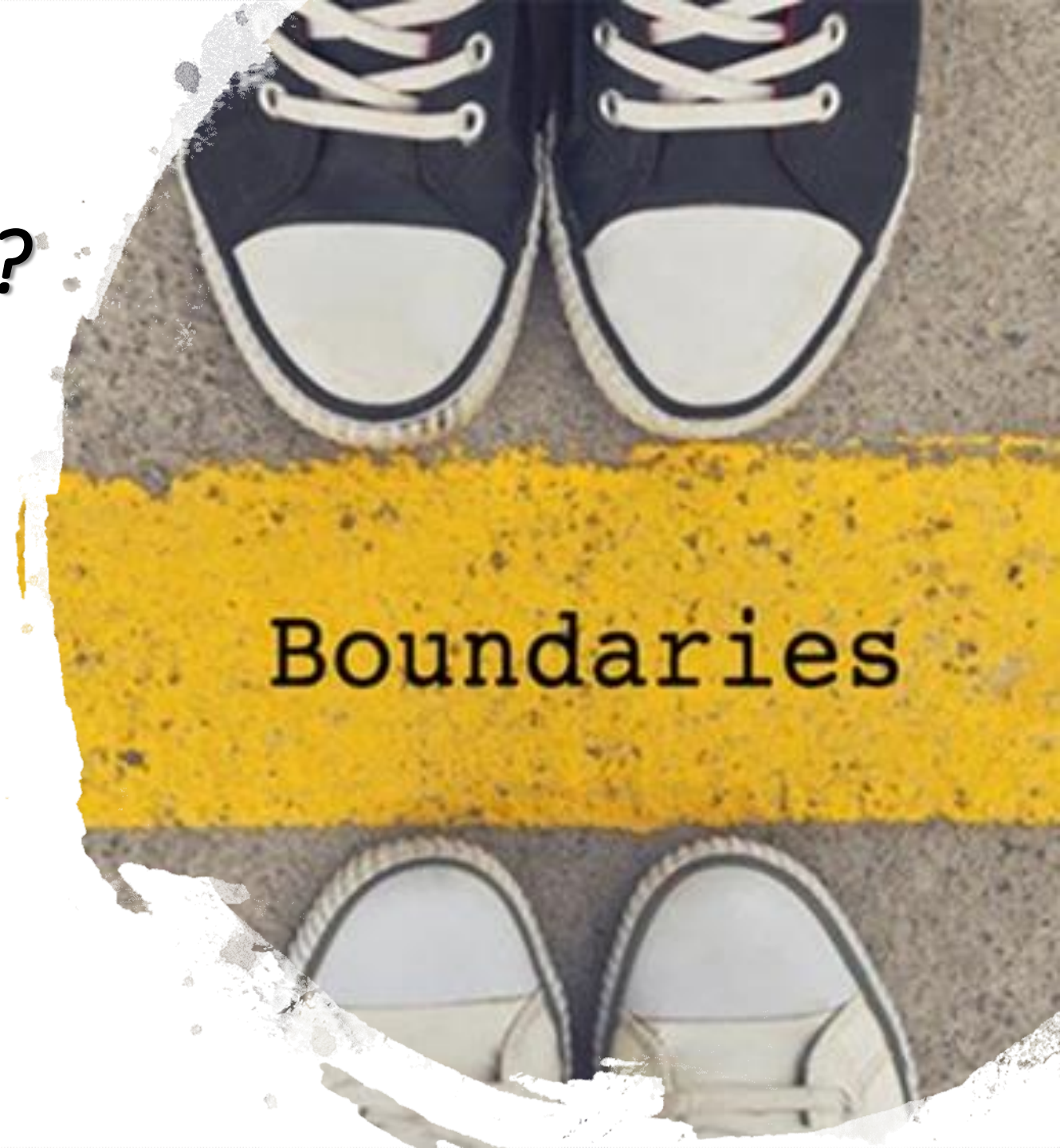
WHY are Professional Boundaries Important?

❑ To ensure relationships are compassionate yet professional.

❑ To prevent unnecessary conflicts.

❑ To protect both participants and yourself.

❑ Protect privacy and confidentiality.

❑ Provide the best possible care or service!

The Caregiver-Participant Relationship

The caregiver has a powerful **role in the relationship.** This power comes from:

1. *Control over the services provided*

2. *Access to private knowledge*

It is important not to let the balance of power slide to the caregiver's side of the relationship.

Maintaining professional boundaries helps the caregiver **maintain a helpful or "therapeutic" relationship**.

Ask yourself: *"Are my actions more about my needs than about the needs of my client?"*

If so, you may be crossing a professional boundary.

therapeutic

boundary

objectivity

manage

trust

ethical

accountability

maintain

establish

professional

relationship

Powerful Role of the Caregiver
"Zone of Helpfulness"

The Caregiver-Participant Relationship

Crossing Boundaries

- ☞ Sharing of personal information
- ☞ Not seeing behavior as symptomatic
- ☞ Unprofessional behavior or demeanor
- ☞ Accepting gifts/favors
- ☞ Conflict of interests
- ☞ Over-involvement
- ☞ Touch
- ☞ Intimate relationships
- ☞ Secrets

Social Media Professionalism

Social media can create a conflict of interest when an employee connects with participants, their families, or their peers.

Ex. 1: Employee is friends on social media w/a participant they support. The employee calls off work to go on vacation and posts pictures. The participant sees these posts and asks for this employee to be re-assigned.

Ex. 2: Employee is friends with the participant's family. After the participant has a medical episode at the program, the employee posts on social media about having a 'terrible day'. Without naming names, they detail the incident. The family files a lawsuit against UCP.

Social Media Recommendations

- ✓ Set expectations early
- ✓ Avoid blurring personal and professional lines
- ✓ Don't share participant or family information on social media
- ✓ Do not use social media to contact your supervisor for conversations in an official capacity
- ✓ Don't use social media as a "representative" of the agency
- ✓ Stay off social media (& phones) during work time!

Getting Back In-Bounds

Have you ever crossed any professional boundaries? Or considered doing so? What should a you do if you find yourself stepping over the line?

❑ Talk to a trusted colleague

❑ Talk to your supervisor or manager

❑ Consider asking about another location/site for re-assignment

❑ Explain that you are unable to behave in certain ways due to professional guidelines (i.e. accept gifts, keep secrets)

❑ Draw a line between your work life and your private life

❑ Apologize and learn from your mistake

❑ *Other ideas?*

Activity Break

Group Breakout Session:

Review the scenario and discuss:

❑ *What observations can you make about the situation?*

❑ *How could the caregiver's actions affect the participant?*

❑ *How could the situation affect the caregiver?*

5 minutes to discuss & 2 minutes to report

WE CHANGE the world WHEN we SIMPLY MEET THE NEEDS of another.
— Kristen Welch

Maintaining Professional Boundaries
Wrap-Up

Maintain a helpful but professional relationship with participants by staying in the *zone of helpfulness*