

Professional Boundaries, Dual Relationships and Conflicts of Interest in Practice

RECEs hold positions of trust and responsibility for children under their professional supervision. They understand the importance of maintaining professional boundaries with children, families and colleagues. “RECEs are aware of dual relationships and identify and declare conflicts of interest when they arise and take action to prevent harm to children or their families.” (Standard V: Principle)

To help you explore these areas of responsibility, each one is presented through the fictional scenario of Jenn RECE, Holly and her family. Reflect on other potential issues or risks that are not presented in the scenario.



Dual Relationships

A dual relationship means that you have another relationship, beyond your professional one in your workplace, with a child, their family or a colleague.

Jenn provides care for Holly on the weekend. Recently, Jenn was hired to work as an RECE at the child care centre Holly attends. If Jenn continues providing care on weekends, she will have two relationships with Holly and her family. Jenn has a business relationship with Holly’s family that involves the exchange of money for care services and now she will have another professional relationship through her work at the child care centre.



Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest can arise when an RECE has a personal or professional interest or obligation that could influence how they carry out their professional responsibilities.

With a financial interest in keeping her weekend job, Jenn’s professional practice and relationships at the child care centre might be influenced. She wants to maintain a positive business relationship with Holly’s family. When Holly’s parents arrive late for pick up, Jenn does not charge them the late fee. She is ignoring the late fee policy that other families must adhere to. Her professional judgement has been impaired and is influencing how she carries out her responsibility to follow workplace policies.



Professional Boundaries

Unclear boundaries between professional and personal relationships can have negative consequences for children, such as confusion and conflicted ideas about the role of an RECE and their relationship to children in their care. Blurring professional boundaries can also complicate relationships between an RECE and a child's family or between an RECE and a colleague.

At the end of the year, Jenn brought a small gift for Holly which she gave her while providing care on the weekend. Jenn received a gift from Holly's parents. On Monday, Jenn realizes that the other RECE at the childcare centre did not receive a gift from the family. On Tuesday, Holly brings the gift Jenn gave her to the centre to show the other children. Jenn's dual relationship is causing confusion not just for her, but also for Jenn's colleagues, Holly, and the other children at the centre. If the blurring of her professional boundaries is not addressed, it might negatively impact Holly, her family, other families and children, as well as her professional relationships with her colleagues.