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## PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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### Overview

#### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for safe practice for staff in their professional relationships with patients and their families. This is to protect themselves and their patients.

#### Scope

- This policy applies to all staff, students and volunteers throughout Auckland District Health Board
- It applies to relationships with all patients and their families.

#### Associated documents

The table below indicates other documents associated with this policy.

Type	Document Title(s)
Board Policy Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bicultural Policy</li> <li>• Challenging Behaviour - Management of</li> <li>• Code of Rights and Responsibilities</li> <li>• Community Settings Service Provision</li> <li>• Informed Consent</li> <li>• Interpreters</li> <li>• Identification - Personal</li> <li>• Harassment Policy</li> </ul>
Legislation	Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights) Regulations 1996 Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 Human Rights Act 1993
Other	Auckland District Health Board "Your Rights" pamphlet

Section: Staff  
 File: Prof Relationships mar02.doc  
 Classification: PP01/STF/060.DOC

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### Professional Relationships Policy

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#### Ethical and legal obligations

- Staff have an ethical obligation to patients and to their colleagues and are to practise within their professional guidelines, codes of practice and ethics where these apply.
- Staff have a legal obligation under the Human Rights Act not to abuse power.
- Staff have an obligation not to use their professional standing to instil their political or religious views on patients and their families/whanau.
- Staff have a legal obligation to ensure the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights is upheld.
- Staff have a legal obligation to ensure the Privacy Act and Health Information Privacy Code are upheld.

#### Professional boundaries

- Social contact and friendships between staff and patients are to be avoided where a professional relationship exists as this may compromise the boundaries of professional relationships.
- If there is a pre-existing social relationship (acquaintance, friend, relative etc) the professional relationship may be modified and/or the clinical responsibility and care for the patient given to others.
- Sexual behaviour or sexual contact between staff and patients and their families under their professional care is prohibited.
- Staff are to refrain from undue familiarity and the use of endearments.
- Auckland District health Board discourages staff taking patients to the staff member's home. There may be extreme exceptions to this in which case the staff member is to have the permission of their manager. Permission and visits are to be documented in the patient's clinical record.
- Staff are to visit patients at home only on work related business.

#### Staff rights

- Staff have a right to be protected from harassment, abuse or threatening behaviours. Refer to Board Policy on Code of Rights and Responsibilities for action to take when patient responsibilities are breached.
- The Board will investigate all allegations of harassment, abuse assault, or threatening behaviour towards staff and by staff.

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### Professional Relationships Policy, contd.

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#### Staff training and support

- Challenging Behaviours training is provided for staff as per Board Policy.
  - Support is available through professional advisers, Human Resource Departments and Occupational Health for all staff with concerns or allegations.
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#### Communication

Staff are to :

- introduce themselves by name and designation
  - wear ADHB photo identification at all times
  - offer and encourage the use of interpreters as per Board Policy
  - explain procedures before carrying them out
  - obtain consent as per Informed Consent Policy
  - keep to relevant personal details in history taking and in conversations
  - never use sexually demeaning words, pictures, actions or jokes
  - address patients in the manner they prefer e.g. First name or Mr ...
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#### Appointments

Staff are to:

- ensure all appointments are officially recorded
  - maintain appointments during appropriate hours
  - ensure that another staff member is advised of their whereabouts if they are escorting a patient out of the ward /service or visiting a patient's home.
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#### Respect

Staff are to:

- make themselves aware of and respect patients cultural and social values
  - respect developmental needs e.g. limiting the number of staff caregivers with young children
  - respect patient choice regarding the gender of the staff caregiver when able
  - honour confidentiality of written and verbal information
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### Professional Relationships Policy, contd.

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#### Privacy

Staff are not to divulge other staff members personal telephone numbers, addresses or other personal information.

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#### Personal (physical and psychological) safety

Staff are to:

- take appropriate measures to ensure personal safety where foreseeable risk is involved or trigger factors have been identified.
  - withdraw from a situation, or obtain assistance, if personal safety is felt to be at risk.
  - offer and encourage the presence of a chaperone or support person during physical examinations, where practical.
  - request another staff member to act as chaperone or support person or they may ask another staff member to undertake the procedure, if a staff member is uncomfortable carrying out a procedure or cares alone.
  - request to co-work a case if they feel unsafe.
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#### Physical contact

Staff are to ensure physical contact is guided by the principle that it is the minimal contact necessary to meet physical or emotional needs of the patient.

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#### Obtaining advice or assistance

Staff are to:

- consult with senior colleagues or manager about difficult situations or unwelcome communications
- document the situation and develop a management plan
- hold team meetings regularly for support, if required, and to ensure the management plan is adhered to
- obtain professional help early for personal crises and not to involve patients in staff members personal problems
- report to manager or Occupational Health any situations involving self or others that staff are uncomfortable about