

Therapeutic Interactions

Policy:

In accordance with providing effective customer service, staff will interact in a professional and therapeutic manner at all times while in the facility and in the community.

Procedure:

MSS prides itself in treating the people we support with respect and dignity, including focusing on the similarities between the people we support and the people we employ. It is important, however, that staff learn to maintain the distinction between a casual friendship and a professional therapeutic relationship in order to ensure the preservation of human rights, to provide high quality support services, and to project the appropriate image of MSS's philosophy and core values to our community partners.

While the appropriateness of specific interactions may depend upon the support needs of the person receiving services, there are some general guidelines that staff will follow. There will be no tolerance regarding violation of the following standards:

1. Staff will maintain an even tone of voice and use an "inside voice" at all times when interacting with a person during a crisis situation or when the person requires individual attention to maintain mood or behavior.
2. Staff will take a person to a quiet, private area to have any discussions that relate to personal matters or that may be deemed to have an authoritative quality, such as reminding a person about rules or the person's behavioral choices and consequences.
3. Staff will refrain from using profanity, vulgar language, or threatening language. Such language that may be considered playful in another setting will not be tolerated while a person is on the clock with MSS. Such language will not be used with the people we support, other coworkers, or any one from the community regardless of the relationship to the staff or the agency.
4. Staff will refrain from all physical interactions with others except:
 - a. standard greetings such as handshakes, fist bumps, and hugs.
 - b. during person care support as outlined in the person's ISP.
 - c. when utilizing trained, approved interactions in an appropriate manner to assist a person in maintaining health and safety when all other interventions have been exhausted and only for the appropriate length of time.
 - d. those interactions deemed by the person's support team to be necessary in order for the person to function happily and safely within the realm of provision of day support services. Example: A

person may benefit from being led from place to place using supportive physical contact such as hand-holding or an arm around the shoulder.

Training

Staff will be trained upon hire and ongoing regarding the appropriate manner in which they are to interact with the people we support, their coworkers, and community partners. Leadership staff will model appropriate interactions at all time. The Program Manager/Coordinator will observe direct support staff during service hours to assess compliance to this policy as well as the effectiveness of staff interactions with the people we support.

Consequences

Individual instances of interactions seen as being ineffective for the provision of support services will be addressed with staff by the Program Manager and/or the Executive Director, depending on the timing and the nature of the interaction. Any observed trends in these incidents will be addressed agency-wide either through staff meetings or schedule group sessions.

Staff deemed to have violated the no-tolerance standards as outlined above will receive disciplinary consequences up to and including immediate termination depending on the severity of the violation. Minor and first time offenses may result in a one-day suspension. More serious and repeated offenses may result in up to a two-week suspension or termination.