



HomeBridge

HomeBridge Youth Society

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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**HomeBridge Youth Society
Code of Professional Conduct
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HOMEBRIDGE YOUTH SOCIETY

Code of Professional Conduct

Introduction

This Code of Professional Conduct is a working document. It is to be followed completely. The first document's content was developed over 18 months from discussion and input of employees throughout HomeBridge Youth Society, and after reviewing the standards of other professions and programs. This version is the fourth edition which has endeavored to capture the ongoing agreements and comments of all employees.

HomeBridge Youth Society is committed to high ethical standards of conduct. The Code of Professional Conduct has been developed to guide and assist employees of the organization in performing their work responsibilities legally, ethically and without discrimination. This Code also coincides with the organization's vision and values.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Policy and Procedure Manual, Internet Policy, Privacy Act Policy, and the Collective Agreement of CUPE, Local 4471. This Code applies to all personnel involved with HomeBridge Youth Society including:

- All employees
- Contracted community members
- Student placements
- Volunteers
- Any other person(s) connected with the organization for the purpose of intervention, planning and delivering services to the youth entrusted to our care.

This document will be reviewed every 3 years, with input and feedback sought from all employees and approval by the Management Team. Over time, items may be added and points may be clarified in order for it to be more understandable and accessible. There will be much discussion, debate, agreement and disagreement. This process of collaboration is embraced with the optimism that, as a result of our commitment to the process, services to young people and their families will be enhanced.

While the Code of Conduct does not provide the answers to every question that may arise, it does provide the framework for determining appropriate behavior and conduct across a variety of situations.

Section 1: Power Differentials: The Reason for a Code of Conduct

Young people most often have no power within the systems they live. They are expected to abide by the “rules” of a family home, group facility, or wherever they find themselves living. If these “rules” are fair and consistent, their experience can be safe as they struggle to grow up. Even in the best of living situations children and youth live in a subordinate and inferior position.

Adults are always in a position of power over children and youth. Adults have more authority, knowledge, skill, life experience, money, ability to access resources, understanding, and credibility in society as a whole. Children and youth are always more impressionable, vulnerable, naive, scared, unskilled, unknowing and innocent.

The young people served by HomeBridge Youth Society have less power than the “typical child”. Society has stereotyped them and their families. Assumptions are made about their behaviour, intelligence, worthiness, attitudes, and potential. The youth find this out quickly. They become vulnerable to acting out, being misunderstood, becoming involved in risky behaviours, and taking great lengths to find the love and acceptance they so desperately desire, need, and deserve.

Employees of HomeBridge Youth Society, therefore, are perceived by the young people and their families to have more power than they have. After all, we are the “professional people paid to take over” because it is perceived that either the families or children have failed. By virtue of this perception, we do have more power.... the power of an “Adult Professional”.

The above perception, in combination with the fact that we have consciously chosen this work, and the vulnerability of the young people and their families, makes us more responsible and accountable for every action and decision. To assist us with our responsibility we have developed a Code of Professional Conduct. This document is to be continually followed, discussed and understood.

Linda Wilson, Former Executive Director
May, 2005

Being mindful of our “Privilege”

Privilege in power refers to the advantages and benefits that individuals or groups with more power have over those with less power. Power can take many forms, such as social, economic, political, cultural, or institutional power. Those who possess power are often able to influence decisions, policies, and systems that affect others.

Privilege in power often manifests itself in systemic and institutional ways, creating social structures and norms that benefit those with power and disadvantage those without. For example, wealthy individuals may have access to better healthcare, education, and job opportunities than those with lower incomes. Similarly, individuals from dominant racial, gender, or sexual orientation groups may benefit from systemic biases in society, while individuals from marginalized groups face barriers and discrimination.

Privilege in power is often invisible to those who benefit from it, and it can be difficult for them to recognize or acknowledge their advantages. However, it is important to understand and address privilege in power to promote greater equity and justice in society. This involves recognizing the ways in which power is distributed unequally, and acting to dismantle systemic barriers and create more inclusive and equitable systems.

Becoming aware of one's privilege requires self-reflection, education, and empathy.

Here are some steps you can take to become more aware of your privilege:

1. Reflect on your own experiences and how they differ from those of others. Consider how your social identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ability) have influenced your experiences and opportunities in life.
2. Educate yourself about the experiences of others who do not share your privilege. Read books, articles, listen to podcasts, and watch documentaries that explore different perspectives and experiences.
3. Listen to and engage with people who are different from you. Seek out diverse perspectives and actively listen to others' experiences without judgment or defensiveness.
4. Examine the systemic and institutional factors that contribute to privilege and oppression. Consider how societal structures and norms may advantage or disadvantage certain groups of people.
5. Take responsibility for your privilege and use it to create positive change. This may involve advocating for social justice, supporting marginalized communities, or amplifying the voices of those who are underrepresented.
6. Becoming aware of your privilege is an ongoing process that requires continued self-reflection, learning, and action. It's important to recognize that privilege is not something to be ashamed of, but rather an opportunity to use your privilege to create a more just and equitable society for all.

Definition: “A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.”
 “A privilege is the absence of an impediment” John Amaechi

- We typically think of privilege in general themes – how it is presented to us in society at present, such as ‘cis,’ ‘white,’ and ‘male.’ It is often represented on the news and discussed in politics using these general concepts.
- However, privilege encompasses all the small, mundane acts, items, and ideas that we carry with us in our day-to-day lives.
- It is easy to forget, for example, that using data on our phones or chatting idly with a colleague about weekend plans with family can remind our clients about what they may live without, even if only for a little while.
- We must be aware of our choice of language, our display of relative wealth – wealth of choice, power, freedom, and movement, among other things – and express that privilege with as much mindfulness as we can around our colleagues and around youth in care.

In consideration of these definitions, here is a list (not yet exhaustive) of privileges that exist with us as a HBYS employee that we must consider as we go about our daily work to be mindful of a power imbalance inherent in our positions as employees and colleagues. Check off all of the existing privileges you have that we need to consider as we carry out our day as HomeBridge employees with our relational interactions.

White	Experienced	Have a vehicle	Have a phone	Have a family who loves you
Male	Can see/hear	Can drive	Have money	Not on medication
No trauma	Good mental health	Have a place to live	Are working	Not been victimized
Hold keys	Can write reports	No addictions	Have a family that wants you	Have access to clean drinking water
Educated	Good physical health	Are able-bodied	Don't wear glasses	Are trusted

Section 2: Context and Assumptions for Integrating the Code of Conduct

Context

The code of conduct is a guide to the culture of the organization. The culture is developed by combining practice expectations of the professions represented in its membership. For this reason, all professions (youth care, maintenance, food service, clinical, development and administration) have taken part in the development of this document. All views were brought together and tied to create the body of the document.

When working with a code of conduct it takes time for employees, students and volunteers to truly understand its depth. With time people become clear on what an expectation is, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, when working in either a paid, student or voluntary capacity with the organization. These understandings usually come through example, discussion, supervision, collegial debate and deferring to professional ethical codes, law and legislation.

Assumptions

Throughout the document there are references to the terms “appropriate”, “acceptable” “competent”, and other words holding different meanings in different cultures. Through collegial discussion, employees have agreed that these words can not be rigidly defined. However, it is understood that these words may be unclear and confusing. As a result, it has been agreed that when in doubt collegial discussion or supervision is necessary.

It has also been agreed that the process of asking, how does my interpretation align with the organizational vision (Youth and their families living in health, safety and harmony) should bring clarity to uncertainty.

This document is to be discussed and debated, but followed completely, always.

Section 3: Professional Responsibility

Definition:

For the purposes of this document a client is a youth, family member, or legal guardian of a youth who is:

- living within a residence operated by HomeBridge Youth Society
- a youth in care of the Department of Community Services or Mi'kmaw Family & Children's Services
- someone, who at one time lived in our programs or was in care of the Department of Community Services or Mi'kmaw Family & Children's Services, and is under the age of 19 years old
- a youth living in foster care and under the age of 19 years old

HomeBridge Youth Society will always endorse initiatives protecting the clients we serve. The HomeBridge Youth Society Confidentiality Policy will always prevail. We have the responsibility to maintain the best interests of the client as the primary obligation. We also have the responsibility to:

- 3.1. Maintain professional boundaries and objectivity to help ensure that our personal values, biases, vulnerabilities and judgements do not interfere with relationships between youth and their families.
- 3.2. Never discriminate on the basis of race, ethnic origin, language, religion, marital status, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, abilities, socio-economic status, political affiliation or national ancestry. All employees and board members have an obligation to unlearn both the overt and subtle forms of discrimination, and challenge ourselves to learn anti biased and ethical practice.
- 3.3. Carry out all duties with integrity and objectivity.
- 3.4. Maintain an acceptable level of emotional and physical health and well being in order to provide a competent level of service. Anyone whose health deteriorates will take time away to heal. Anyone who does not recognize their symptoms can be asked by a Manager to do so.
- 3.5. Maintain and increase an acceptable level of knowledge, attitude and skill through opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- 3.6. Share in the maintenance and ethics of our professions and respect the integrity of a multi-disciplinary approach.
- 3.7. Never exploit the relationship with a client for personal benefit, gain or gratification.
- 3.8. Never harass any person.
- 3.9. Never be involved with hate crimes.
- 3.10. Identify and remove ourselves from any consideration or situation which may predispose objectivity and/or effectiveness resulting in a conflict of interest.
- 3.11. Act with the knowledge that parents and guardians, except as limited by law, retain primary responsibility for their youth. We will support parents and guardians to exercise their rights and responsibilities toward their youth and promote family relationships.
- 3.12. Bridge conflicts arising between Parents/Guardians/Clients and employees. Concerns with generally accepted professional and/or developmental practices or issues will be clarified through respectful education and communication.
- 3.13. Maintain the confidentiality policy of HomeBridge Youth Society (see Appendix III). The information we acquire in the course of our work will only be divulged when consistent with our professional duties in accordance with existing laws and agency policies.
- 3.14. Identify any potential breach with the employee involved. If resolution is not found, advise the employee that the process for bringing forward concerns regarding conduct will be followed, and then do so (see Appendix I).

- 3.15. Employees are required to advise their Supervisor immediately if charged with a criminal offense.

Section 4: Responsibility to Clients

HomeBridge Youth Society promotes a view of Youth Care, which is based on establishing and maintaining healthy relationships. The issues present in the lives of many of our clients contribute to the creation of an environment where there is a high risk of allegations. HomeBridge Youth Society recommends employees avoid knowingly placing themselves and/or the clients in situations that could lead to allegations.

Employees will use their discretion when using their own money but it needs to align with the values and beliefs of your program and/or your teammates in the best interest of the young person. Communicate your intention before or after the event. Save receipts for reimbursement or have a discussion with your supervisor about why you chose not to reimburse yourself.

Any communication or connection with any past resident needs to be done considering the program's mission, values, beliefs and protocols agreed upon by the team surrounding past resident communication.

- 4.1. No employee is to engage in the following with a client:
 - a. socializing outside the context of the program
 - b. knowingly giving out personal telephone numbers, addresses, e-mail addresses, or any other social networking site information
 - c. taking to personal homes
 - d. co-habiting
 - e. entering into a romantic relationship
 - f. entering into a friendship
 - g. loaning a personal vehicle or allowing a client to drive a personal vehicle
 - h. borrowing from, loaning, or giving money to a client
 - i. accepting gifts outside the context of the program (All gifts accepted within the context of the program will remain in the facility unless they are non-identifiable).
 - j. personal chores for money or as a personal favour (e.g., cleaning cars)
 - k. buying items owned by the young people (excluding entrepreneurial, program sponsored initiatives)
 - l. buying from, selling to, or exchange of cigarettes, drugs, alcohol or sex to youth
 - m. Requests for favors asked of the client, for the sole benefit of employees is not permitted (e.g., "Would you go to the store and get me some pop").
 - n. Loaning personal items such as laptops, tablets, and cell phones.

Any employee, past or present, who involves themselves in the above behaviours will be deemed by this organization to be unethical. This behaviour could result in discipline, dismissal, legal ramifications and impact future employment opportunities.

- 4.2. Making sarcastic or obscene remarks or telling stories with sexual or violent overtones is inappropriate.

- 4.3. The use of profanity is to be avoided.

- 4.4. Employees are to avoid activities that could be considered "horseplay" (e.g., physical jostling, arm wrestling, rough housing, etc.) with the young people. This behaviour could be misinterpreted by the youth and cause fear, agitation or alarm.
- 4.5. Any intentional use, even minor, of physical pain, direct or indirect, as a way to control youth is unacceptable.
- 4.6. Exposing a client to pornographic materials, films or any abusive sexuality is cause for termination.
- 4.7. Efforts are to be made to ensure that the media that youth are exposed to, including books, internet, videos, games, posters, music, magazines, television, etc., present healthy relationships. Individual intervention plans will inform the decision of what video games the youth will be permitted to play. Employees cannot rent or take clients to violent or sexually explicit movies. When viewing movies as a means to develop a therapeutic relationship with a young person, observance must be paid to the movie classification system. The expectation is that employees will discuss the content and meaning of any media exposure with each other and with the young people.
- 4.8. All relevant employees and supervisors must be alerted immediately when youth have indicated suicidal ideation or planning.
- 4.9. HomeBridge Youth Society employees shall not interfere with the relationship a client has with an outside professional unless discussed with the facility supervisor and agency, and all are convinced the best interests and well-being of a client requires such intervention.
- 4.10. Anyone who is involved in any type of research where clients are involved, shall only do so with the consent of the youth, the approval of the facility supervisor, guardian or parent(s) and when clients are paid at the minimum wage for their expertise. Honorariums for public speaking will be considered on an individual basis.
- 4.11. Any prior relationship with a youth could be deemed a conflict of interest and its implications will be assessed accordingly on an individual basis. It is the employee's responsibility to bring this matter to the attention of the facility supervisor where the client is involved (e.g., a family member is being considered for residency).
- 4.12. It is the responsibility of employees to notify insurance carriers if they choose to transport clients in their vehicles. Employees who use their own personal vehicle to transport clients must provide written confirmation from their insurer annually that 1) you carry \$2,000,000 Third Party Liability coverage and 2) your insurance includes coverage to carry passengers/clients (as advised in writing by your Insurance company to HomeBridge). A photocopy of this insurance, insurer's letter, driver's abstract, vehicle safety inspection, and a valid driver's license must be forwarded to the HR Manager to be retained on the personnel file of the employee. Clients must wear seat belts in all vehicles. All vehicles must have a valid vehicle inspection, registration, and all drivers must have a valid driver's license.

Section 5: Professional Conduct

- 5.1. All clients and employees of HomeBridge Youth Society are to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- 5.2. Employees will demonstrate exemplary behaviour physically, emotionally and ethically, as we are role models for youth, their families, and our colleagues.
- 5.3. Personal beliefs, values, politics or social attitudes that are not congruent with those of HomeBridge Youth Society are not to be discussed with, or in front of clients (e.g., socializing outside of work).
- 5.4. Employees must always be aware of their perceived authority by clients. They must be aware of their relative position of power and promote self-empowerment with the residents.
- 5.5. Employees involved in activities which contradict the philosophical premises and professional practices of HomeBridge Youth Society, whether or not criminal charges are laid, may be subject to disciplinary action or termination (e.g., involvement with cults or hate based crimes).
- 5.6. The discussion about dress code has a long history in the organization. Employees must present a professional presence, while at the same time, remaining approachable for the youth and able to perform the duties that require physicality, including sports and restraints as examples. Below is the final agreement of what is necessary for a HomeBridge Youth Society professional to meet all these objectives.

Employees are expected to comply with the following dress code while on duty:

Dress Standards

- Good personal hygiene and grooming is to be practiced
- We are a scent sensitive environment, therefore please refrain from wearing perfumes, lotions, etc. that may be irritants to some people.
- Day shift (between the hours of 7am and 7pm), 7 days a week (except for kitchen and maintenance):
 - Smart casual is always appropriate.
 - Clothing to be unripped, clean and in good repair, including jeans.
- Night shift (between the hours of 7pm and 7am), 7 days a week
 - Clothing to be clean, unripped, unwrinkled and presentable

Special Circumstances:

- During programming/training: wear comfortable clothing which is appropriate for the activity
- Cleaning
- Track pants, gym pants, and yoga pants can be worn on overnights

What **not** to wear:

- shorts/skirts shorter than tip of middle finger when standing straight and arms and fingers straight to side
- spaghetti straps, halter tops, muscle shirts

- ripped or torn clothing (*even if purchased that way*)
 - clothing revealing cleavage
 - sleepwear
 - recreational headgear (e.g., ballcaps, cowboy hats, toques, etc.) in facilities or other business/professional settings (*as a professional standard in line with other organizations/professions, i.e., Emergency personnel and schools (police, fire - remove their hats upon entering facility)*)
 - accessories that may compromise safety
 - clothing advertising drugs, alcohol, violence, sexism, racism or other similar presentations is inappropriate.
- 5.7. Employees are not permitted to do personal shopping when in the presence of a youth.
- 5.8. Gossiping, and/or the spreading of gossip or rumours will not be tolerated.

Work Place Gossip Definition (<http://www.hrzone.com/hr-glossary/workplace-gossip-definition>):

Workplace gossip is a form of informal communication among colleagues focused on the private, personal and sensitive affairs of others. Gossip is seen almost universally as a negative process because it can introduce falsehoods, rumours and slanderous statements into the ecosystem of work and cause conflict in interpersonal relationships.

Human development expert Peter Vajda identifies workplace gossip as a form of workplace violence because it is an “attack” on another, albeit a passive-aggressive one. Negative consequences of workplace gossip can include loss of productivity and effectiveness, loss of trust as feelings get hurt and breakdown of unity as workers develop personal opinions on information spread by gossip and change their perceptions of individuals.

Section 6: Communication

- 6.1. Self disclosure is to be used sparingly and **in a therapeutic way only**. Consultation with other employees is necessary before any employee discloses or discusses personal issues with a young person. Examples of this may be self-disclosure regarding past addictions or abuse, or disclosure of personal privilege, i.e., purchases of new car, home or trips, or talking about our own children/family and what they are involved in, etc.
- 6.2. Written and verbal communication are essential to carry out our professional duties and we will ensure that the content and style of all communications are honest, clear, direct, and complete. This will enhance the quality of our service to the youth, their families and the community.
- 6.3. It is an expectation that all telephone calls, email communications, and text messages from HomeBridge employees or stakeholders will be acknowledged with a response as soon as possible.

- 6.4. Videotaping and/or audiotaping is prohibited unless full informed consent is given by all parties involved.

Section 7: Conflict of Interest

Defined as: A conflict between the private interests and the official responsibilities of a person in a position of trust.

A conflict of interest occurs when an employee of HomeBridge Youth Society must choose between the organization's best interests and their own interests. This includes any situation where an employee's judgement may be compromised, where unsolicited favoritism occurs, or where an employee receives a benefit of some kind.

- 7.1. It is the employee's professional obligation to avoid situations that could potentially lead to or create, a conflict of interest.
- 7.2. Where a conflict arises, all employees shall attempt to resolve their professional differences in ways that uphold HomeBridge Youth Society's principles of respect, confidentiality and integrity.
- 7.3. Where two employees are immediate family members or identify themselves to be in a committed relationship, they shall not work within the same program or department.

Section 8: Drug and Alcohol Use

- 8.1. The consumption of alcoholic beverages, drugs, or the residual effects of such, on shift, will not be tolerated.
- 8.2. Medication use that will impair professional judgement cannot be used on shift. This judgement is to be made through medical advice and self-assessment. Feedback from colleagues must also be observed.

Section 9: Harassment

HomeBridge Youth Society is committed to providing an environment without intimidation, aggression, coercion, and victimization. We understand the detrimental impact of harassment on performance and personal development. As a result:

- 9.1. Any evidence of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, including harassment of clients or employees (notwithstanding the possibility of criminal charges) is cause for termination.
- 9.2. Any initiative to humiliate, ridicule, hurt, intimidate, threaten, scare or put in danger any youth or employee will not be tolerated.
- 9.3. Any effort to insult, slander, degrade, diminish self-respect, scorn, exclude, or provoke any youth or employee will not be tolerated.

- 9.4. Bullying of any kind, including cyber-bullying, will not be tolerated and may result in criminal charges.

Section 10: Hours of Work

- 10.1. Regarding work performed for HomeBridge Youth Society, all employees must have 24 consecutive hours off within every seven-day period. This requirement is stated in the Labour Standards for the Province of Nova Scotia.
- 10.2. As a matter of professional practice, employees are expected to perform at top standard, even if they choose to work in excess of the determined 56 hours for consecutive days, in order to supplement their employment or experience beyond the work of HomeBridge Youth Society. If an employee's performance is jeopardized because they are assessed to be over-extended, they may be asked to re-examine their commitment to HomeBridge Youth Society. Employment expectations include arriving at work rested, professionally grounded, able to make clear decisions and perform effective interventions at all times.
- 10.3. It is expected that there will be an 8-hour resting period between 8 and 12 hour shifts of any type of paid or volunteer work, with the exception of emergency situations—and/or for operational reasons as approved by a HomeBridge Youth Society Manager. It is considered unethical and negligent to do otherwise.

Section 11: Media Relations

- 11.1. The Executive Director is the only authorized person to speak to the media with respect to HomeBridge Youth Society business or affairs.
- 11.2. Only at the explicit request of the Executive Director is a designate or employee permitted to speak on issues concerning the youth or the organization to media representatives.
- 11.3. Any articles written by employees which identify HomeBridge must be reviewed by the Executive Director prior to submission for publishing (e.g., Articles to CYC-Net, Child and Youth Care Journal). Non-identifying articles can be submitted without further review.

Section 12: Pornography

- 12.1. Pornography shall not be viewed in any HomeBridge Youth Society facility at any time.
- 12.2. Any HomeBridge Youth Society employee involved in viewing or utilizing computer technology to access, display, distribute, forward or store information that is offensive, pornographic, obscene, or abusive, while at work, is unacceptable and cause for termination.
- 12.3. HomeBridge Youth Society will cooperate with law enforcement agencies to prosecute anyone using its facilities unlawfully.
- 12.4. Exposing a client to pornographic materials, films or any abusive sexuality is cause for termination.

Section 13: Professional References

- 13.1. Professional references can be provided by supervisors only.
- 13.2. Colleagues can provide character references only.

Section 14: Client References

- 14.1. Employees are not to give clients references for the purpose of gaining employment without a process of collaboration that involves the youth, Youth Care Workers and Supervisor.
- 14.2. Youth Care Workers may collaborate with service providers outside of HomeBridge Youth Society in relation to issues surrounding future placement of a client in their care, only after the appropriate releases have been signed by the youth, social worker and/or legal guardian, giving permission for Youth Care Workers to release confidential information.

Section 15: Student Placements

- 15.1. Employment references for people who have completed student placements with HomeBridge will be provided by Supervisors in collaboration with the employee who worked with the student.
- 15.2. Power differentials exist between students and employees; therefore, invitations to social events, outside the context of the program, will not be extended to students. Gifts cannot be accepted from students as long as a professional relationship still exists.
- 15.3. Supervisors are to be advised of known established employee/student relationships prior to the start of a placement, so arrangements can be made to consider appropriate, or alternate facility placement.

Section 16: Provincial Policies

- 16.1. Employees working alone must have Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, and CPR/First Aid Training. Employees cannot work shifts alone with expired qualifications. It is the responsibility of each employee to be aware of their own certification expiry dates. When training is scheduled, attendance is mandatory.
- 16.2. All employees are required to be aware of and abide by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its requirements within HomeBridge Youth Society.

Section 17: Reporting Violations of the Code of Conduct

- 17.1. We have been given a sacred trust to work with youth and their families. Therefore, it is each employee's obligation to report unethical behavior, specifically actions in violation of the Code of Conduct. Please see Appendix I for the process to follow in order to raise such concerns.

17.2. Employees shall fully cooperate and participate in any investigation of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

References:

- *Standards for Practice of North American Child and Youth Care Professionals Code of Ethics
- *Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics
- *Standards for Conduct, Nexus Program
- *Code of Conduct, Phoenix Youth Programs
- *Child and Youth Care Workers Association of South Africa
- *Canadian Nurses Association, Professional Code of Ethics
- *CN Code of Business Conduct
- *Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology, Standard of Professional Conduct
- * Canadian Psychological Association, Code of Ethics

APPENDIX I: PROCESS FOR CODE OF CONDUCT CONCERNS

A. External Professionals Impacting HomeBridge Youth Society.

It is the obligation of each employee to report unbecoming or unethical behaviour of professionals outside of HomeBridge Youth Society to their HomeBridge Youth Society supervisor immediately. It is the supervisor's responsibility to bring the issue to the Management Committee for discussion and planning regarding action required.

B. Employees of HomeBridge Youth Society.

It is the responsibility of every employee to bring forward concerns regarding the unbecoming conduct or unethical behaviour of any employee of HomeBridge Youth Society to their direct supervisor as soon as possible (see Process for Review). Unbecoming conduct or unethical behaviour is defined, at a minimum, as actions which contradict the philosophy underlying, as well as the specific behaviours outlined in, the Code of Conduct.

Given our commitment to individual context and circumstance, there will not be standardized responses for concerns regarding behaviour which may contradict the Code of Conduct. Responses are based on full review of all relevant information and the employee's professional development plan, and are determined by the appropriate supervisor.

Supervisors have an obligation to follow the full extent of this process. If there are concerns that a supervisor has not followed this process, please refer to Process for Review: Management Team.

Process for Review: Unbecoming conduct or unethical behaviour of colleagues, those on student placement, or any employee of HomeBridge Youth Society:

1. If an employee recognizes that a co-worker or colleague is in breach of the Code of Conduct, and there is no potential for immediate or significant harm, it is their responsibility to bring this matter to their colleague's attention. It is expected that the employee refer their colleague who is in breach of the Code of Conduct to this document as a form of professional support and education. If there is no resolution to the matter, progress to Step #2 of the Process for Review.
2. The employee who has a concern regarding a potential breach of the Code of Conduct will bring forward the matter to their direct supervisor or 'back up' supervisor for their "home base facility" immediately. This must be done in written form, either at this point in the process, or at the time of Step #3. Based on the outcome of the full process, this document may or may not be placed on the employee's personnel file.
3. As soon as possible, the supervisor will schedule a formal meeting with the employee who brought forward a concern about the conduct of another employee in order to gather information related to the context of the concern, the relationship between the employees involved, and to fully discuss the implications of maintaining confidentiality of the source of information. If not done so already, the concern will be documented in writing.
4. The facility supervisor will inform the Human Resource Manager of the potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

5. As soon as possible, the supervisor will schedule a formal meeting with the employee about whom a concern has been raised and seek information related to the context of the concern, the relationship between the employees involved, and the individual's professional development plan. The Human Resource Manager may also be included in this meeting.
6. The supervisor and Human Resource Manager will meet with any other relevant persons related to the concern.
7. The supervisors involved and Human Resource Manager will meet to review the information gathered and determine the degree of involvement of the Executive Director.
8. The course of employee discipline will be evaluated based on the details and circumstances of individual context and professional development plan of the employee.
9. Confidentiality regarding the response to the concern will be maintained by the supervisor.
10. A written account of the concern, the discussions/meetings held for clarification, and the forthcoming response will be prepared by the supervisor and Human Resource Manager. This will be reviewed with the employee and signed by both parties. This document will be retained in the employee's personnel file. Unless otherwise noted, it does not constitute a "written warning" consistent with HomeBridge Youth Society's progressive discipline policy (see Appendix II).

Please Note: For unethical behavior of an employee, colleague or student placement that falls outside the Code of Conduct, employees are expected to follow the above stated process for review.

Process for Review: Unbecoming conduct or unethical behaviour of any member of the Management Team:

1. The employee who has a concern regarding potential breach of the Code of Conduct by a member of the Management Team will bring forward the matter to the Executive Director immediately. This may be done in written or verbal form. If the notification is in written form, this document will not be placed on the employee's personnel file.
2. The Executive Director will schedule a formal meeting with the employee who has brought forward a concern about the conduct of another employee to gather information related to the context of the concern, the relationship between the employees involved, and to fully discuss the implications of maintaining confidentiality of the source of information.
3. The Executive Director will meet with the employee about whom a concern has been raised and seek information related to the context of the concern, the relationship between the employees involved, and the professional development plan of the employee.
4. The Executive Director will meet with any other relevant persons related to the concern.
5. The course of employee discipline will be evaluated based on the details and circumstances of individual context and professional development plan of the employee.
6. Confidentiality regarding the response to the concern will be maintained by the Executive Director.
7. A written account of the concern, the discussions/meetings held for clarification, and the forthcoming response will be prepared by the Executive Director and reviewed with the employee and signed by both parties. This document will be retained in the employee's personnel file. Unless otherwise noted, it does not constitute a "written warning" consistent with HomeBridge Youth Society's progressive discipline policy (see Appendix II).

Please Note: For unbecoming or unethical behavior of any member of the Management Team that falls outside the Code of Conduct, employees are expected to follow the above stated process for review.

Process for Review: Unbecoming conduct or unethical behaviour of the Executive Director

1. The employee who has a concern regarding the potential breach of the Code of Conduct by the Executive Director will bring forward the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The Office Manager will provide direction on the means through which to contact the Chair of the Board.
2. The Board of Directors will determine their process for concerns related to the Executive Director.

Please Note: For unbecoming conduct or unethical behavior of the Executive Director that falls outside the Code of Conduct, employees are expected to follow the above stated process for review.

APPENDIX II: PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY

The HomeBridge Youth Society Progressive Discipline Policy is based on the progressive discipline process outlined by Human Resources and Skills Development of Canada (HRSDC). For more information, please refer to the HRSDC website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

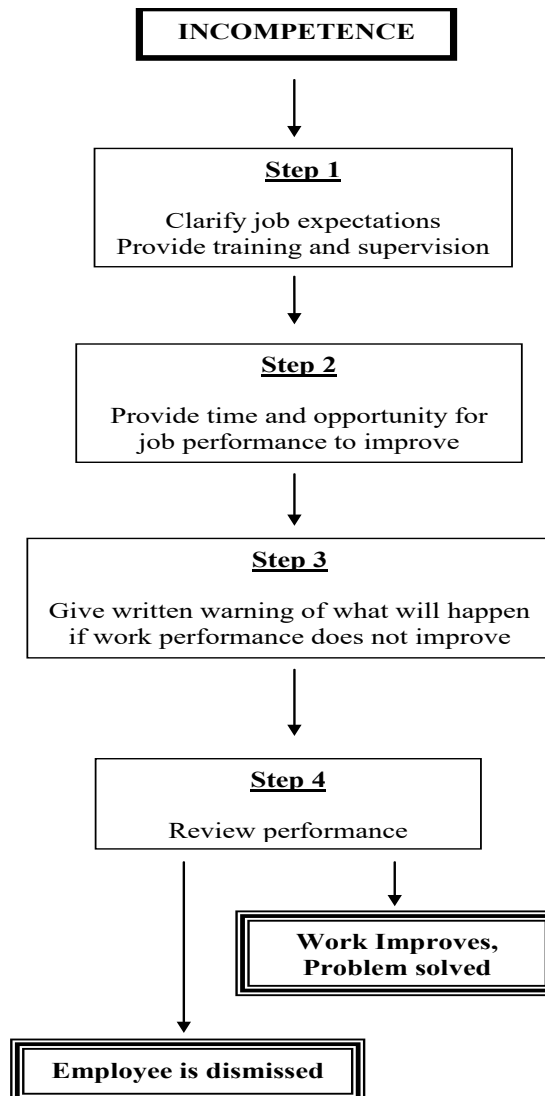
There are two kinds of work place problems that require progressive discipline:

Incompetence: an employee lacks the skills or ability needed for the job.

Misconduct: an employee breaks rules for keeping the work place efficient and safe.

Progressive Discipline for Incompetence:

In the event that an employee lacks the skills needed to perform their job, their immediate supervisor will follow the progressive discipline process outlined below.

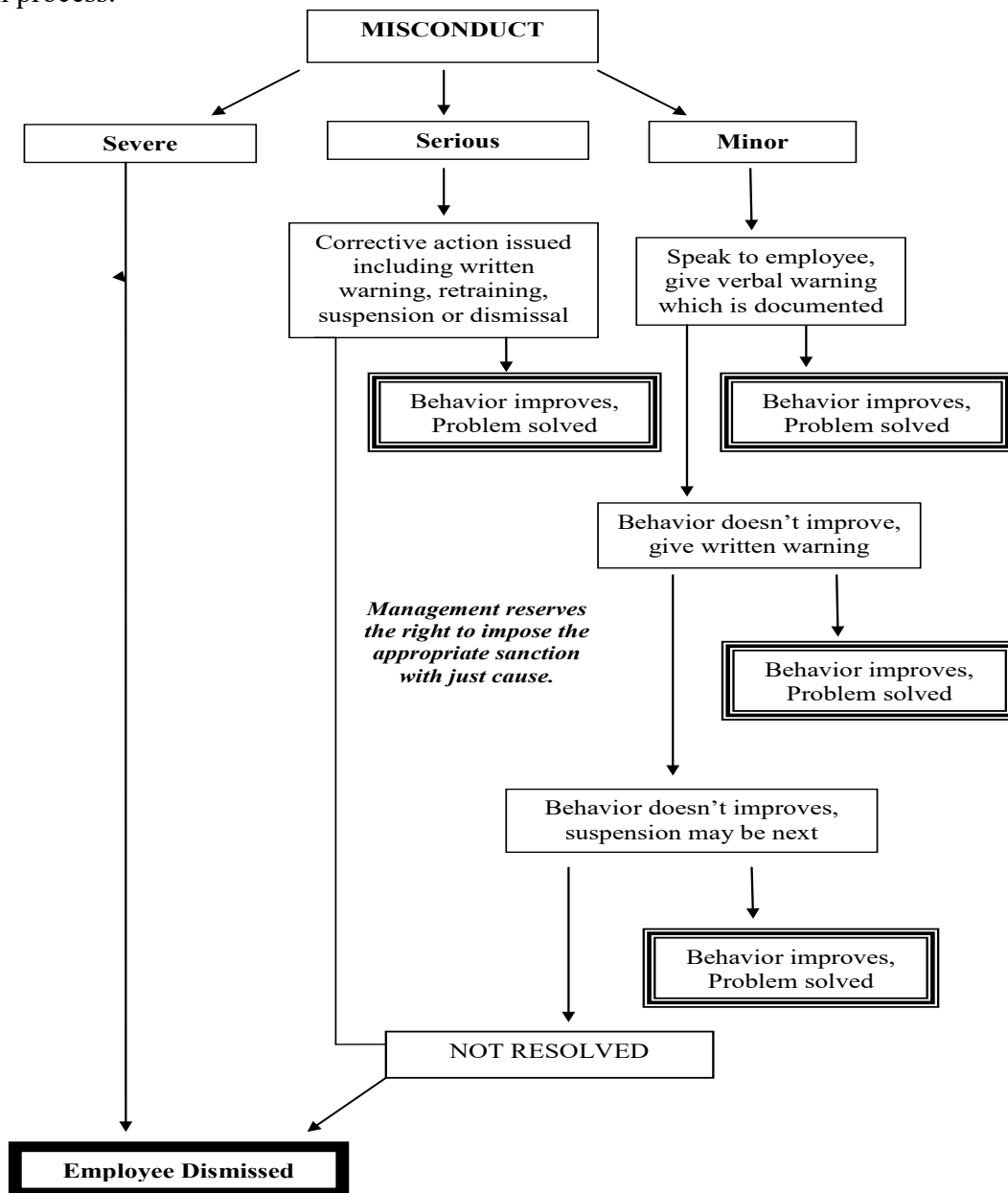


Progressive Discipline for Misconduct:

When dealing with misconduct the employer must determine if the employee's misconduct is minor, serious or severe to implement the appropriate discipline process. The investigation by the direct supervisor of the employee in question and Human Resource Manager will consider factors such as:

- seriousness and/or frequency of the problem
- employee's work history
- effect on the organization

Once a decision has been reached, the supervisor and Human Resource Manager will follow the process as outlined below. The length of time will vary on circumstances surrounding misconduct. Refer to the Collective Agreement between HomeBridge Youth Society and C.U.P.E. 4471 for further information. Union representation, if appropriate, will be encouraged throughout the investigation process.



APPENDIX III: HOMEBRIDGE YOUTH SOCIETY CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

HomeBridge Youth Society recognizes the importance of keeping all information concerning residents confidential. Any information gained with respect to any resident (past or present) or a resident's family is treated as confidential. This includes the time the employee is in the employ of the facility or following termination/retirement of services.

Access to such information may occur among employees, students, volunteers and consultants; therefore, it is imperative to protect residents from an invasion of privacy as a result of indiscriminate and unauthorized access to and relapse of information by these individuals. Any such release, except with the consent of the Board and by authorized employees is subject to disciplinary and/or legal action.

All requests from any member of the media (e.g., newspaper, radio, television, internet, etc.) are to be directed to the Executive Director of HomeBridge Youth Society.

Rationale:

Confidentiality forms the foundation of the expectation of respect, privacy and professionalism offered towards all clients and families. This policy relates to the context of how, where, when, why, what, and with whom information is shared. This information may concern clients, program issues and/or personnel.

Expectations:

1. All employees shall maintain the best interests of the client(s) as their primary obligation. Any action which is not consistent with this commitment is unethical. The emotional safety of clients is of highest priority in performance expectations.
2. To ensure the best service for each young person, only necessary information will be shared in the context of professional and ethical work. No gratuitous information is to be shared at the expense of the client or family.
3. Employees are expected to follow procedure to ensure that private papers and property of clients are respected, if the client has requested this and the program has agreed to do so.
4. There shall only be one master, or primary file per client. Within two weeks of discharge, all information shall be gathered and secured to the file and stored in an agreed upon central location for safe-keeping. It is the facility supervisor's responsibility to ensure that all records are properly maintained and kept secure.
5. Employees are expected to confront each other respectfully and in a timely manner when there is any concern for professional performance, including maintenance of this confidentiality policy. The unnecessary, unauthorized and disrespectful exchange of client information is considered to be gossip and, as such, is unethical and unprofessional (e.g., relaying gratuitous stories, mimicking, minimizing client experiences).

The emotional demands of the work require appropriate debriefing to ensure healthy workers; this debriefing is expected to maintain the boundaries discussed above.

Requirements:

1. Information gained at any time with respect to any client or family is to be treated as confidential during and after employment within HomeBridge Youth Society unless:
 - a) The client provides written authorization for the release of specified information
 - b) The information is released under the authority of a statute or an order of a court of relevant jurisdiction.
 - c) In medical emergencies, necessary information only.
 - d) The client presents danger to self or others.
2. HomeBridge Youth Society establish policies and practices protecting the confidentiality of client and personnel information which will be adhered to in all HomeBridge Youth Society facilities and in all aspects of HomeBridge Youth Society's work. All HomeBridge Youth Society personnel are responsible to carry out their work in a manner which respects these principles of confidentiality. In addition, administrative and supervisory employees are expected to educate, initiate the discussions and enforce the standard protecting the privacy of all clients, their families and HomeBridge Youth Society program and personnel issues.
3. Management employees are expected to establish procedures and forums for debriefing all team members to provide the support necessary to consistently deliver a professional, caring, and effective service to clients and families.
4. All employees are responsible to have a sound understanding of the following definitions and how they apply to the Youth Care context within HomeBridge Youth Society:

Confidentiality: A firm trust

Gossip: Sharing, verbally or written, of information and/or stories with individuals that are not required to know such information OR with whom the information will not assist their interaction with a client and/or family.

Debriefing: The positive exchange of information between employees and/or professional counselor, etc. to discuss and put into perspective a completed event or mission.

Ethical: Relating to morals especially as it relates to human conduct.

Professional: Relating to any professional code of ethics or conduct which you are required to abide under your profession and the strict adherence to this policy.

APPENDIX IV: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM

1. **A focus on commitment**

Youth in care have often lived in a variety of settings. Too often, they have moved through various group care programs. It can be difficult to ‘hang in’ with youth who challenge our strengths, but it is exactly what needs to be done. When we ‘hang in’ the opportunity for healthy attachments, improved self-esteem and the opportunity to learn new ways of being, is created.

2. **A focus on self in relationship**

Relationship in youth care work is not about being friends or feeling good about one another. Relationships are the experiences where new self-understanding can evolve. They are a place where a young person can experience themselves differently, in relation to significant others.

3. **A focus on caring**

In youth care, caring means ‘doing’ with people in a manner that confirms their worth and value as humans. It is about appreciation and respect. It is manifested in what we do and how we do it.

4. **A focus on family**

Too often youth in Child and Youth Caring Programs are isolated from their family psychologically, emotionally and/or physically. This can be intensified by program rules and practices which may separate them further. Family involvement in the day-to-day life of a program, in daily decision making and, in treatment, is essential to overcoming this sense of isolation.

5. **A focus on individuality**

Each young person in care is unique, special and individual. When programs treat everyone the same, no one is special. Individualized programs, differential treatment and unique responses help youth to realize that they are different from others, in a special sort of way.

6. **A focus on success**

A program that is strength or success focused is distinctly different, in practice and experience, than the one that is problem focused.

7. **A focus on support**

Young people need to experience adults as a source of support so they may learn new ways, give up unhealthy patterns and try new experiences. It is this focus on support, actualized in practice, which allows youth to take risks in spite of natural fear.

8. **A focus on helping through involvement in daily life events**

When we focus on helping, through our involvement in their daily life events, we focus on helping people where they live and experience their lives. When they experience success, they experience success in living.

9. **A focus on context**

Nothing occurs in isolation, yet, frequently interventions appear to ignore context. When we consider context, we are able to design specific interventions for an individual at this moment, at this place. Such interventions are more likely to be helpful and effective.

10. **A focus on meaning-making**

We all try to make sense out of what we experience. It is our way of organizing our experience so that we understand it. When we focus on ‘meaning making’, we focus on what things mean to the other, as well as to ourselves.

11. **A focus on ‘response-able’ interventions**

We understand that youth must have ability youth before we expect them to achieve. Our responsibility is to create ‘response-able’ behaviors. Young people need to achieve for themselves not for the approval of others. Adults must remember to respect their pace when learning.

12. **Focus on Safety**

The physical and emotional safety is imperative for a positive Child and Youth Caring Programs experience. It includes recognizing, and responding therapeutically to the needs of race, sexual orientation and identities, religion, regional uniqueness, and unique family systems. Making fun or joking without understanding the background of an individual is unprofessional and, in some cases, abusive.

13. **Focus on Environment**

The overall theme reflected in a program is impacted by everything from the facility’s cleanliness, to the mannerisms, professional approach, accountability, and social skills of the employees. The environment is created by the way people are greeted, and made to feel welcome no matter who they are, a young person, a family member, a guest, or a neighbor.