



Ethics & Boundaries for Youth Peer Providers

Youth peer support relationships are built on a foundation of mutuality and shared lived experience. This means that ethics and boundaries for youth peer providers may look different than they do for a clinical provider, such as a therapist or care coordinator. These differences are what make youth peer support a specific and vital service. However, there is still a power differential between a youth peer provider and a young adult receiving support. Ethics are an essential tool and guide for behavior, expectations, and professional development in the emerging workforce.¹

Every day, Youth Peer Providers are responsible for making decisions that impact others. These can be urgent choices that come up in the field, or situations that require careful consideration. In both cases, having clear ethics and understanding your own boundaries are essential to both peoples' safety, wellbeing, and success.

Ethics are:

- Standards and expectations for a role or field
- About safety and preventing conflicts of interest
- Collectively established
- Core to the role

Boundaries are:

- Personally established by individuals
- Flexible depending on situations and persons involved
- About self-care and respect
- Negotiable

Youth MOVE National's Ethics for Youth Peer Providers are rooted in:

- Youth Voice
- Values of Youth Peer Support
- Principles of Youth Peer Support
- Four Assumptions of Ethics for Youth Peer Providers

We encourage you to think about applying ethics in two ways:

1. Ethical responsibilities to yourself
2. Ethical responsibilities to the young adults you work with

Take a minute to review [Youth MOVE National's Code of Ethics for Youth Peer Providers](#).

- What did you learn while reviewing the Code of Ethics?
- What feels most important in the Ethical Responsibilities to Self?
- What stands out in the Ethical Responsibilities to Young Adults Receiving Youth Peer Supports?
- How will you use the Code of Ethics while providing youth peer support?

¹ YMN Code of Ethics 2019





Ready to learn more?

Use the exercises below individually, as a group, or in a supervision meeting to practice the application of ethics and boundaries as a peer provider.

PEER SUPPORTER ETHICS AND BOUNDARIES EXERCISE I

Watch this short video [Monthly Minute: Youth Peer Support Role Definition](#) to explore boundaries in youth peer support.

Pause the video at 2:20 just after Max is asked by Rose for a ride and consider the following about Max's ethical dilemma.

- What ethical dilemma is Max facing?
- Who is involved? What does each party want? Why do they each want that?
- What questions might Max ask themselves while navigating this dilemma? Let's think about:
 - WHO is affected? WHO holds power in this scenario?
 - WHAT possible outcomes are there if Max says yes, or Max says no?
 - WHY is this an ethical dilemma? What ethical lines may be crossed?
 - HOW can Max support Rose and maintain their ethics?

Continue watching the video from 2:21 to 5:37 to hear about how Max, with support from their supervisor, navigated the situation with Rose, and debriefed the decision afterwards. What parts of this decision and debrief came up as you considered the questions above? What didn't you think of that you might consider next time?

Continue watching the video from 5:38 to 6:52 to learn about Max and Lane's experience. Then pause to complete the Decision Tree worksheet below to explore the options in front of Max. Reflect back on the questions above as you work.

Then start the video again at 6:53 to hear how Max navigated this ethical dilemma.

Feel free to use these reflection questions and worksheet in your work as a Youth Peer Provider.

PEER SUPPORTER ETHICS AND BOUNDARIES EXERCISE II

Think about a time when you had to make a hard decision about how to work with a youth in your role as a peer support provider. You can use something from your own experience, a hypothetical, or something you've heard other peer supporters discuss. Use your knowledge of ethics and boundaries to map out the individual positive and negative outcomes associated with your decision using the worksheet below. Do this several times and you will start to recognize common factors associated with making ethical choices within a system of boundaries.





Youth Peer Provider Decision Tree

