



# Practice Points

## PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

The purpose of this Practice Point is to address the issue of Children's Service Workers taking foster children to their personal homes and/or social networking with a foster child via the Internet. Taking a child to a worker's private home may indicate a special privilege is being provided to a foster child. Professional boundaries should also be set when it comes to communicating with a child or family via social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc. These practices are neither professional nor acceptable and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal of employment.

As stated in the Code of Ethics, Children's Division staff are responsible for setting clear and appropriate professional boundaries with families and children with whom they are working. Staff shall not engage in activities that may risk their professional judgment being compromised, or of the client being harmed or exploited. As indicated in the DSS Administrative Manual, Section 1—Employment Practices, Executive Order 92-04 states that "Employees shall act impartially and neither dispense nor accept special favors or privileges which might be construed to improperly influence the performance of their official duties".

If these professional boundaries are not established and adhered to, it leaves staff open to allegations of unprofessional conduct and abuse. The object of this policy is to protect children *and staff*, and to help staff feel more secure by making it clear what they can and cannot do with children on their caseload.

For additional information, contact Judy Kleffner, Human Resources Manager, at [Judith.A.Kleffner@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Judith.A.Kleffner@dss.mo.gov).