



Guideline:

# Professional Boundaries

## Healthy Workspaces with Colleagues

Month, 2026

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## Table of Contents

4		
5	<b>Content Advisory Warning:</b> .....	<b>3</b>
6	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
7	<b>Colleagues</b> .....	<b>3</b>
8	<b>Healthy Workspaces</b> .....	<b>4</b>
9	<b>Why Healthy Workspaces Matter</b> .....	<b>4</b>
10		

11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17

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## Content Advisory Warning:

The following content contains material that may be disturbing for some readers.

Topics covered include sensitive themes, such as harassment and bullying,  
and other potentially triggering subjects.

Readers are encouraged to practice self-care when engaging with this guideline.

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**Guideline:** Provides guidance to regulated members to support them in the application of Standards of Practice

## 20 Introduction

21 The Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA) is the regulatory body  
22 for the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology in Alberta. ACSLPA carries  
23 out its activities in accordance with provincial legislation to protect and serve the public by regulating  
24 and ensuring competent, safe, ethical practice of speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

25 The intent of this guideline is to support regulated members in developing and maintaining appropriate  
26 and responsible boundaries and healthy workspaces with their colleagues. Regulated members may  
27 also find it useful to review the following Key College Documents when reviewing this guideline:

- 28 • [Standard of Practice 2.4 Professional Boundaries](#)
- 29 • [Standard of Practice 4.6 Human Resources](#)
- 30 • [Code of Ethics](#)

## 31 Colleagues

32 Colleagues include anyone that regulated members work with or alongside. This includes colleagues  
33 within or outside of one's own organization:



## 34 Healthy Workspaces

35 Healthy workspaces are spaces where mutual respect, dignity, and collaborative work are created,  
36 supported, and maintained. Healthy workspaces are characterized by civility, or showing regard for  
37 others by being polite, courteous, reasonable, and respectful. Civility is an important part of acting in a  
38 professional manner with both clients and colleagues. Regardless of their role in the workplace setting,  
39 ACSLPA regulated members have a shared responsibility for contributing to healthy workspaces.

40 Healthy workspaces are environments where:

- 41 • Everyone is treated fairly and feels respected and valued as an individual
- 42 • Working and learning spaces feel safe, and are free of discrimination, bullying,  
43 and harassment.
- 44 • A sense of inclusion is fostered, and people feel that their personal and individual differences  
45 are valued.
- 46 • There is clear communication between colleagues, characterized by colleagues feeling  
47 comfortable with asking questions, sharing ideas, admitting mistakes, talking about errors,  
48 and raising concerns safely, without fear of negative consequences, punishment,  
49 or humiliation.
- 50 • People can work effectively with their colleagues in the best interests of clients.
- 51 • Individuals are self-aware and can manage the impact they may have on others.
- 52 • Everyone takes responsibility for creating a healthy workspace.

## 53 Why Healthy Workspaces Matter

54 Healthy workspaces are violated when:

- 55 • The dignity or self-esteem of any individual is negatively impacted, and/or
- 56 • When an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment is created.

57 Regulated members should be aware that even what could be considered less significant or ‘minor’  
58 violations (like eye rolling) can have negative impacts on an individual on the receiving end.

59 Healthy workspace violations can have considerable and harmful impacts on individuals, teams, and  
60 client care. Breakdowns in healthy workspaces can lead to poor staff experiences that can ultimately  
61 negatively impact the ability to provide safe and effective client care. Exposure to healthy workspace  
62 violations can result in:

- 63 • Increased stress and anxiety;
- 64 • Increased burnout;
- 65 • Decreased attentiveness, engagement, and collaboration;
- 66 • Limited advancement in career pathways;
- 67 • Loss of trust in one’s management or leadership teams, employer, or organization;
- 68 • Decreased work satisfaction;
- 69 • Decreased productivity;
- 70 • Increased turnover and difficulties with retention and recruitment, leading to poor  
71 organizational or team sustainability;
- 72 • Increased incidences of harm or near harm, or neglect of client needs; and/or
- 73 • Workplace or regulatory college-based complaints.

## 74 Creating and Maintaining Healthy Workspaces

75 Healthcare workplaces are at an increased risk for healthy workspace violations since they are fast-  
76 paced, high stakes and high stress environments that often have hierarchical leadership structures  
77 that can heighten power imbalances. Unfortunately, provider wellness is often not prioritized and may  
78 even be neglected in the culture of healthcare. Other organizational issues, such as leadership or  
79 organizational culture can have significant impacts on healthy workspaces. As noted above, it is the  
80 individual responsibility of ACSLPA regulated member to contribute to healthy workspaces, whether in  
81 a leadership, management, or front-line role.

82 The following behaviours are expected of ACSLPA regulated members, regardless of their practice  
83 setting or role. Regulated members should note that violations of the expected behaviours below are  
84 particularly problematic when they are based on protected identity grounds<sup>1</sup>. Regulated members  
85 should also recognize that conversational styles, pacing, turn-taking, eye contact, tone, and  
86 communication patterns may differ across cultures, languages, and neurodivergent communication  
87 styles. Reflection and clarification are encouraged before assuming harmful intent.

- 88 • Maintaining and respecting the physical boundaries of colleagues. Physical boundary  
89 violations include:
  - 90 ○ Using force to cause harm,
  - 91 ○ Inappropriate physical contact or attempts at contact (e.g., striking, kicking, bumping),  
92 and/or
  - 93 ○ The threat of force.
- 94 • Maintaining and respecting the emotional and psychological boundaries of colleagues.  
95 Violations of this nature include:
  - 96 ○ Bullying<sup>2</sup>, and harassment<sup>3</sup>
  - 97 ○ Verbal violations, e.g.,
    - 98 ■ Name-calling;
    - 99 ■ Yelling;
    - 100 ■ Using obscene or offensive language;
    - 101 ■ Teasing or ridiculing;
    - 102 ■ Providing criticism in a way that is hostile, humiliating, punitive, or unrelated to  
103 constructive professional practice;
    - 104 ■ Not giving a colleague opportunities to speak during conversations; and/or
    - 105 ■ Making intimidating, threatening, condescending, or negative comments.
  - 106 ○ Non-verbal violations, e.g.,
    - 107 ■ Eye rolling,
    - 108 ■ Purposely turning one's back on a colleague during a conversation, and/or
    - 109 ■ Other offensive gestures or tone of voice.

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<sup>1</sup> The Alberta Human Rights Commission defines 'protected grounds' as the personal characteristics of individuals or groups of individuals that are protected from discrimination under human rights legislation. This includes race, religious beliefs, gender, disability, age. Please see the *Alberta Human Rights Act* for a full list of protected grounds in Alberta.

<sup>2</sup> Workplace bullying typically encompasses acts or comments that could psychologically hurt or isolate a person in the workplace and usually involves a pattern of behaviour that is meant to intimidate, offend, or humiliate a particular person or group of people (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2026). Please see this link: <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html#section-3-hdr> for more information on workplace bullying, including examples of bullying.

<sup>3</sup> Harassment can be defined as any unwanted or unwelcome verbal or physical contact that offends or humiliates a person and can involve one serious incident or a series of incidents (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2026). Please see this link: <https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/what-are-human-rights/about-human-rights/harassment/> for more information in harassments, including examples of harassment.

- 110 ○ Violations of others' feelings of psychological safety, e.g.,  
111     ▪ Purposely embarrassing a colleague;  
112     ▪ Refusing to answer questions related to practice, policy, or client care;  
113     ▪ Purposely giving wrong information;  
114     ▪ Privacy violations, e.g., stalking, spying, or going through someone's belonging;  
115     ▪ Using, displaying, or distributing materials that are inappropriate under the  
116     *Alberta Human Rights Act*;  
117     ▪ Taking steps to undermine a colleague's workplace performance;  
118     ▪ Giving the silent treatment; and/or  
119     ▪ Gossiping or spreading rumours.  
120 ○ Sexual boundary violations, including sexual harassment or any unwelcome sexual  
121     conduct or remarks. Please see the ACSLPA guideline [Professional Boundaries:  
122     Prevention of Sexual Abuse & Sexual Misconduct](#) for more information on boundary  
123     violations of this nature.

124 It is important to note that behaviour that is not intended to be disrespectful or violate boundaries such  
125 as those listed above can still have significant harmful impacts for the person on the receiving end. It is  
126 the result or impact of a behaviour that matters – if the behaviour is unwelcome, causes discomfort,  
127 humiliation, or embarrassment, or causes someone to feel degraded, then it is a healthy workspace  
128 boundary violation.

## 129 **Responding to Healthy Workspace Violations**

130 ACSLPA acknowledges that being a target of any of the healthy workspace violations listed above can  
131 have significant impacts on an individual. Regulated members who find themselves in such a position  
132 can consider:

- 133 ● Prioritizing your safety – immediately remove yourself from the space if necessary and if it feels  
134 safe to do so. Seek out a trusted person or persons or mental health or other relevant  
135 professionals for support.
- 136 ● ACSLPA recognizes that being in a position of having to advocate for yourself after having been  
137 a target of healthy workspace violations can place additional unnecessary stress on an  
138 individual. It must also be acknowledged that it is not always safe to speak out, and that  
139 additional barriers to speaking up may exist for individuals who are internationally educated,  
140 racialized, multilingual, Indigenous, neurodivergent, disabled, in precarious employment  
141 positions, or navigating power imbalances related to culture, language, identity, or professional  
142 hierarchy. If available to you, consider seeking out a support person. This does not have to be  
143 someone in the workspace or another professional. This can be a family member or friend who  
144 is willing and able to help advocate on your behalf and in your best interests (e.g., listening to  
145 your concerns and feelings and offering advice, helping with correspondence about the matter  
146 to your employer, attending meetings about the matter with you, etc.).
- 147 ● Documenting the behavior(s) of concern. This may be needed for review or intervention  
148 processes later on but may also be helpful as you clarify and process the issue.
- 149 ● If you feel safe and comfortable to do so - engage with workplace supports (e.g., Human  
150 Resources or your management or site-specific reporting mechanisms).
- 151 ● Only if you feel safe and comfortable to do so - speak to the person responsible to address  
152 the concerning behaviours. You can let them know their behaviour is disrespectful and ask  
153 them to stop.
- 154 ● Seek external advice or support (e.g., ACSLPA, employee assistance programs, legal counsel,  
155 professional associations or unions, or the Alberta Human Rights Commission if necessary).

156 ACSLPA acknowledges that witnessing healthy workspace violations can be distressing and places  
157 regulated members in difficult positions in the workplace. However, members are reminded that  
158 ignoring or silently observing healthy workspace violations may send the message that the behaviour is  
159 acceptable. Some steps that can be taken in these types of situations include:

- 160 • Checking in and offering support to anyone targeted or affected by healthy workspace  
161 violations. You can let them know the behaviour you witnessed was unacceptable, and that you  
162 can be available to provide your perspective as a witness if needed.
- 163 • Only if you feel safe and comfortable to do so – address the behaviour directly with the person  
164 responsible. You can let them know their behaviour made you uncomfortable and ask them  
165 to stop.
- 166 • If you feel safe and comfortable to do so and **only with the consent of the person who was**  
167 **targeted** – consider reporting the behaviour to your employer in accordance with any relevant  
168 policies or procedures.
- 169 • Bringing forward to your employer any policy or procedural changes you think are necessary  
170 given your experience with the violation event(s).
- 171 • Seeking support for yourself – this can be a family member or friend, trusted colleague, mental  
172 health professional, or a formal workplace support professional (e.g., Human Resources) for  
173 support and advice as needed.

174 Regulated members in management and leadership positions would be expected to address healthy  
175 workspace violations promptly and in accordance with any employer policies and ACSLPA's [Standard  
176 of Practice: Human Resources](#). Regulated members who are responsible for the management of  
177 employees should consider creating or amending healthy workspace policies if their workplace does  
178 not have applicable policies, or if the policies in existence do not adequately support the maintenance  
179 of healthy workspaces.

180 Being informed that your behaviour may have violated a colleague's healthy workspace boundaries  
181 may be upsetting. Regulated members in this position can consider:

- 182 • Stopping the offending behaviour immediately.
- 183 • Reflecting to understand how your behaviour could have had a negative impact on someone.
- 184 • Seeking support for yourself, e.g., a family member or friend, trusted colleague, mental health  
185 professional, or a formal workplace support professional (e.g., Human Resources) for support  
186 and advice as needed.
- 187 • Inquiring with your manager, or workplace supports (e.g., Human Resources) on how you can  
188 rectify the matter. Honour the wishes of the affected person if they do not wish to interact with  
189 you directly during the resolution of the matter.

190 Regulated members are reminded that they can contact the College with questions or concerns they  
191 may have about healthy workspace violations.

## 192 References

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