

**New England MIRECC Peer Education Center
Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital
200 Springs Road, Bedford, MA 01730**

**Navigating Boundaries in Peer Support Services Seminar
Seminar Vignettes for Group Discussion**

**Vignette #1: Peer Support Provider–Peer Support Provider
Interaction:**

Jeff is a trained VA peer support specialist. He begins co-facilitating a peer support group with Cindy, another peer support specialist, in the local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Domiciliary Program. Cindy and Jeff work well together as group co-facilitators. After a few weeks, they begin sharing information with one another about their pasts and lives outside their work at the VA medical center. In their conversations after their group, Jeff has flirted with Cindy and has perceived Cindy as flirting back. One day, Jeff approaches Cindy after the group to ask her out to dinner. He says that they have "a lot in common" and "work well together" and that there is "definitely chemistry" between them. As Jeff says these things, he places his arm around Cindy.

Questions about Vignette #1:

1. Is this a boundary crossing, a boundary violation, or no issue at all?
2. Based on your answer to Question #1, what do you think Jeff should do?
3. What do you think Cindy should do in this scenario?

**Vignette #2: Peer Support Provider–Clinical Staff Member
Interaction:**

Sharon, a trained VA peer support specialist, works in the same program as Dr. Generous who is the program's director. Sharon's road to recovery has been difficult. As a single mother of four children, Sharon hopes her new position as a VA peer support specialist will improve her finances and help her make ends meet at home. After a few weeks of working in the program, Sharon discloses her financial difficulties to Dr. Generous. Feeling moved by Sharon's story, he offers to give Sharon an interest-free loan to cover her previous month's bills, with the stipulation that Sharon will pay him back \$75/month until the \$600 is repaid.

Questions about Vignette #2:

1. Is this a boundary crossing, a boundary violation, or no issue at all?
2. Based on your answer to Question #1, what do you think Sharon should do?
3. Would you view the situation any differently if this was an interaction between Sharon and a member of her peer support group? If so, what do you think Sharon should do?
4. If you heard a similar hard-luck story from a Veteran, what would you do?

Vignette #3: Peer Support Provider–Peer Group Consumer Interaction:

Mariam, a trained VA peer support specialist, facilitates a peer support recovery group for African American Veterans. The group focuses on recovery and the unique experiences of African Americans in the VA health care system. Drawing from the group members' cultural traditions, the group decided to begin each meeting paying tribute to their ancestors with a prayer of thanksgiving and celebration. After several weeks of meeting, some of the group members discuss the importance of the group opening with a tribute/prayer, how they fell away from participating in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church years ago, and their growing sense that reconnecting with a local AME church would promote their recovery. Mariam is a longstanding member of the local AME church. Not knowing about Mariam's affiliation with the church, the group members ask her if she attends church, and, if so, where she attends and how she likes it. Mariam tells the group about her experience with her AME church.

Questions about Vignette #3:

1. Is this a boundary crossing, a boundary violation, or no issue at all?
2. Based on your answer to Question #1, what do you think Mariam should have done when asked about her spirituality?

Vignette #4: Peer Support Provider–Peer Group Consumer Interaction:

Kyle, a VA peer support specialist, facilitates two peer support recovery groups in the local VA substance abuse treatment program's Aftercare program. To promote his own ongoing recovery from his history with addictions, Kyle attends Alcohol Anonymous (AA) meetings at a local community center two nights per week after work. One evening, while Kyle is attending his AA meeting, he sees Steve, who is a member of Kyle's VA Aftercare group. Steve sees Kyle and approaches him as the AA meeting ends. Initially, Steve makes casual

conversation with Kyle, commenting on how helpful the AA meeting was. As their conversation continues, Steve brings up the VA Aftercare group that Kyle facilitates. Kyle and Steve talk about one of the recent Aftercare group meetings and decide to go to a nearby restaurant together for some dessert before calling it a night.

Questions about Vignette #4:

1. Is this a boundary crossing, a boundary violation, or no issue at all?
2. Based on your answer to Question #1, what do you think Kyle should have done?
3. Is there anything Kyle could do differently to minimize the chances of having similar experiences with other Veterans that attend his Aftercare peer support groups?