

CareCertify LLC

Adult Day Services Training Series

ADS-08

Communication, Boundaries & Volunteers

Participant Guide

Adult Day Services Training Series · Audience: Direct-Contact Staff · Volunteers · Subcontractors · Aides · CE Hours: 1.0

Warm Communication, Clear Boundaries

Adult day services run on relationships — with participants, families, and each other. Warm, respectful communication makes the center welcoming, and clear professional boundaries keep it safe, especially because participants are vulnerable adults. Volunteers and subcontractors are a vital part of the team, working within their roles and limits.

This guide builds communication skills, draws the boundary lines, and clarifies the volunteer role. The goal is a center that's both genuinely warm and genuinely safe.

Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Communicate respectfully with participants and families
- Adapt communication for sensory and cognitive challenges
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Apply rules on gifts, money, and confidentiality
- Describe the role and limits of volunteers and subcontractors

Section 1: Communicating With Participants

Good communication starts with active listening — giving full attention and reading nonverbal cues for needs, pain, or feelings. Speak clearly, plainly, and respectfully, explain before you act, and treat every participant with courtesy and dignity. How you communicate shapes whether a participant feels safe, respected, and at home in the center.

Section 2: Adapting for Sensory and Cognitive Challenges

Many participants have hearing, vision, speech, or cognitive challenges. For hearing loss, reduce noise and face the participant. For vision loss, announce yourself and describe what's happening. For speech difficulty, be patient and allow time. For cognitive changes, use short sentences, one step at a time, and validate feelings. Communicating well with every participant is part of respecting their rights.

Section 3: Communicating With Families

Families are partners in a participant's care and often the experts on their loved one. Communicate respectfully and clearly, share appropriate information within confidentiality rules and center policy, and listen

to family knowledge and concerns. Route clinical questions and complaints to the right person, and never share a participant's private information beyond what's appropriate.

Section 4: Professional Boundaries

The relationships at the center are warm, but they must stay professional and focused on the participant's care. Don't form personal, business, or romantic relationships with participants, do private side work, or arrange off-hours outings. Participants are vulnerable adults, which makes boundaries protective — for them and for you.

Section 5: Gifts, Money, and Confidentiality

Don't accept money, valuable gifts, tips, or loans from participants, and don't handle their finances — financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult is reportable maltreatment. Keep participant information confidential, sharing only with those who need it for care and per policy, and don't connect with participants on social media or post about them. Follow center policy on small, token gifts.

Section 6: The Role and Limits of Volunteers and Subcontractors

Volunteers and subcontractors are a vital part of adult day services — leading activities, offering companionship, and enriching the day. But they work within defined roles: they complete orientation and meet requirements (including background studies), they support rather than replace required trained staff, and they don't perform tasks beyond their role (like medication administration or being solely responsible for participants who can't self-preserve). Volunteers work under staff supervision and follow the same boundaries and reporting duties.

Section 7: Teamwork and Communication

Adult day care is a team effort. Share accurate, timely information about participants, hand off clearly, and report changes and concerns. Ask when you're unsure rather than guessing, and respect every role — staff, volunteers, families, and clinical partners. Good teamwork, built on clear communication, is what keeps participants safe and the day running well.

Section 8: Handling Conflict and Concerns

Conflict happens — a frustrated participant, a worried family member, a disagreement with a coworker. Stay calm and don't take it personally. Listen, acknowledge feelings, and look for common ground, and involve your supervisor when a situation is beyond your role. Never argue with, belittle, or retaliate against a participant or family member; concerns are information that helps improve care.

Key Terms

Term	What it means
Active listening	Fully attending to and confirming what someone communicates.
Professional boundary	The limit that keeps the relationship safe and participant-focused.
Confidentiality	Keeping participant information private and shared only

	as needed.
Volunteer role	The defined scope within which a volunteer supports the center.
Dual relationship	A second role with a participant (friend, business, romantic) — avoid.
Financial exploitation	Misusing a vulnerable adult's money or property — reportable.

Check Your Understanding

1. Give two ways to communicate with a participant who has hearing loss.
2. How do you balance warmth with professional boundaries?
3. What are the rules on gifts and a participant's money?
4. What is the role and what are the limits of volunteers?
5. How should you handle conflict with a family member?

What's Next

Looking ahead

Next, ADS-09: Infection Prevention & Health Monitoring covers keeping participants healthy and noticing changes.