

ALERT

A MUST READ!

When Addiction Professionals Run Recovery Houses

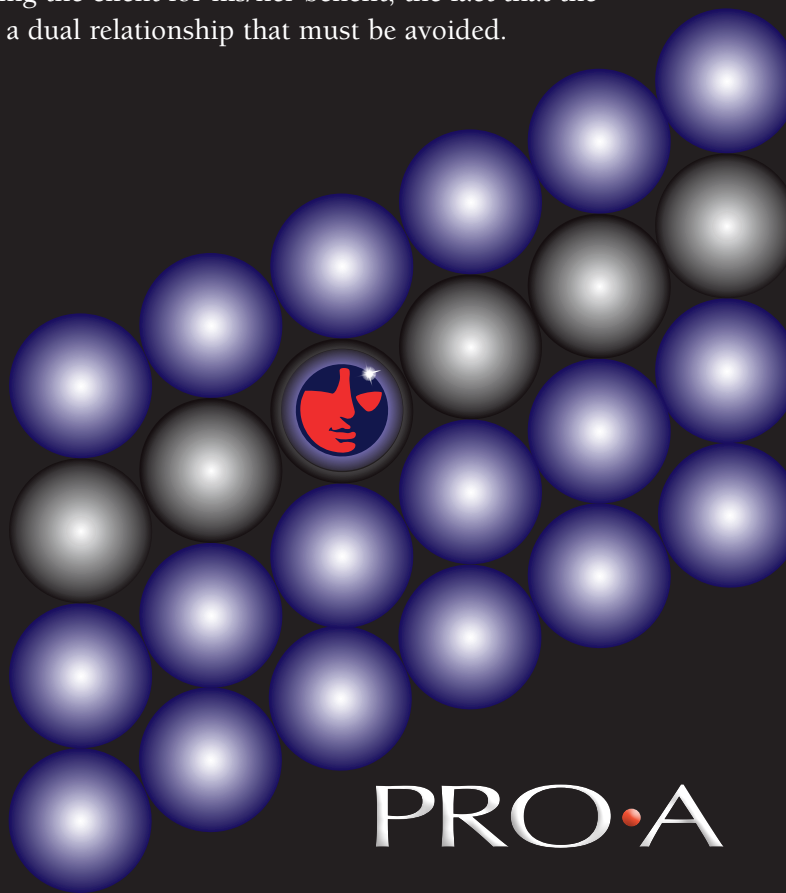
Significant Risk of Exploitive Relationships

*By Mary Jo Mather, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Certification Board and
William Stauffer, Executive Director, The Pennsylvania Recovery Organization Alliance
reprinted - from December 2014 Quarterly Newsletter*

There is significant risk of an exploitive relationship developing between a care giver and a client in respect to recovery housing. Specifically, in situations where program staff members own or have material interest in a recovery house that clients of the drug and alcohol program are referred to for housing, an exploitive or dual relationship between the staff member and the client is established.

While one might argue that the staff member is referring the client for his/her benefit, the fact that the staff member also gains by this referral creates a dual relationship that must be avoided.

Addiction professionals need to be very aware of potential code of ethical conduct concern for any caregiver who engages in such conduct or is aware of a colleague who is engaged in such conduct.



Being involved in or even aware of such conduct and failing to take proper action may place addiction professionals at risk for potential sanctions for unethical conduct under the PCB Ethical Code of Conduct.

As background, when considering ethical conduct of a certified professional, things can get murky quite quickly when there are such dual relationships. Dual relationships are simply defined as a situation where multiple roles exist between a care worker and a client. Dual relationships are any relationships other than the ones for which you are credentialed to provide and/or relationships that fall outside of your scope of practice. Not all such dual relationships are necessarily problematic and may be unavoidable. For example, if you are working to help the only plumber in your small rural town and your drain clogs or you need a tooth pulled and you are working with the only dentist in the area. You may have no choice but to seek the services of the plumber or dentist you had as a client. Knowing this, whenever you or someone you supervise enters into a dual relationship, great care and proper supervision needs to be utilized to avoid situations in which an exploitive relationship develops— or even the perception of one. As a professional, if you find yourself rationalizing the benefit to the client as a way of convincing yourself there is no boundary crossing occurring, you have likely already crossed over into a boundary violation.

What may make a dual relationship exploitive? Such a relationship becomes exploitive when there is material or other gain through the dual relationship with the caregiver. When employed by an agency, there is an implied contract that all professional

activities will be conducted in that setting with that agency's best interests in mind. To exploit your role with your agency to recruit or refer agency clients for personal gain to your recovery house violates that implied contract and the PCB code of ethical conduct. Blurred roles for persons in recovery can make this particularly challenging within the drug and alcohol service system. Administrators should pay very close attention to this kind of issue - some of the situations that could develop may also be illegal and place the agency and individuals involved at risk for legal sanctions.

What may make a dual relationship exploitive?

Such a relationship becomes exploitive when there is material or other gain through the dual relationship with the caregiver. When employed by an agency, there is an implied contract that all professional activities will be conducted in that setting with that agency's best interests in mind. To exploit your role with your agency to recruit or refer agency clients for personal gain to your recovery house violates that implied contract and the PCB code of ethical conduct.

How to address such a circumstance? One way would be to have agencies put rules in place disallowing this kind of dual relationship and policies to reduce the potential of this kind of exploitive relationship that includes regular monitoring and appropriate corrective action. Agency policies can state that potential violations, once investigated fully by the agency, will be turned over to PCB for investigation and possible sanctions of the certified professional who is in violation of a dual relationship if any of the involved staff are PCB certified. The other way is for us as addiction professionals to follow our PCB Code of Ethical Conduct standards.

So what should you do if you work in a facility and see this type of conflict playing out in your facility? As certified addiction professionals, we have an obligation to promptly alert colleagues informally of this kind of potential unethical conduct and agency administrators overseeing client care through which this kind of dual relationship may potentially develop. Additionally, we have a responsibility to report violations of professional conduct of other certified professionals to the appropriate licensing/disciplinary authority when he/she knows or should have known that another certified professional has violated ethical standards and has failed to take corrective action after informal intervention.

We are all responsible for maintaining high ethical standards and the integrity of services we provide people as addiction professionals. We owe as much to the people and communities we serve. We need to keep this in mind in the practice of our professional affairs. The welfare and best interests of those we serve is paramount and is accomplished by the provision of ethical and competent services. Those of us in recovery deserve and expect to be treated fairly and to be referred to well-run recovery houses free from dual relationship issues and other concerns. With this always in mind, our clients will thrive and receive the types of services they deserve and should expect from addiction professionals.

PCB Code of Ethical Conduct

<https://www.pacertboard.org/sites/default/files/Code%20of%20Conduct%209-2016%20approved.pdf>

**Pennsylvania Certification Board, www.pacertboard.org
298 S. Progress Avenue Harrisburg, PA 17109, 717.540.4455**

**Department of Drug & Alcohol Programs, Program Licensure Division, www.ddap.pa.gov/pages/default.aspx
132 Kline Village, Suite A, Harrisburg, PA 17104, 717.783.8675, RA-licensuredivision@pa.gov**

**Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance, www.pro-a.org
900 South Arlington Avenue, Suite 254A, Harrisburg, PA 17109, 717.545.8929**

