



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
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UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER
ETHICAL BOUNDARIES IN PATIENT-CLINICIAN RELATIONSHIPS

1. This Information Letter provides clinicians and managers with information about ethical boundaries in patient-clinician relationships in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).
2. Maintaining appropriate boundaries in patient-clinician relationships is an essential part of compassionate, effective, and ethical health care practice. A new report by VHA's National Ethics Committee, "Ethical Boundaries in Patient-Clinician Relationships," helps clarify the concept of boundaries and boundary violations, and analyzes examples of potentially problematic actions to help clinicians identify and avoid professionally inappropriate conduct.
3. To ensure a consistent approach to boundaries in patient-clinician relationship throughout the VHA system, clinicians are encouraged to review this report and incorporate its recommendations into policies and procedures where appropriate. The report is available from the National Center for Ethics in Health Care at: http://vaww.va.gov/vhaethics/resources_4.cfm.
4. Questions about the report may be directed to Ellen Fox, MD (10E), Director, National Center for Ethics in Health Care, (202) 501-0364.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for
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Under Secretary for Health

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