

Healthy Boundaries in Care and Community & VA & Veteran Care

Union of Saints

Patients and individuals deserve care that is respectful, focused, and appropriate to the purpose of the visit or interaction. In professional settings, including healthcare, providers are expected to remain within the **scope of care** and maintain clear professional boundaries.

Sometimes conversations or actions may extend beyond the intended purpose of an appointment. This can occur when a discussion moves into topics that are unrelated to the reason for the visit or when guidance is offered outside the provider's professional role. When this happens, it may feel as though the interaction has moved beyond appropriate limits or has **overreached** the purpose of the visit.

Individuals may experience this in different ways. Common terms used to describe these situations include:

- **Overreach**
- **Overstep boundaries**
- **Exceed limits**
- **Exceed the scope of care**
- **Act outside the proper scope**
- **Go beyond appropriate boundaries**
- **Cross a boundary**
- **Extend beyond the intended purpose**
- **Become intrusive**
- **Push past healthy boundaries**
- **Act beyond a professional role**

It is also helpful to understand the role of **private contractors** in medical systems that serve veterans and other communities. Private contractors or outside providers are **not part of the internal VA physician system**. They are independent civilian professionals who offer services to the broader medical community, which may include veterans.

This distinction is important because administrative authority within the VA generally applies to **VA employed physicians and staff**. Civilian providers who offer services may operate under separate professional structures, licensing boards, and independent practices.

If an interaction begins to move beyond the purpose of care, patients and individuals may respectfully ask how a topic relates to their treatment or request that the conversation return to the purpose of the visit.

Healthy care environments are built on respect, transparency, and trust. Providers should remain attentive to professional boundaries, and patients should feel empowered to ask questions and advocate for care that remains within the appropriate scope.