



AMBASSADOR INSIGHTS



What strategies help you maintain healthy boundaries with the families you support?

When I first started, I really struggled with this, and sometimes found myself working harder than my families to support their child's development and B3 participation. Now I really check myself- no answering texts/calls on nights and weekends, less sharing of personal experiences, and more expecting them to do their part (ie, printing communication pictures, building a PVC pipe walker, asking their MD a question).

Talking to them about it and explaining. For example, with scheduling, I am in 3 counties, so I try to do counties on certain days. I do accommodate family schedules, but I also share why I may have certain days I try to schedule on so they understand too.

Setting focus time on my phone. I can have it on during the work day, where my work notifications come through, but then during the evening and weekend, I have it set so I am not notified of work stuff.

- 1) If families try to befriend me on FB or somewhere, I use company policy as an excuse, so as not to hurt their feelings.
- 2) I tell families that I will answer text messages "if I am available and not busy" after hours, but that my personal life is busy, so sometimes an answer may need to wait until the next day. Sounds harsh, but it is being honest. I answer many work texts after hours, but if families start to abuse it, or if it is something that doesn't affect other team members (for example, a cancellations for 8AM the next day), I don't even open it completely, and leave it as unread, so I remember in the morning to answer it.
- 3) I try to remember the mantra, "Your emergency is not my emergency." There is only so much I can do. I give resources, I write a lot of things on my joint plans, I text a lot of resources, but rarely will a child be hurt or in danger if I do not answer a text or call right away. Families know to call 911 for that. The fact that they couldn't pay rent and received an eviction notice at 6PM on a Friday does not constitute me calling them back....it can wait until Monday. There is literally nothing I can do for them that they cannot do for themselves

by making a couple other phone calls or going online. Sometimes the best thing you can do is stop being their catch-all or crutch, and almost force them to take ownership of the issue and problem solve on their own.

- 4) The whole 'you can lead a horse to water' saying. I cannot do more to help a child than their family is (or is at least trying to do). I understand I have more resources, but I cannot allow myself to be the person who takes all of the ownership. I have learned the hard way - the more I do for some families, the less they do, and the less the child actually progresses.

I have started leaving my work phone in my car overnight so I don't feel the urge to respond to any contacts after hours. I live in the county I work in so there are often conversations about how I may act if I see them in the community (not initiating interaction with them due to confidentiality). I'm upfront about how I'm not always available to respond immediately as I'm in/out of the office and spending time with families and that I will get back to them as soon as I'm able. It's still stressful when families aren't doing their part and that's why I'm fortunate that I have a fabulous team that supports each other. If families are involved in other systems, like CPS, I'll still encourage them to contact their assigned case worker for that role.

Ditto what everyone else has said about creating boundaries around social media and replying to messages after work hours. Also, each day I remind myself that this is the family's baby, not mine, and I can only work as hard as they work or I will be frustrated with them and myself. Some days that is more challenging than others 😊