

Policy: The Ministry of Presence

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the core philosophy of "The Ministry of Presence" as the primary modality of care for D&D Educational Foundation. While we provide RACHEL Systems, we believe our primary impact is relational. This policy outlines the expectations, practices, and boundaries required to offer a consistent, compassionate, and non-judgmental presence to those we serve.

2. Definition

The Ministry of Presence is defined here as the intentional practice of sharing physical, emotional, and spiritual space with another person. It prioritizes *being with* a person over *doing for* them. It is the act of witnessing another's reality without an immediate agenda to fix, cure, or advise, thereby affirming the dignity and worth of the individual.

3. Core Principles

All personnel act as representatives of this ministry and shall adhere to the following principles:

3.1. People Over Tasks

While administrative and logistical tasks are necessary, they are secondary to the human being in front of us. When a client/guest approaches, staff will pause tasks to acknowledge them.

3.2. Active Listening (The "Holy Listening" Standard)

Listening is the primary tool of this ministry.

- **Listen to understand, not to respond:** Personnel should avoid formulating a response while the other person is speaking.
- **Comfort with silence:** Personnel shall not feel compelled to fill silences with chatter. Silence is often where processing occurs.

3.3. Suspension of Judgment

We meet people exactly where they are. Personnel will suspend moral evaluation, diagnostic labeling, or unsolicited advice-giving during the initial stages of connection.

4. Operational Guidelines

4.1. The "Fixing" Trap

A central tenet of the Ministry of Presence is the distinction between **Curing** and **Caring**.

- **Policy:** Staff are not expected to have answers to all of a client's suffering. Staff are prohibited from offering "clichés of comfort" (e.g., "Everything happens for a reason," "It will be okay") which often minimize pain.
- **Action:** Instead, use validating language: "I hear how hard this is," or "I am here with you in this."

4.2. Physical Presence and Body Language

- **Eye Level:** Whenever possible, sit to be at eye level with the person served. Standing over a seated person creates a power dynamic contrary to this ministry.
- **Distractions:** Mobile phones, radios, and other devices must be silenced or put away during direct one-on-one interactions, barring emergencies.

4.3. Consistency

Presence implies reliability. If a staff member commits to checking in on a client at a specific time, they must do so, or communicate clearly if they cannot.

5. Professional Boundaries

To sustain a Ministry of Presence without incurring compassion fatigue or burnout, strict boundaries must be maintained.

5.1. Emotional Boundaries (The "Container" Concept)

Staff act as a container for the client's emotions but should not absorb them. We walk *beside* the client in their pain; we do not jump into the hole *with* them.

5.2. Scope of Practice

- **Non-Clinical Role:** Unless licensed as a therapist or medical professional and acting in that specific capacity, staff shall not offer clinical diagnoses or medical advice.
- **Referral:** If a client requires intervention beyond "presence" (e.g., suicide assessment, legal counsel), staff must immediately bridge the client to the appropriate professional resource.

5.3. Personal Disclosure

The focus must remain on the client. Personal stories should only be shared if they explicitly serve the client's healing and do not shift the focus to the staff member.