



ALBERTA COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL WORKERS

DRAFT

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

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DRAFT for registrant consultation

Preamble

Social work is grounded in a holistic understanding of people within their biological, psychological, social, cultural, economic, environmental, spiritual, and relational contexts. Social workers recognize the strengths, capacities, identities, relationships, and lived experiences of those they serve while considering the broader systems and conditions that influence wellbeing, participation, and opportunity. This holistic understanding informs ethical decision-making, professional judgement, and the delivery of social work services across all areas of practice.

The social work profession is founded on core professional values that inform ethical practice. Social workers uphold the following professional values:

- Respecting the dignity and worth of all people
- Promoting social justice
- Recognizing and responding to the impacts of historical and ongoing injustice
- Valuing human relationships
- Preserving integrity in professional practice
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality
- Providing competent professional services

Purpose and Function

The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice establishes the ethical and professional requirements for social workers registered with the College.

The **Code of Ethics (Code)** establishes enforceable ethical principles that arise from the values, purposes, and responsibilities of the social work profession. It provides a framework for ethical decision-making and professional conduct across the breadth of social work practice.

Standards of Practice (Standards) establish specific enforceable requirements for professional practice. They address areas of professional responsibility and provide more detailed requirements for applying the ethical principles established by the Code.

The Code and Standards are enforceable regulatory requirements and must be read and applied together. The Code and Standards have different functions but are interdependent. The Code provides the ethical context in which the Standards are understood and applied,

while the Standards give more specific expression to professional responsibilities in particular areas of practice. A social worker must comply with both.

Scope and Application

The Code and Standards apply to social workers when engaging in the practice of social work.

They apply across the breadth of social work roles, professional activities, services, relationships, and practice settings. Social work practice may include direct and clinical practice as well as consultation, supervision, leadership, administration, policy development, research, education, advocacy, and other professional activities within the scope of social work practice.

The application of an ethical principle or standard of practice depends on the circumstances, including the social worker's registration status, professional role, practice context, responsibilities, and the nature of the professional activity or relationship.

Relationship to Legislation and Other Requirements

The Code and Standards operate within the legislative and regulatory framework governing social work in Alberta. Social workers must comply with applicable legislation, regulations, orders, and requirements of the College.

The Code and Standards do not replace other legislation or legal requirements that apply to social work practice.

Social workers may also be subject to requirements arising from their employer, organization, contract, practice setting, or other professional role. Such requirements may supplement professional responsibilities but do not replace or reduce requirements established by legislation, the Code, or the Standards.

Professional Judgement and Context

Social work practice occurs in diverse circumstances and may involve competing ethical, legal, professional, organizational, and client interests. The Code and Standards provide a framework for exercising professional judgement in those circumstances.

Professional judgement involves recognizing the circumstances relevant to a decision, identifying applicable ethical and legal requirements, considering the potential impact of available actions, and taking reasonable steps to meet professional responsibilities.

Professional judgement does not permit a social worker to disregard a specific requirement of the Code, Standards, legislation, or other applicable regulatory requirement.

Reading and Applying the Document

The Code and Standards should be read together. The Code of Ethics, and the Standards of Practice serve different functions and inform one another.

- The Code of Ethics establishes enforceable ethical principles.
- The Standards of Practice establish enforceable professional requirements in specific areas of practice.
- Definitions establish the meaning of terms used in the document.

Not every provision of the Code or Standards will apply to every social worker or in every circumstance. The application of a principle or standard depends on the social worker's role, relationship, activity, registration status, and practice context.

ACSW Code of Ethics

Ethical Principles

- 1. Social workers respect the diversity, dignity, rights, and worth of clients, including their right to self-determination and participation in decisions affecting their lives.**
- 2. Social workers act honestly, ethically, and accountably in all aspects of professional practice.**
- 3. Social workers maintain and continually develop the knowledge, skills, judgement, and professional capacity required for safe and competent practice.**
- 4. Social workers promote social justice and social change by advancing effective and humane systems that reduce barriers, and support the equitable distribution of resources, protection of the natural environment in which individuals, families, groups and communities thrive**
- 5. Social workers exercise professional judgement that is impartial, evidence-informed, and responsive to the circumstances of each situation.**

6. **Social workers foster respectful professional, and culturally responsive relationships that support safe, ethical, and effective services.**
7. **Social workers maintain and protect the confidentiality of all professionally acquired information.**

ACSW Standards of Practice

Definitions and Interpretation

The definitions and interpretations in this section establish the meaning of key terms used throughout the Standards of Practice. They are intended to support clarity, consistency, and fairness in the application of the Standards across diverse areas of social work practice.

The meaning and application of the Standards must be considered in the context of the social worker's role, practice setting, client circumstances, the Code of Ethics, and applicable legislation.

Assent	an informal agreement to participate, in a professional service, by a client who cannot give consent due to age, cognitive abilities, or legal status. Assent is an acknowledgment that they understand (to the best of their ability) and are willing to participate in the proposed service or treatment. Assent is especially relevant when working with children or adults with impaired decision-making capacity.
Authorized Decision Maker	an individual who has authority, within the scope of their appointment or applicable legislation, to provide informed consent or make decisions regarding professional services on behalf of a client. An authorized decision-maker may include a parent, legal guardian, agent, or other person appointed by the client or recognized by applicable legislation.
Best Interests	a consideration of what supports a person's wellbeing, rights, dignity, safety, and circumstances, informed by the person's culture, views, values, preferences, and the least restrictive approach appropriate in the circumstances.

	Where a person's ability to make decisions is affected, best interest considerations are applied in accordance with applicable legislation.
Boundaries (professional boundaries)	means the limits that define and maintain the professional nature of the relationship between a social worker and a client or other person receiving professional services and protect the integrity of the relationship and the interests and well-being of those receiving professional services. Boundaries distinguish professional relationships from personal, social, emotional, financial, sexual, or other relationships or interests and protect against harm, exploitation, conflicts of interest, and misuse of the social worker's position of trust, authority, or influence. Boundary Crossing means a departure from an established boundary in the context of a professional relationship. A boundary crossing may be appropriate, necessary, or reasonably unavoidable in some circumstances and does not, by itself, constitute a boundary violation. Boundary Violation means a breach of a boundary that results in, or creates a risk of harm, exploitation, undue influence, or misuse of the social worker's position of trust, authority, or influence.
Capacity	the ability to make a decision by understanding the information relevant to the decision and appreciating the reasonably foreseeable consequences including benefits or risks of making or not making the decision.
Client	Client means a person receiving, or being the intended recipient or beneficiary of, a psychosocial intervention provided by a social worker acting in a professional capacity. A client may include: • An individual, family, group, community, organization, government, patient, or person recognized under applicable legislation • A person who previously received professional services from a social worker in the past but is not currently receiving services. • involuntary clients whose engagement with professional services is not solely based on their own initiative or free choice. This includes where participation is required by

	law or by the exercise of authority or influence by another person(s) or organization. A person may have a professional relationship with a social worker without being a client. The Standards may impose requirements toward students, supervisees, practicum students, research participants, those receiving professional services, including entities depending on the nature of the professional relationship or activity. Where a Standard refers specifically to clients, the obligation applies to clients as defined above. Where a Standard is intended to apply more broadly, it may refer to service recipients or other persons or entities.
Clinical diagnosis	the professional process of identifying and distinguishing mental, emotional, behavioural, substance-related and addictive disorders, or other clinically recognized conditions, disorders, impairments, or disabilities through clinical assessment and professional judgement, using a psychosocial framework and informed by accepted diagnostic classification systems.
Clinical social work practice	The application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills in the areas of assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental, emotional, and behavioural disorders, conditions and addictions.
Colleague	A social worker or other professional with whom a social worker interacts in a professional capacity and who does not have professional authority, responsibility or an evaluative role in relation to the social worker. A person acting in a supervisory capacity is not considered a colleague for the purposes of these Standards.
College	Alberta College of Social Workers.
Competence	the demonstrated knowledge, skills, judgement and experience to provide the professional service
Conduct	means a social worker's actions, decisions, communications, behaviours, and omissions in the course of professional practice or otherwise in circumstances where the social worker's professional role, authority, trust, influence, or responsibilities are engaged or relevant.
Confidential Information	refers to information obtained by a social worker in the context of a professional relationship or in other circumstances when there was a reasonable expectation that a social worker would not disclose the information.
Conflict of Interest	means a situation in which a social worker has a relationship, interest, or other circumstance that could improperly influence, or reasonably be perceived as improperly influencing, the social

	worker's professional judgement, objectivity, or ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities. A conflict of interest may arise from personal, familial, financial, professional, organizational, business, or other relationships or interests. A conflict of interest may exist whether or not the social worker benefits from the situation. Accepting personal or financial authority or responsibility for or on behalf of a client including appointment as a guardian, trustee, personal representative, executor, administrator, or similar role would constitute a conflict of interest. This does not include a statutory role or responsibility assigned to a social worker by legislation.
Consent	Consent means a continuous and active process through which social workers ensure that clients, or an authorized decision maker, understand and agree to a professional service, action, or the use or disclosure of information. Informed consent means consent that is given voluntarily after the client, or a person authorized to make a decision on the client's behalf, has received and understood the information reasonably necessary to make the decision, including the nature and purpose of the proposed professional service or action, relevant benefits and risks, reasonable alternatives, and the reasonably foreseeable consequences of consenting or not consenting. Expressed consent means the form in which consent or informed consent is communicated: directly through verbal, written, electronic, or other accessible means of communication that clearly indicates agreement to a professional service, action, or the use or disclosure of information. Implied consent means consent that is not communicated directly but is reasonably inferred from a person's words, actions, or the circumstances in which a professional service, action, or use or disclosure of information is proposed.
Consultation	refers to a process in which professional advice or expertise is provided on request to an individual, group, organization or community
Digital Tools	electronic technologies, software, applications, platforms, artificial intelligence systems, and other digital resources used to provide professional services or to support communication, documentation, information management, scheduling,

	assessment, scoring, interpretation of assessment results, administration, supervision, education, research, or other activities related to the practice of social work.
Dual/Multiple Role	Dual/Multiple Role means a situation in which a social worker has, or has had, a professional relationship with a client or others receiving professional services and another present or previous relationship or role including a familial, social, emotional, financial, supervisory, teacher/student, administrative, legal, or other relationship or role. A dual or multiple role may be appropriate or reasonably unavoidable in limited circumstances, including an emergency, limited availability of services, geographic or community factors, specialized expertise, or other circumstances in which avoiding the additional role would not be possible, until an appropriate transfer to another regulated professional is feasible.
Electronic Communication	the transmission, exchange, or sharing of information through electronic or digital technologies, including email, text messaging, virtual platforms, online communication systems, social media, and other electronic methods used in the context of professional practice.
Engaging in the Practice of Social Work	means providing social work services or carrying out activities, interactions, or responsibilities in the social worker's capacity as a social worker that are directly related to, arise from, or are ancillary to the practice of social work. A social worker may be engaging in the practice of social work whether the activity is paid, unpaid, voluntary, or incidental to other professional responsibilities. The Standards of Practice may apply to conduct occurring outside the provision of social work services where the conduct arises from, is connected to, or is affected by the social worker's professional role, authority, trust, influence, or responsibilities.
Evidence Informed	a process that incorporates best available evidence from research findings, and practice experience
Expressed Consent	means the form in which consent or informed consent is communicated: directly through verbal, written, electronic, or other clear communication indicating agreement to a professional service, action, or the use or disclosure of information.
Fiduciary Duty	a duty that has been established where the person receiving professional services has placed their trust and confidence in the social worker who has accepted expressly or through legal

	authority to act in manner consistent with the trust and confidence placed in them.
Fitness to Practice	means having the physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and behavioural capacity necessary to practice safely and competently, and to fulfill the responsibilities of the profession.
Implied Consent	means consent that is not communicated directly but is reasonably inferred from a person's words, actions, or the circumstances in which a professional service, action, or use or disclosure of information is proposed.
Informed Consent	means consent that is given voluntarily after the client, or a person authorized to make a decision on the client's behalf, has received and understood the information reasonably necessary to make the decision, including the nature and purpose of the proposed professional service or action, relevant benefits and risks, reasonable alternatives, and the reasonably foreseeable consequences of consenting or not consenting.
Involuntary Client	a client whose engagement with professional services is not solely based on their own initiative or free choice. This includes clients whose participation is required by law or by the exercise of authority or influence by another person(s) or organization.
Organization	refers to any setting as well as to the administrative structures through which professional services are provided, including for-profit and not-for-profit community agencies, private practice settings, government agencies, health services, schools, and other entities.
Patient	HPA 1(1) (x.1) "patient", for the purposes of a complaint made in respect of unprofessional conduct in relation to sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, means a patient as set out in the standards of practice of a council; (See definition of Client)
Prohibited Relationship	means a romantic or sexual relationship between a social worker and a client, former client, student, supervisee, or other person where the relationship arises from, is connected to, or is affected by the social worker's professional authority, trust, influence, or responsibility, and the relationship constitutes exploitation, undue influence, or misuse of the social worker's professional position.
Professional Relationship	means a relationship that arises from a social worker's professional role or from the provision of professional services. A professional relationship may include a relationship with a client, colleague, student, supervisee, research participant, employer, organization, or other person or with whom the social worker interacts in a professional capacity.

Providing Social Work Services	Social work services means providing or engaging in paid, unpaid or voluntary services or activities to, for, or on behalf of a client or other person that fall within the scope of social work practice as defined by section 3 of Schedule 27 of the <i>Health Professions Act</i>. Social work services include, but are not limited to, direct and clinical practice; community engagement and intervention; supervision; consultation; advocacy; leadership; governance; administration; policy development; education; and research.
Psychosocial Intervention	A professional service provided by a registered social worker that applies social work knowledge, skills or professional judgement to address psychological, social, behavioural, relational, cultural, environmental or systemic factors affecting the functioning or well-being of clients. A psychosocial intervention constitutes a restricted activity when it meets the definition of, and requirements for, a restricted activity under the Restricted Activity Regulation.
Psychotherapy	the intentional and structured use of a psychotherapeutic method, or modality to treat or alleviate psychological, emotional, behavioural conditions, or relational difficulties.
Reasonable	refers to the common law principle that behaviour or conduct, which a typical or average social worker, with similar training and experience, would consider to be appropriate in given circumstances.
Record	A document, whether written, electronic or in any other form, that contains information created, received or maintained by a social worker in the course of providing a professional service, including information about a client or other person or , the professional context, services or activities provided, and the outcomes or decisions associated with those services or activities.
Restricted Activity	an activity prescribed as a restricted activity under the <i>Health Professions Act</i> and the <i>Restricted Activity Regulation</i> and that may only be performed by a regulated health professional who is authorized to perform the activity, subject to any conditions, restrictions, or supervision requirements established by legislation or the College.
Restricted Activity - Psychosocial Intervention	performing a psychosocial intervention with an expectation of treating a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs: • judgement; • behaviour;

	• the capacity to recognize reality; or • the ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.
Self-determination	means the right of individuals to direct their own lives and to participate meaningfully in choices and decisions about matters that affect them.
Sexual Abuse	as defined in the <i>Health Professions Act</i> s.1(1)(nn.1), means the threatened, attempted or actual conduct of a regulated member towards a patient that is of a sexual nature and includes any of the following conduct: (i) sexual intercourse between a regulated member and a patient of that regulated member; (ii) genital to genital, genital to anal, oral to genital, or oral to anal contact between a regulated member and a patient of that regulated member; (iii) masturbation of a regulated member by, or in the presence of, a patient of that regulated member; (iv) masturbation of a regulated member's patient by that regulated member; (v) encouraging a regulated member's patient to masturbate in the presence of that regulated member; (vi) touching of a sexual nature of a patient's genitals, anus, breasts or buttocks by a regulated member.
Sexual Misconduct	As defined in the <i>Health Professions Act</i> s.1(1)(nn.3) means any incident or repeated incidents of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature by a regulated member towards a patient that the regulated member knows or ought reasonably to know will or would cause offence or humiliation to the patient or adversely affect the patient's health and well-being but does not include sexual abuse.
Sexual Nature	means conduct, communication, behaviour, remarks, interactions, or relationships that are sexual or have a sexual component. Whether something is of a sexual nature may depend on its content, purpose, context, manner, or circumstances. Conduct may be of a sexual nature whether or not it constitutes sexual abuse or sexual misconduct as defined in the <i>Health Professions Act</i>.
Social Determinants of Health	means the personal, social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions that influence the health, well-being, and quality of life of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations.

Social Health	means the social conditions, relationships, environments, and circumstances that influence health, well-being, participation, functioning, and quality of life. In social work practice, social health recognizes that health is shaped by the social determinants of health and by individuals' interactions with their families, communities, systems, and broader social and ecological environments.
Social Worker	a person regulated under the <i>Social Workers Profession Regulation</i> in the Province of Alberta.
Scope of Social Work Practice	The statutory scope of social work practice as defined in s.3, Schedule 27 of the <i>Health Professions Act</i>: 1. Enhance or restore social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities by improving developmental, problem-solving and coping capacities of people and systems. 2. Promote effective and humane systems that provide resources, opportunities and services to people and link people to those systems. 3. Contribute to the development and improvement of social policy. 4. Teach, manage and conduct research in the science, techniques and practice of social work. 5. Provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations. Social work practice may occur across a breadth of settings, roles and systems and may involve assessment, intervention, prevention, treatment, support, education, consultation, advocacy, coordination, evaluation, research, leadership and other activities consistent with the purposes and functions of social work. An activity may be within the scope of social work practice when it is undertaken using social work knowledge, skills, experience and professional judgement to address social, psychological, behavioural, relational, cultural, environmental or systemic factors affecting social health, functioning, or well-being.
Supervision	refers to the professional relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee that includes evaluation and direction over the services provided and promotes the continued development of the supervisee's knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide services in an ethical and competent manner. Where supervision is limited to overseeing organizational requirements and

	compliance with policies it does not fulfill the requirements for practice supervision under these Standards of Practice.
Technology	means electronic, digital tools, systems, devices, platforms, or processes used to support, deliver, document, communicate, manage, or otherwise facilitate professional services or practice activities.
Unprofessional Conduct	Has the meaning set out in s.1(1)(pp) of the <i>Health Professions Act</i> . For the purposes of these Standards, unprofessional conduct includes conduct that contravenes the <i>Health Professions Act</i> , these Standards, the Code of Ethics, or another enactment that applies to the profession, or that otherwise constitutes unprofessional conduct under the <i>Health Professions Act</i> .

Standards of Practice

1. Regulatory Accountability

Social workers are accountable to the public through the College. They meet the requirements of a regulated profession by maintaining their authority to practice, complying with regulatory requirements, and cooperating with the College in fulfilling its mandate to protect the public.

Standard 1.1 – Registration and Authorization to Practice

A person must be registered with the College and authorized to practice before using a protected title or providing professional services.

A social worker meets this standard by

- Using protected titles and providing professional services within the scope of social work practice only while registered with the College and authorized to do so.
- Maintaining professional liability insurance.
- Complying with any conditions, restrictions, or limitations placed on their practice.
- Ceasing practice when registration or authorization no longer permits practice.

- e) Maintaining accurate and current personal, educational credential, and employment information with the College, including notifying the College of required updates or corrections.
- f) Reporting findings, sanctions, or restrictions imposed by another regulatory body when required.
- g) Reporting any domestic or international criminal charges or convictions as required.
- h) Not knowingly assisting or facilitating another person to represent themselves as authorized to practice social work when they are not entitled to do so.

Standard 1.2 – Continuing Competence

A social worker must demonstrate and maintain continuing competence in accordance with College requirements.

A social worker meets this standard by:

- a) Completing competence program requirements.
- b) Maintaining documentation required to demonstrate continuing competence.
- c) Participating in practice visits, examinations, assessments, interviews or other competence assessments or audits when required.
- d) Completing education, training, remediation, or other requirements directed by the College.

Standard 1.3 Adherence to Regulatory Processes

A social worker must adhere to the College's regulatory processes and comply with requirements imposed by the College.

A social worker meets this standard by:

- a) Taking reasonable steps to remain informed about changes to legislation, regulatory requirements, standards, and other requirements relevant to their practice.
- b) Providing truthful and complete information to the College when required.
- c) Responding to requests from the College within required timelines.
- d) Disclosing confidential information when the information is required for a social worker to defend against a complaint of unprofessional conduct and/or when directed to do so by an investigator or prosecutor of a complaint under the *Health Professions Act*.
- e) Cooperating with regulatory processes concerning registration, continuing competence, professional conduct, complaints, investigations, hearings, and other regulatory matters.

- f) Complying with orders, conditions, restrictions, limitations, or other requirements imposed by the College.
- g) Not obstructing, interfering with, or attempting to improperly influence a regulatory process.

2. Professional Integrity

Social workers uphold the integrity of the profession by acting honestly, ethically, and responsibly in their professional activities and relationships.

Standard 2.1 – Honesty and Professional Representation

A social worker must represent their qualifications, registration status, services, competence, and professional role accurately and honestly.

A social worker meets this standard by:

- a) Identifying themselves by their full name and as a registered social worker when engaging in the practice of social work, regardless of job title.
- b) Using protected titles only as permitted by legislation and College authorization.
- c) Providing accurate information regarding their education, training, experience, registration status, professional affiliations, areas of practice, and professional services.
- d) Ensuring professional profiles, advertising, public statements, digital content, and other communications accurately represent their qualifications, registration status, professional services, and role.
- e) Avoiding representations that are false, misleading, deceptive, exaggerated, or likely to create an inaccurate understanding of their qualifications, services, role, or expected outcomes.
- f) Clearly representing their professional role, responsibilities, and relationship to those receiving professional services.
- g) Clearly distinguishing between professional representations and personal or other non-professional communications or activities.
- h) Taking reasonable steps to correct information that is inaccurate or misleading about their qualifications, registration status, role, or services.
- i) Accurately representing the origin, authorship and development of professional work and appropriately acknowledging the contributions of others, including where artificial intelligence or other technologies have assisted in its development.

Standard 2.2 –Boundaries

Obligation:

A social worker must establish, maintain, and appropriately manage professional boundaries to protect clients and others receiving professional services, preserve the integrity of professional relationships, and prevent misuse of professional authority or trust.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Establishing and maintaining boundaries that are consistent with the purpose, nature, and limits of the professional relationship.
- b) Clearly distinguishing the professional relationship from personal, social, financial, or other relationships or interests.
- c) Recognizing and managing the power imbalance, trust, dependency, vulnerability, authority, and influence inherent in or arising from the professional relationship.
- d) Maintaining professional relationships in a manner that supports the dignity, autonomy, safety, and well-being of those receiving professional services.
- e) Ensuring that personal interests, needs, relationships, or circumstances do not interfere with professional judgement or the interests of those receiving professional services.
- f) Recognizing and appropriately managing dual or multiple relationships that may impair professional judgement, create conflicts of interest, or increase the risk of harm or exploitation.
- g) Not exploiting a client, or other person in a professional relationship for personal, financial, sexual, emotional, social, or other improper personal benefit.
- h) Not engaging in a prohibited relationship.
- i) Not engaging in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.
- j) Not engaging in conduct of a sexual nature with a client, former client, student, supervisee, or other person where the conduct exploits or misuses the social worker's professional authority, trust, influence, or position.
- k) Recognizing and managing boundaries and boundary-related responsibilities that may continue after a professional relationship ends.
- l) Recognizing that a boundary crossing may be appropriate, necessary, or reasonably unavoidable in some circumstances, and ensuring that any such crossing is appropriately assessed, managed, and documented.
- m) Taking prompt and appropriate action to address a boundary crossing that is inappropriate or creates a risk of harm, exploitation, undue influence, conflict of interest, or misuse of the social worker's position of trust, or authority.
- n) Taking immediate and appropriate action to address and prevent further harm where a boundary violation has occurred or is reasonably suspected.
- o) Seeking supervision, consultation or other professional support when necessary to assess or manage a boundary concern, boundary crossing, or potential or actual boundary violation.
- p) Taking appropriate action to restore and maintain boundaries when they are unclear, compromised, crossed, or violated.

Standard 2.3 – Conflicts of Interest

A social worker must identify and appropriately manage actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest to protect the interests of those receiving services and demonstrate professional judgement and objectivity.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Identifying actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest that may adversely affect those receiving professional services, or the social worker's professional judgement and objectivity.
- b) Recognizing when a relationship, interest, dual or multiple role, or other circumstance creates or may create a conflict of interest and taking appropriate action to address it.
- c) Avoiding conflicts of interest where possible to ensure the interests of those being served as well as professional judgement and decision making are not compromised or result in harm or exploitation
- d) Disclosing and appropriately managing conflicts of interest when they cannot be avoided.
- e) Documenting significant conflicts of interest and actions taken to address them.
- f) Disclosing and managing conflicts arising from multiple professional roles, employment relationships, or organizational affiliations.
- g) Seeking consultation when conflicts of interest create uncertainty about appropriate professional action.

Standard 2.4 – Financial Integrity and Accountability

A social worker must ensure that financial arrangements and financial responsibilities arising from professional services are transparent, accurate, and managed in a manner that protects those receiving services and maintains professional integrity.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Using written agreements or other appropriate documentation to clarify professional services, financial arrangements, and responsibilities when the nature of the service or practice context requires it.
- b) Providing clear information about fees, billing practices, and costs associated with services before services are provided.
- c) Charging fees that are reasonable and appropriate for the professional services provided.
- d) Ensuring that billing, invoices, receipts, insurance claims, and financial records accurately and truthfully reflect the professional services provided.

- e) Managing advance payments, retainers, deposits, or other funds received from clients in a manner that is transparent, accurate, and consistent with professional and legal requirements.
- f) Managing or assisting with money, property, benefits, or financial decisions on behalf of a client only when authorized, and acting in accordance with any fiduciary duty that arises from doing so — including clarifying the authority, purpose, responsibilities, and safeguards involved, even when these responsibilities arise through an organizational role.
- g) Not exploiting clients through financial arrangements or the misuse of financial responsibilities.
- h) Not offering, accepting, or providing payment, gifts, commissions, or other benefits in exchange for referrals or professional recommendations.

Standard 2.5 - Responsibilities of the Profession

A social worker must fulfill their responsibilities to the social work profession, support trust and public confidence in the profession, and contribute to the integrity and accountability of social work practice.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Understanding and complying with the Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and applicable legislation relevant to their practice.
- b) Identifying and addressing situations where workplace policies, organizational expectations, or employer directions may be inconsistent with professional requirements.
- c) Taking reasonable steps to resolve conflicts between professional requirements and workplace expectations through appropriate communication, consultation, or organizational processes.
- d) Ensuring that professional decisions remain consistent with the Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and applicable legislation when conflicts cannot be resolved.

Standard 2.6 - Responsibilities Regarding the Professional Conduct of Others

A social worker must take reasonable action in response to concerns regarding the conduct, competence, impairment, or practice of another social worker or other professional where the concern may reasonably pose a risk to those receiving professional services, the public.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Seeking consultation or professional advice when necessary to assess the nature, seriousness, or appropriate response to a concern.
- b) Raising concerns directly with the person whose conduct is in question and seeking to resolve the concern through appropriate professional processes, where appropriate and safe to do so.
- c) Taking reasonable steps to protect those receiving professional services from actual or potential harm.
- d) Taking appropriate action to address concerns through organizational, professional, or other regulatory processes, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the concern and the circumstances.
- e) Maintaining appropriate confidentiality and respecting the privacy and rights of persons involved when responding to or reporting concerns.

3. Competence and Scope

Social workers are responsible for ensuring that the professional services they provide are within their scope of practice and that they have the knowledge, skills, experience, and professional judgement necessary to provide those services in a competent manner. They recognize the limits of their competence, scope of practice, and authority and take steps to address limitations.

Standard 3.1 – Competence

A social worker must undertake professional services only when they have the knowledge, training, skills, and professional judgement necessary to provide those services competently.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Practicing within the limits of their competence, experience, and professional role taking into account the nature, complexity, and circumstances of the professional service.
- b) Maintaining and applying current knowledge and skills, relevant to their area of practice.
- c) Applying relevant knowledge, evidence, professional judgement, and ethical principles when providing professional services.
- d) Considering relevant social, cultural, environmental, and structural contexts when adapting practice to the circumstances and needs of those receiving professional services.
- e) Recognizing when the information, knowledge, skills, experience, or other professional capacity necessary to provide a service is insufficient, and taking

appropriate action, including seeking consultation, supervision, education, referral, transfer, or discontinuation of the service.

- f) Recognizing when fitness to practice is compromised and taking action.
- g) Providing a clinical diagnosis only when authorized and competent to do so.

Standard 3.2 – Authorized Scope of Practice

A social worker must provide professional services within the scope of social work practice and the authority of their registration status, professional role, and practice context.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Practicing within the authority of their registration status and complying with any limitations, conditions, or restrictions that apply to their practice.
- b) Clearly identifying, communicating, and managing their professional role, responsibilities, authority, and limitations with clients, employers, organizations, and other professionals in their practice context.
- c) Performing the restricted activity of psychosocial intervention only when authorized or under the supervision of an authorized health professional, as permitted by legislation.
- d) Performing other regulated professional activities only when authorized by legislation or the College, as applicable.
- e) Not providing practice supervision as a social worker on the provisional register.
- f) Not engaging in independent private practice while on the provisional register.
- g) Not representing, advertising, or otherwise communicating that they are authorized to provide a service, practice in a specialized area, or perform a regulated activity when they are not authorized to do so.

Standard 3.3 – Professional Judgement

A social worker must exercise professional judgement by weighing and applying relevant professional knowledge, evidence, ethical principles, legislation, and the knowledge and lived experiences of those receiving services when making professional decisions.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Considering relevant evidence, professional knowledge, ethical requirements, legislation, and the knowledge and lived experiences of those affected when making professional decisions.
- b) Considering the potential benefits, risks, consequences, and reasonably foreseeable effects of professional decisions.

- c) Recognizing and addressing personal biases, assumptions, values, experiences, emotions, and other factors that may influence professional judgement, and not basing professional decisions on stereotypes, prejudice, or assumptions.
- d) Maintaining independence of professional judgement and not allowing organizational, financial, personal, or other interests to improperly influence professional opinions, assessments, recommendations, or decisions.
- e) Using professional judgement to determine and justify an appropriate course of action when legislation, professional requirements, organizational policies, or other applicable standards do not prescribe a specific approach.
- f) Seeking consultation, supervision, or other appropriate support when professional judgement is uncertain, complex, or affected by competing requirements.

4. Professional Service Provision

Social workers provide services that are safe, ethical, responsive, and promote the wellbeing, participation, and dignity of those receiving services.

Standard 4.1 – Establishing Professional Relationships

A social worker must establish and maintain a clear understanding of the purpose, nature, scope, roles, responsibilities and expectations of professional relationships.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Establishing a clear understanding of the purpose, nature, scope, and goals of the professional relationship including the role of the social worker, the services to be provided, and relevant limitations or expectations.
- b) Clarifying the roles, responsibilities, authority, involvement, and expectations of individuals, organizations, or other parties involved in the professional relationship, including relevant communication and information-sharing arrangements.
- c) Clarifying the basis for participation in the professional relationship, including whether participation is voluntary, mandated, or otherwise authorized, and identifying circumstances in which consent, decision-making authority, or participation may be affected by legislation, legal authority, or the nature of the professional role.
- d) Identifying any limitations, requirements, or competing responsibilities that may affect the professional relationship or the social worker's ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities.
- e) Considering whether the professional relationship is appropriate in the circumstances, including factors that may create conflicts of interest, boundary concerns, or other barriers to fulfilling professional responsibilities.

Standard 4.2 – Assessment

A social worker must conduct assessments that are appropriate to the purpose and context of the professional service and based on relevant and sufficient information.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Gathering, evaluating, and integrating relevant information from appropriate sources, including the perspectives and experiences of clients or others affected by the professional service while considering the relevance, reliability, limitations, and completeness of the information.
- b) Engaging those receiving services where possible, in the assessment process and supporting their understanding of the information, perspectives, and conclusions relevant to the assessment.
- c) Using assessment approaches and methods that are appropriate to the purpose, scope, and context of the professional service.
- d) Considering strengths, needs, goals, risks, resources, and relevant social, cultural, family, community, environmental, and systemic factors, including social determinants of health.
- e) Ensuring that professional opinions, conclusions, recommendations, and diagnostic activities undertaken as part of an assessment are based on sufficient and relevant information and appropriately reflect significant limitations or uncertainty.
- f) Communicating assessment information, conclusions, and recommendations in a manner that supports meaningful understanding and participation, considering the circumstances, capacity, and needs of those affected.
- g) Reviewing and updating assessments when new information or changes in circumstances may affect the assessment.

Standard 4.3 – Planning, Delivering and Evaluating Professional Services

A social worker must plan, deliver and evaluate professional services that are appropriate, evidence-informed, and responsive to the purpose of the professional activity, the circumstances and goals of those receiving professional services, and the context of practice.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Developing plans and selecting approaches, methods, or interventions that are appropriate to the purpose of the professional service, informed by assessment where applicable, and responsive to the circumstances and goals of those receiving services.

- b) Engaging those receiving services and others affected, where appropriate and possible, in identifying goals, selecting approaches, evaluating services, and adapting plans.
- c) Applying the knowledge, skills, and professional judgement necessary to implement the professional service plan and respond to changing circumstances.
- d) Integrating relevant evidence and the perspectives, knowledge, and circumstances of those affected when selecting, providing, monitoring, and evaluating services.
- e) Considering the impact of social, cultural, environmental, organizational, and systemic factors on service provision and outcomes.
- f) Monitoring and evaluating the appropriateness, effectiveness, and impact of services throughout their provision.
- g) Adapting, adjusting, discontinuing, or transitioning services when circumstances, information, risks, goals, outcomes, or contextual factors change, or when services are no longer appropriate or effective.

Standard 4.4 – Coordination and Continuity of Services

A social worker must support coordination and continuity of professional responsibilities and services.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Identifying when additional services, resources, or supports may be required and taking reasonable steps within their role and responsibilities to identify and facilitate appropriate referrals, connections, or transitions.
- b) Taking reasonable steps within their role and practice context to support continuity of professional responsibilities and services during transitions, absences, changes in service providers, changes in service availability, or other circumstances that may disrupt services.
- c) Taking reasonable steps to support appropriate transfer of relevant information records and professional responsibilities when services or professional responsibilities are transferred, interrupted, or concluded, consistent with applicable legislation and privacy requirements.

Standard 4.5 – Conclusion of Professional Services

A social worker must conclude professional services responsibly and appropriately, having regard to the circumstances, risks, and ongoing professional responsibilities involved.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Recognizing when professional services are no longer required, appropriate, beneficial, or within the social worker's competence or scope of practice and taking appropriate action modify, refer, suspend, or conclude services.
- b) Respecting the decision of those receiving professional services to withdraw from or end services and taking reasonable steps to clarify the conclusion of services, address any foreseeable risks, and provide information or referral, where appropriate.
- c) Providing reasonable information about the conclusion of services, including the reasons for concluding services and any relevant changes or circumstances affecting the professional relationship, when appropriate and possible.
- d) Taking appropriate action when safety concerns, threats, or other circumstances prevent services from continuing safely, including modifying, suspending, or concluding services as appropriate to the circumstances.
- e) Taking reasonable steps, where ongoing professional support is required, to support continuity or transition of services consistent with Standard 4.4.

Standard 4.6 - Documentation of Professional Services

A social worker must create documentation that accurately reflects professional services or activities, decisions, actions, and professional responsibilities in a manner that supports safe, ethical, and accountable practice.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Creating documentation that is accurate, timely, relevant, and sufficient to reflect the nature, purpose, and context of the professional service.
- b) Documenting professional services provided, significant actions, assessments, decisions, recommendations, interventions, and outcomes in sufficient detail to support accountability and continuity of services.
- c) Documenting the basis for professional decisions, including relevant information considered, professional judgement applied, and factors influencing conclusions or recommendations.
- d) Ensuring documentation distinguishes professional opinions, observations, assessments, and conclusions that are informed from information obtained from other sources is properly attributed.
- e) Ensuring professional documents, reports, assessments, communications, and other records includes the social worker's name and professional credential; and accurately represent the social worker's qualifications, role, involvement, and professional opinions.
- f) Documenting consent, significant decisions, changes, transitions, and the conclusion of professional services in accordance with applicable legislation, privacy requirements, and relevant organizational requirements.

5. Rights, Autonomy and Participation

Social workers respect and promote the rights, dignity, and self-determination of clients. They recognize individuals as active participants in decisions affecting their lives while considering circumstances that may influence participation, including capacity, legal authority, personal identity, relationships, social conditions, and the context of professional services.

Standard 5.1 – Consent and Decision-Making

A social worker must obtain informed consent or establish another lawful and appropriate basis for providing professional services and facilitate voluntary, informed decision-making and participation to the greatest extent possible within the circumstances, applicable legislation, and professional requirements.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Determining whether professional services require informed consent, another form of authorization, or may proceed on another lawful or appropriate basis, including implied consent, legal authority, emergency circumstances, or other applicable circumstances.
- b) Determining who has authority to provide consent or authorize services when required, including where the person receiving services is a minor, has limited decision-making ability, an organization or another person has legal authority to make decisions, in accordance with applicable legislation.
- c) Considering whether the person providing consent or making the decision is able to understand, appreciate, and communicate a decision regarding the professional service, and taking appropriate action when decision-making ability is uncertain or affected.
- d) Providing those receiving professional services or authorized decision-makers with information necessary to support informed decision-making, including information about the nature, purpose, benefits, risks, limitations, alternatives, and expected outcomes of professional services where relevant to the circumstances.
- e) Communicating information in a manner appropriate to the person's circumstances, abilities, communication needs, and understanding, and providing opportunities to ask questions, seek clarification, and express preferences.
- f) Identifying and addressing, where possible, circumstances that may affect the ability to make a voluntary and informed decision, including power imbalances, mandated services, legal authority, organizational requirements, or other contextual factors.

- g) Supporting the participation of those receiving professional services in decisions to the greatest extent possible, including where another person has authority to make decisions on their behalf.
- h) Obtaining consent in a manner appropriate to the circumstances, including verbal or written consent where required by legislation, professional requirements, or the nature of the professional activity.
- i) Respecting decisions regarding consent, participation, refusal, limitation, or withdrawal in relation to professional services, information sharing, and other professional activities, while recognizing circumstances where decisions may be affected by legal authority, applicable legislation, or professional requirements.
- j) Obtaining informed consent before professional services are observed, recorded, or used for purposes beyond the provision of services, including education, supervision, consultation, research, or other purposes, where required.

Standard 5.2 – Opportunity for Participation

A social worker must facilitate opportunities for meaningful participation in decisions about services and matters affecting the goals, circumstances, and wellbeing of those receiving professional services.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Giving due consideration to the knowledge, experiences, perspectives, values, preferences, and contributions of those receiving services in professional decision-making.
- b) Providing opportunities for those receiving professional services to contribute to identifying goals, priorities, desired outcomes, and approaches to professional services or activities and to express their concerns, questions, and feedback to the greatest extent possible within the circumstances.
- c) Giving due consideration the perspectives, circumstances, capacities, preferences, and experiences of those receiving services when exercising professional judgement and making decisions.
- d) Taking reasonable steps to reduce barriers and adapt communication, approaches, or processes to support opportunities for participation.
- e) Seeking assent, input, or other expressions of the person's views where appropriate, including when another person has legal authority to make decisions on their behalf.

Standard 5.3 – Respect for Rights, Dignity, and Self-Determination

A social worker must respect and promote the rights, dignity, and self-determination of those receiving services while fulfilling their professional responsibilities, and applicable legal requirements.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Treating those receiving services with respect for their dignity, rights, values, identities, perspectives, and lived experiences in professional interactions and decision-making.
- b) Not imposing personal values, beliefs, judgements, or assumptions on those receiving professional services,
- c) Practicing in a manner that protects dignity and does not demean, exploit, discriminate against, or otherwise diminish those receiving professional services.
- d) Taking reasonable steps to address barriers, discrimination, or other circumstances within their role that may limit a person's ability to exercise their rights or participate in decisions affecting them.
- e) Using professional authority responsibly, having regard to the inherent power imbalance in professional relationships.
- f) Not pressuring, controlling, manipulating, or unduly influencing those receiving services.
- g) Respecting self-determination while taking appropriate action where professional responsibilities, legal requirements, or serious risks of harm require action that may affect a person's choices or preferences.
- h) Not assuming or exercising decision-making authority on behalf of a client beyond the authority provided by the client, law, or the social worker's formally assigned professional role and responsibilities, including responsibility for managing, controlling, holding, or making decisions about a client's money, property, benefits, or other personal affairs.

Standard 5.4 – Access to Services and Resources

A social worker must take reasonable steps to promote access to services and resources for those receiving professional services.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Accounting for relevant social determinants of health and social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and systemic factors that may affect a person's access to, participation in, or ability to benefit from professional services, supports, and resources.
- b) Identifying barriers that may impact those receiving professional services in accessing, participating in, or benefiting from professional services, supports, and resources, and taking reasonable action within their role and authority to address those barriers.
- c) Adapting communication, professional approaches, or service processes to respond to the barriers impacting client access.
- d) Facilitating a referral, based on reasonableness and client best interest, to another qualified service provider when a client requests a referral or when the

social worker's personal or conscientious beliefs prevent them from providing the professional service.

- e) Advocating within their role and authority to address barriers affecting access to professional services, supports, or resources.

6. Confidentiality Information and Records

Social workers protect confidentiality and manage information and professional records in a manner that respects privacy, supports appropriate access, and meets professional responsibilities.

Standard 6.1 – Confidentiality

A social worker must protect confidential information and manage confidentiality in accordance with applicable legislation and professional requirements.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Informing those receiving professional services about the nature and limits of confidentiality, including circumstances in which confidential information may be required or permitted to be disclosed.
- b) Clarifying confidentiality expectations and information-sharing arrangements when professional services involve parents, guardians, authorized decision-makers, family members, organizations, funders, employers, or other parties.
- c) Protecting confidential information from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, alteration, loss, theft, or destruction.
- d) Protecting confidential information from use or disclosure except where authorized by the client, permitted or required by law, or otherwise permitted or required by professional requirements.
- e) Taking reasonable steps to protect confidential information when communicating, collaborating, transferring information, or using digital tools, including artificial intelligence, in the provision of professional services.
- f) Taking appropriate action when confidential information is accessed, used, disclosed, lost, stolen, or otherwise compromised without authorization.

Standard 6.2 – Information Collection, Access, Use and Disclosure

A social worker must collect, access, use, and disclose information only for an appropriate professional purpose, and in accordance with applicable consent, legislation and professional requirements.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Determining the appropriate authority and professional purpose for collecting, accessing, using, or disclosing information, including whether the consent is required.
- b) Collecting, accessing, using, and disclosing only the information necessary for the identified professional purpose and only to the extent necessary for that purpose.
- c) Obtaining information directly from those receiving professional services whenever possible and obtaining information from other sources when necessary to support the professional activity or service with applicable consent or authorization.
- d) Informing those receiving professional services, as required, about the purpose for collecting information and how information may be used or disclosed.
- e) Sharing information within collaborative, family, group, organizational, or system contexts in a manner consistent with the identified purpose, applicable consent, confidentiality requirements, and legislation.
- f) Using artificial intelligence or other technologies that process information only for purposes related to the provision of professional services and in a manner consistent with applicable consent, confidentiality, privacy, information-management, and other requirements.

Standard 6.3 – Access to Information

A social worker must respect the rights of persons receiving professional services to access information about themselves and their professional services and respond to requests for access in accordance with applicable legislation and professional responsibilities.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Informing those accessing professional services about their rights and the process for accessing information about themselves and their professional services, including records.
- b) Responding to requests for access, correction, or clarification of information in accordance with applicable legislation and professional requirements.
- c) Providing reasonable access to information, subject to applicable legislation and professional requirements.
- d) Explaining circumstances where access to information may be limited or restricted by applicable legislation or professional requirements.
- e) Supporting those accessing professional services to understand information provided.

Standard 6.4 - Record Management

A social worker must manage professional records in a manner that protects confidentiality, supports appropriate access, and meets applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Storing and managing professional records in a manner that protects confidentiality, privacy, security, and the integrity of information.
- b) Maintaining arrangements to ensure records remain accessible and protected during absences, changes in practice, transitions, incapacity, retirement, or closure of practice.
- c) Retaining professional records for the period required by applicable legislation and regulatory requirements.
- d) Ensuring appropriate access to records for those receiving professional services, social workers, or others with lawful authority or professional responsibility, in accordance with applicable requirements.
- e) Securely transferring records when responsibility for records or professional services changes, while protecting confidentiality and privacy.
- f) Securely archiving or disposing of records in accordance with applicable legislation and regulatory requirements.

7. Collaboration and Professional Contribution

Social workers contribute to ethical, competent, and accountable practice through effective collaboration, professional expertise, and responsible participation in professional activities and relationships.

Standard 7.1 – Collaboration

A social worker must collaborate effectively and respectfully with clients and others involved in the delivery of professional services, while maintaining accountability for their own professional responsibilities, decisions, and actions.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Clarifying their professional role, responsibilities, authority, scope of practice, and limitations when working collaboratively.
- b) Communicating clearly, respectfully, and effectively with clients and others involved in professional services, including families, identified supports, colleagues, employers, organizations, and other professionals.

- c) Contributing relevant professional knowledge, judgement, perspectives, and expertise to collaborative processes.
- d) Considering and incorporating the perspectives, goals, preferences, and circumstances of clients and others into collaborative decision-making where appropriate.
- e) Maintaining accountability for their own professional decisions, actions, ethical requirements, and responsibilities when participating in collaborative processes.
- f) Sharing information and involving others in collaborative processes in accordance with consent, confidentiality requirements, applicable legislation, and professional responsibilities.
- g) Addressing differences, concerns, or conflicts arising in collaborative practice through appropriate communication and professional processes

Standard 7.2 – Practice Supervision and Professional Support

A social worker must seek, participate in, or provide appropriate practice supervision, consultation, reflective practice, or other professional support as required and appropriate to their role, responsibilities, competence, and the practice context.

A social worker meets this Standard by:

- a) Seeking and participating in practice supervision or other professional support as required by registration status, continuing competence requirements, applicable conditions, limitations, restrictions, role, or practice context.
- b) Engaging in feedback processes that enables them to identify and address gaps, limitations, blind spots, or areas of uncertainty in their knowledge, skills, experience, judgement, or practice.
- c) Clarifying the purpose, expectations, roles, responsibilities, authority, limitations, and accountability arrangements within supervision or professional support relationships.
- d) Providing supervision, guidance, feedback, and support appropriate to the role, responsibilities, experience, competence, and circumstances of those receiving supervision or professional support.
- e) Taking action within their role and authority to address concerns about a supervisee's practice that arise within a supervision relationship.
- f) Documenting supervision and other professional support provided or received in a manner that is accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate to the nature and context of the professional activity, including documenting significant concerns, decisions, actions, and follow-up where appropriate.