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# Standards of Practice For Registered Social Workers in Saskatchewan

Effective March 1, 2020

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## A. PREAMBLE

The purpose of standards of practice is to set the minimum acceptable level of practice in the field of social work, and to provide guidelines for social workers to assess their own practice in order to develop high standards of professional practice. Standards of practice help to establish criteria for the assessment of complaints about the practice of social work, and to inform the public about reasonable expectations of social work practice.

A profession may be defined as a cohesive and autonomous body of trained persons who perform work for the benefit of the public on the basis of applied specialized knowledge derived from education, research and practice experience. A key attribute of a professional is the exercise of discretionary judgment on behalf of a client who may not be able to judge the need for and/or quality of a service.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of regulating members of a profession is to protect the public from preventable harm. The privilege of self-regulation is granted to a profession by the provincial legislature. It is a social contract between a profession and the public. It is the property of the public the profession claims to serve.<sup>2</sup>

The SASW Standards of Practice reflects the six core values as highlighted within the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics. These core values are as follows:

**Value 1:** Respect for Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons

**Value 2:** Pursuit of Social Justice

**Value 3:** Service to Humanity

**Value 4:** Integrity of Professional Practice

**Value 5:** Confidentiality in Professional Practice

**Value 6:** Competence in Professional Practice

Although this document is intended to provide guidance, no document can possibly address all situations that may arise in practice. Sound professional judgment – in assessing how to apply knowledge and standards to specific situations – remains fundamental to good practice.

This Standards of Practice document is based on the 2005 CASW Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice, as well as the Standards of Practice document published by the Alberta College of Social Workers (2013)<sup>3</sup>. SASW gratefully acknowledges the Alberta College of Social Workers for granting permission to use their work as the basis of this publication. This document is to be considered within the context of the Code of Ethics (2005).

## B. DEFINITIONS

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<sup>1</sup> In law, the public interest is at stake when there is “a pecuniary interest or some interest by which their legal rights or liabilities are affected” (Campbell C.J, R.V. Bedfordshire, 24 L.J.Q.B.84).

<sup>2</sup> “*Closer to Home*”, Report of the B.C. Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs. 1991. Page D-29.

<sup>3</sup> The 2013 Standards of Practice, Alberta College of Social Workers.

## ***In these Standards:***

- (a) CLIENT refers to a recipient of professional services, irrespective of whether fees are charged or the salary or compensation received by the social worker, and includes
- i. an adult or minor age 14 or over who has the requisite understanding to appreciate the nature and consequences of the professional services being provided,
  - ii. the guardian in respect of a child under the age of 14 or an individual for whom a guardian has been appointed,
  - iii. the couple, family or other group in cases when professional services are provided to benefit a couple, family or other group rather than an individual,
  - iv. the corporate entity or organization in cases when professional services are provided to benefit a corporate entity or organization rather than an individual
- (b) COLLEAGUE refers to any other social worker, any person employed in the same organization as the social worker, or any other professional the social worker has contact within the provision of professional services.
- (c) CONFLICT OF INTEREST occurs when, in an official capacity, a social worker's services to or relationship with a client, is compromised, or might be compromised, because of decisions or actions in relation to another client, colleague, him or herself or some other third party (Reamer, F. 1998). A conflict of interest occurs when a person has a duty to more than one individual and cannot easily manage the adverse interests of the parties. (Reamer, F. 2017)
- (d) 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 by the client that a social worker would not disclose that information.
- (e) CONSULTATION refers to a problem solving process in which expertise is offered to an individual, group, organization or community.
- (f) COUNSELLING refers to services provided within the context of a professional relationship with the goal of assisting clients in addressing issues in their lives by such activities as helping clients to find solutions and make choices through exploration of options, identification of strengths and needs, locating information and providing resources, and promoting a variety of coping strategies, but do not include psychotherapy services. (B.C. College of Social Workers)
- (g) DUAL/MULTIPLE ROLE RELATIONSHIP refers to a professional relationship when there is a present or previous familial, social, sexual, emotional, financial, supervisory, teacher/student, administrative or legal relationship.
- (h) INFORMED CONSENT refers to permission given by a client to a social worker, based on reasonable disclosure by the social worker and understanding by the client, of the facts, risks and alternatives, to use identified intervention procedures, which may include assessment, treatment, follow-up, research or community intervention, or to disclose confidential client information.

- (i) INVOLUNTARY CLIENT means a client who receives services because of a legal mandate such as probation or child welfare or one who is forced or pressured to seek services by family members, employers, or others in a position of power or influence over the individual.
- (j) MUTUAL/MUTUALITY means that the helping process, when feasible and subject to relevant legislation and regulation, will involve shared control between the client and the social worker toward the achievement of agreed to or acknowledged goals.
- (k) 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.
- (l) PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP refers to a relationship with a social worker, when the social worker is assumed to have expertise, knowledge or skills by virtue of the social worker's qualifications as a social worker, whether or not there is an exchange of money or other remuneration.
- (m) PSYCHOTHERAPY is defined as any form of treatment for psycho-social or emotional difficulties, behavioral maladaptation and/or other problems that are assumed to be of an emotional nature, in which a social worker establishes a professional relationship with a client for the purposes of promoting positive personal growth and development. (B.C. College of Social Workers)
- (n) REASONABLE refers to the principle of common law suggesting that which a "typical" or "average" social worker, with similar training and experience, would consider to be appropriate in given circumstances.
- (o) RECORD refers to a document, whether written, electronic or in any other form, containing information about a client, the client's circumstances and environment, the professional services provided to the client and the outcome of the provision of those services.
- (p) SOCIAL WORKER refers to a Registered Social Worker in the Province of Saskatchewan.
- (q) SUPERVISION refers to the professional relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee that includes evaluation and direction over the services provided and promotes 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 supervision under these Standards of Practice.

## C. GENERAL PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS

**PRINCIPLE:** Social workers are accountable to the people they serve, to their profession and to society. This accountability is achieved by adherence to the philosophy, purpose and standard of practice determined by the profession. Social workers strive to ensure that outside interests do not jeopardize their professional judgment, independence, or competence. Failure to fulfill the obligation of these Standards of Practice may result in disciplinary procedures and appropriate consequences under the statutory authority of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers as authorized under *The Social Workers Act*. Social workers engage in collaborative practice and treat colleagues with respect.

### C.1 MAINTAINING REGISTRATION

- (a) A social worker shall identify him/herself to clients as a registered social worker. When asked, a social worker shall provide to the client information regarding the social worker's education and experience, and show the client her/his professional identification when appropriate to do so.
- (b) A social worker whose registration is suspended or cancelled for any reason will cease using the title of social worker until reinstated.

### C.2 PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

- (a) Within a professional relationship, the central focus of practice shall be based on voluntary, and under some circumstances involuntary, agreements between a social worker and client.
- (b) A social worker shall advocate with and on behalf of clients and for the betterment of society:
  - (i) A social worker is responsible for articulating the needs of and supporting clients in communicating with relevant others.
  - (ii) A social worker shall take reasonable actions to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, with special regard to marginalized or oppressed groups and persons.
  - (iii) A social worker shall make reasonable efforts to promote conditions that encourage respect for the diversity of cultures and uniqueness of every individual they serve.
  - (iv) A social worker shall make reasonable efforts to advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions and to promote social justice.
- (c) A social worker is responsible to provide competent professional services irrespective of the amount of fees charged or the salary or compensation received by the social worker.
- (d) A social worker shall provide a professional opinion about a client only when it is based on sufficient and relevant information.

- (e) A social worker will make reasonable efforts to keep clients informed when unable to meet a request or have other commitments that may have implications for the client.

### **C.3 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- (a) A social worker shall be aware of the circumstances that may lead to, or be perceived as, a conflict of interest and shall make reasonable effort to avoid such conflict. If conflict of interest cannot be avoided the social worker shall disclose the conflict and take appropriate measures to minimize the impact of the conflict on clients, co-workers, and employers.
- (b) When a social worker's professional responsibilities to an organization and to a client are in conflict, a social worker shall attempt to safeguard client rights and promote changes by bringing the situation to the attention of the organization and attempting to facilitate a satisfactory resolution of the conflict. When a conflict of interest cannot be satisfactorily resolved, a social worker shall:
  - (i) cease acting for the client; or
  - (ii) if the nature of the service is such that the social worker cannot cease acting for the client, document the conflict of interest and all measures taken to try to resolve the conflict of interest.
- (c) A social worker who intends to provide, or provides, professional social work services through more than one organization shall advise each organization of any potential conflict of interest.

### **C.4 INFORMED CONSENT**

- (a) Social workers promote the self-determination and autonomy of clients, actively encouraging them to make informed decisions on their own behalf.
- (b) It is the responsibility of a social worker to obtain informed consent from a client before providing professional services to the client:
  - (i) Best practice wherever reasonably possible and appropriate is to have written informed consent (paper or electronically).
  - (ii) Verbal informed consent may be obtained and noted where written consent is not reasonably possible or appropriate.
  - (iii) Consent is considered to be implied if the client is returning voluntarily for ongoing services; attending a drop-in service or program; accessing crisis, emergency, information or referral services.
- (c) A social worker shall give to each client an accurate account of the professional services to be provided:
  - (i) within a reasonable time of starting services and at any time the social worker is proposing a change to the services being provided;
  - (ii) detailing any potential risks to the client; and



- (iii) setting a date for review.
- (d) When information is required from other sources, a social worker shall make a reasonable effort to explain this to the client, decide with the client what other sources are to be used and seek agreement on the method of obtaining the needed information.
- (e) When information is required by law, a social worker shall help the client understand the consequences, if any, of refusing to provide the required information.
- (f) Where services are mandated, the principles of informed consent shall be applied as much as is reasonable for the given circumstances.
- (g) A social worker shall obtain written informed consent from a client before professional services provided to the client are observed by others or electronically recorded for academic, supervision, research, or consultation purposes.

### **C.5 CONSENT TO SHARE INFORMATION**

- (a) Except where otherwise permitted by these Standards (see section D1), a social worker will obtain informed consent from a client prior to releasing any information about the client to any other party. Informed consent includes providing clear information regarding:
  - (i) with whom the information will be shared;
  - (ii) what information will be shared;
  - (iii) the intended purpose for sharing the information;
  - (iv) whether the client has a right to request that identifying information be excluded;
  - (v) any other information particular to the specific request that a reasonable person would want to know, and;
  - (vi) time frame in which information can be shared.

### **C.6 USE OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

A social worker will receive appropriate training and supervision prior to using assessment tools independently.

A social worker shall provide a client with clear information to facilitate the client's understanding of the social worker's assessment.

- (a) A social worker shall make every effort to identify deficiencies in information or information gathering activities that could compromise the validity or interpretations of, and conclusions drawn, in assessments.
- (b) A social worker shall treat with respect and represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views and findings of colleagues.

### *C.7 TERMINATION OF SERVICES*

- (a) A social worker shall continue to provide the opportunity for a client to receive professional services from the social worker until:
  - (i) the service goals have been met;
  - (ii) the professional services are no longer required;
  - (iii) it is reasonably clear to the social worker or to the client that the professional services are not achieving the agreed purposes;
  - (iv) a conflictual dual/multiple role relationship exists or arises and is not in the best interests of the client.
  - (v) the social worker has reason to believe that the client poses a threat to the social worker's personal safety.
- (b) In the case of a.iii or a.iv above, the social worker shall terminate services when the client has had a reasonable opportunity to arrange to receive professional services from another social worker or suitable professional.

### *C.8 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES*

- (a) A social worker shall not provide professional services to a client if the social worker is aware that the client is receiving similar professional services from another professional without ensuring that the services are being coordinated. If the client refuses to consent to coordination of services, the social worker shall advise the client that the receipt of uncoordinated similar professional services may not serve the best interest of the client.
- (b) If the client consents, the social worker shall advise other professionals involved with the client of the fact that the client is receiving similar professional services from each of them and the nature of the professional services that the social worker is providing.
- (c) The social worker shall document the client's decision with respect to providing consent and with respect to the action taken by the social worker.

### *C.9 CONTINUITY OF CARE*

- (a) A social worker shall make arrangements for another social worker or suitable professional to deal with emergency needs of clients during periods of reasonably foreseeable absence by the social worker.
- (b) A social worker who serves the clients of colleagues during a temporary absence or emergency shall serve those clients with the same consideration as that afforded any client.
- (c) A social worker shall not assume professional responsibility for the clients of another organization or a colleague without appropriate communication with that organization or colleague to ensure continuity of care.

- (d) When a social worker in private practice is taking extended leave or closing the practice for any reason, client files shall not be transferred without the client's consent.

#### C.10 REFERRAL

- (a) A social worker shall make or recommend a referral to another professional, technical or administrative resource when a referral is clearly in the best interests of the client.
- (b) A social worker shall make reasonable efforts to appropriately refer a client when requested to do so by the client.
- (c) A social worker shall not refer clients or accept a referral for a fee, non-monetary reward or any other personal benefit.

#### C.11 SOLICITATION OF BUSINESS

- (a) A social worker shall not, in any manner, compel or ask a client to solicit business on behalf of a social worker.
- (b) A social worker shall not solicit the clients of colleagues.

### D. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

**PRINCIPLE:** Social Workers shall maintain accurate, timely and relevant records. The files will be managed in a manner that protects client privacy in accordance with legislation. Social workers shall disclose information when properly authorized or when obligated legally or professionally to do so.

#### D.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

- (a) Social workers shall maintain confidentiality in an appropriate manner that promotes the well-being of the client. This includes carrying out research, teaching, as well as other professional duties.
- (b) Social workers shall comply with applicable legislation. Under normal circumstances all information obtained from a client(s) shall be considered confidential and the information not disclosed by the social worker without the informed written consent of the individual(s) as discussed in section C.5.
- (c) A social worker shall take reasonable care to ensure that supervisory, administrative and other indirect service personnel maintain client confidentiality. A social worker may disclose information to persons within their organization who, by virtue of their responsibilities, have an identified need to know. A social worker shall inform clients that supervision and professional consultation are part of professional social work practice and that confidential information may be shared as part of the process.

- (d) A social worker shall promote the adoption of contracts, reasonable policies and procedures in both the workplace and academic institutions, concerning confidentiality guidelines for students who take material from the field into the classroom.
- (e) When a case report or other confidential information is used as the basis of teaching, research, or other published report, a social worker shall ensure that the information does not identify the client.
- (f) A social worker is responsible to ascertain and make clear, to both organizational and individual clients, the limits of confidentiality. Where feasible and appropriate, clients shall be given a written description of the limits of confidentiality.
- (g) A social worker shall transfer information to another organization or individual only with the informed consent of the client and then only with reasonable assurance that the receiving organization provides the same guarantee of confidentiality and respect for the right of privileged communication as provided by these standards.
- (h) When professional services are provided to more than one client during a joint session, a social worker shall, at the beginning of the professional relationship, clarify the manner in which confidentiality will be handled.
- (i) A social worker in practice with families, couples, groups, organizations, or communities must safeguard the rights to privacy and confidentiality of information acquired concerning individuals.
- (j) Information that one client has requested be kept confidential will not be disclosed without the informed consent of the person(s) to whom that information refers:
  - (i) When one person provides consent to the release of confidential records or information, a social worker may release only information about the consenting person and must protect the confidentiality of all information about the non-consenting person(s).
  - (ii) When social work services have been contracted for a client by a third party, a social worker shall clarify with all parties prior to providing the services the rules of confidentiality and any obligations regarding information that must be provided to the third party.
- (k) Social workers shall inform a client who is below the age of majority, or who has a legal guardian, of the limit the law imposes on the right of confidentiality with respect to their communications with social workers.

## *D.2 OWNERSHIP OF RECORDS*

- (a) The case record, and all information pertaining to a client, is the property of a self-employed social worker and is subject to their control except as required by law.
- (b) In employment situations, the case record is the property and responsibility of the organization and subject to employer control. The social worker's obligation is one of attempting to ensure agency practices align with these Standards.

- (c) A social worker contracted to provide services to the public will maintain a personal record of clients served, services provided, dates of contact, and where the case file is maintained if it is not with the social worker.

### *D.3 RECORD CONTENT*

- (a) A social worker shall keep systematic, legible and accurate records.
- (b) Social workers shall consider clients to be the primary source of information about their personal issues.
- (c) Recorded information shall conform to the accepted service or intervention standards and protocols and shall be recorded in a format that facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the service intervention. This shall include: reasons for professional involvement; the assessment; interventions; goals; and progress toward the goals.
- (d) Recorded file information, whenever reasonably possible, shall include the following:
  - (i) each client's legal name, and other contact information;
  - (ii) if the client is an organization/corporation, the name, address, telephone number and the title of the organizational/corporation representative will be recorded;
  - (iii) a brief description of the professional services requested and provided and the location and dates when those services were provided;
  - (iv) the fee arrangement, if any;
  - (v) a copy of all reports and other documents prepared or received as part of a professional relationship;
  - (vi) clear identification of the author of any documents and reports in the record; and
  - (vii) clear indication of when and why the file was opened and closed.
- (e) A social worker shall ensure that all information recorded is necessary and either relevant to the services being requested by or provided to the client or needed for organization administration.
- (f) A social worker maintains a thorough understanding of their workplace policies concerning record-keeping including content standards, storage, security, client access, and destruction. The social worker shall monitor and advocate for any change where policies are not in accordance with the Code of Ethics.
- (g) A social worker shall ensure that information is recorded when an event occurs, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- (h) Once information is placed on a client file, this becomes part of the case record and the social worker shall observe the same standards with respect to security and destruction of the social work record as referred to in section D.5.

#### *D.4 CLIENT ACCESS TO RECORDS*

- (a) A social worker shall provide:
  - (i) access to a record to any client who is the subject of that record, on the request of the client and subject to any limitations required by law; and
  - (ii) information to each client about the conditions under which access will be provided or denied to a client pursuant to clause (D.4.a.i); and
  - (iii) a copy of the file or parts of the file, subject to a reasonable fee, as may be required by relevant legislation.
- (b) The client has the right to receive appropriate explanation by the social worker of the information found within the client record.

#### *D.5 MAINTENANCE AND DISPOSAL OF RECORDS*

- (a) A social worker shall ensure that records are securely preserved for a minimum of 7 years from the date of the last entry. Social workers shall be diligent in protecting client confidentiality and security of records with all forms of technology (emails, text messages, facsimiles, answering machines, and internet on-line counseling). The social worker shall reasonably assure that the client is knowledgeable about technology when such technology is utilized as part of record maintenance and privacy of personal information.
- (b) Social workers shall store records in a way that maintains the confidentiality of the information contained in the records.
- (c) A social worker, in accordance with workplace policies, may use any form of technology for keeping records, provided the confidentiality of the information contained in the record is maintained.
- (d) A social worker shall dispose of records in a manner that ensures that the confidentiality of information in the record is maintained. A social worker who is closing a practice shall ensure that client files are maintained in a secure location for 7 years following the last entry for a professional service. In the event that the client was under the age of 18 following the last entry for a professional service, the social worker shall ensure that the client file is maintained in a secure location for 7 years following the date on which the client would have turned 18 years of age.
- (e) A social worker shall take measures to ensure that file information can be accessed by clients as appropriate within a 7 year period following closure (or in the event of a client who is under the age of 18, for a 7 year period following the client's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday), and that clients are aware that the information will be kept.
- (f) A social worker in private practice must have a plan in place for maintenance of files should the social worker die or become incapacitated.
- (g) A social worker shall make reasonable efforts to establish organizational confidentiality policies regarding:

- (i) who does and does not have access to what kinds of information; and
- (ii) orientation to the principles of confidentiality for all staff, volunteers, and others who may have access to confidential information.

#### D.6 LEGALLY DEPENDENT PERSONS

A social worker working with a person under the age of majority who has not been designated a mature minor or who has a guardian will discuss with the relevant parties, where appropriate, the limit the law imposes on the right to confidentiality with respect to communications with the social worker.

#### D.7 DISCLOSURE OF RECORDED INFORMATION

- (a) A social worker shall inform clients early in the professional relationship of the limits of client confidentiality.
- (b) Clients may consent to disclosure of personal information in writing. The consent must detail the information that is to be disclosed; the party to whom the information is to be disclosed; and the time frame of the consent.
- (c) Notwithstanding section D.1, information from the record may be released without client consent if the social worker believes, on reasonable grounds, that disclosure of the information is required due to the following circumstances:
  - (i) when a social worker believes that disclosure is necessary to protect against a clear and substantial risk that the client will inflict imminent serious harm on self or others;
  - (ii) when a social worker is required by child welfare legislation or a court order to disclose the information;
  - (iii) when disclosure is required by order of a court, a social worker shall not divulge more information than is reasonably required and shall, when possible, notify the client of this requirement. In cases in which a subpoena is served to obtain confidential information about a client, a social worker shall attempt to protect the client's right to privacy;
  - (iv) if it is necessary to release to a collection agency in order to collect a fee and there is no clear and substantial risk that the client will inflict imminent serious harm on self or others as a result of the disclosure;
  - (v) when the information is required for a social worker to defend against a complaint of unprofessional conduct, social workers shall disclose information relevant to allegations of professional misconduct or unskilled practice against oneself, colleagues, employees, students or supervisors; or
  - (vi) when directed to do so by an investigator or prosecutor of a complaint under *The Social Workers Act*.

- (d) Social workers shall fulfill their legal obligation to report abuse or neglect of children and other vulnerable persons
- (e) A social worker shall ensure that the assessment interview, therapeutic sessions, or other professional services provided to a client be observed by others, or electronically audio or video recorded, only with the informed written consent of the client
- (f) A social worker shall continue to treat as confidential all information about clients gained as a result of professional relationships with those clients after the professional relationships have ended.
- (g) A social worker is not responsible for unauthorized disclosure of client information from someone other than the social worker that may occur through a joint session or client appointment.
- (h) A social worker shall consider whether legal advice is required with regard to maintaining client confidentiality when there is a significant risk of harm related to possible disclosure of the information.

#### *D.8 PROTECTION, PRIVACY AND SECURITY OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS*

- (a) A social worker who is implementing or changing an electronic record-keeping system shall consider how client information is to be managed and any potential risks to privacy.
- (b) A social worker in private practice who maintains electronic records will have policies for electronic data management. While policies will vary depending on whether the social worker is in sole private practice or working in a shared system and whether the social worker employs or contracts third parties to conduct parts of the practice, the social worker should consider each of the following items:
  - (i) data management processes, including who is responsible for privacy;
  - (ii) what information will be entered in the electronic record, who is responsible for data entry, and processes to ensure that the information placed on the record is necessary;
  - (iii) plans for ensuring that employees, students, and others who may have access to the client records understand what they may or may not access related to individual clients;
  - (iv) how the information that is collected from clients may be used or disclosed;
  - (v) how long the files will be maintained and how they will be disposed of at the end of that period;
  - (vi) security systems that will be in place for both the physical equipment and the information maintained in the electronic record;
  - (vii) access to client records in case of client emergency or inability to access the social worker;
  - (viii) the data back-up system;



- (ix) how access to electronic records will be logged and monitored;
  - (x) correcting information in an electronic record;
  - (xi) how any breach of privacy will be managed;
  - (xii) how people within the organization will be educated on appropriate use of the electronic information and how it will be managed to ensure confidentiality/privacy is maintained;
  - (xiii) processes for disclosure of electronic data, including making referrals, providing information to other professionals engaged with the client, communicating information to the client, and other disclosures permitted by these standards or relevant privacy legislation; and
  - (xiv) how changes to the system will be monitored to ensure that privacy is maintained.
- (c) When a social worker contracts a third party to manage electronic records or for IT support, the social worker will require the contracted party to agree to all privacy conditions.
  - (d) A social worker must ensure that all electronic data management is in compliance with the relevant privacy legislation in the jurisdiction in which the social worker is practicing.

## E. COMPETENCE

**PRINCIPLE:** Social workers shall be competent in the performance of the services and functions they undertake on behalf of the persons they serve.

### E.1 KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS/ABILITIES

- (a) A social worker shall have adequate knowledge to meet standard of practice requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of:
  - (i) social institutions, formal organizations, and social work as a distinct professional discipline;
  - (ii) social work theory;
  - (iii) professional ethics;
  - (iv) ethical and professional advocacy;
  - (v) social policy and relevant law; and
  - (vi) social work intervention methods, including human development and functioning, cultural and environmental functioning and patterns of social interaction.
- (b) A social worker shall have adequate skills to meet standard of practice requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, skills in the following tasks:
  - (i) interviewing;
  - (ii) assessment;

- (iii) intervention;
  - (iv) communication;
  - (v) documentation;
  - (vi) consultation;
  - (vii) supervision; and
  - (viii) evaluation
- (c) A social worker shall have adequate ability to meet standard of practice requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to:
- (i) Use interpersonal communication skills to:
    1. provide clear explanations of professional and workplace roles;
    2. establish the expectation of mutual participation in the change process;
    3. clarify the need to gather sufficient and appropriate information for the services requested or provided;
    4. determine competence to consent;
    5. implement the requirement of informed consent; and
    6. provide appropriate information to clients with respect to assessment, the nature of the helping process, alternative modes of intervention and innovative intervention possibilities.
  - (ii) Develop a prompt and reasonable report when required; and
  - (iii) Use consultation and supervision in the management of professional relationships with clients and the application of practice methods.

## *E.2 CULTURAL COMPETENCE*

A social worker shall strive to obtain a working knowledge and understanding of the impact that their own heritage, values, beliefs and preferences can have on one's practice and on clients whose background and values may be different from their own.

A social worker will be able to work with a wide range of people who are culturally different from the social worker or who may be considered to be members of vulnerable populations.

A social worker will obtain a working knowledge and understanding of clients' racial and cultural affiliations, identities, values, beliefs, and customs and will be able to apply this knowledge in the provision of services.

When possible, a social worker will provide or secure social work services in the language chosen by the client. If using an interpreter, the social worker will, when possible, engage an independent and qualified professional interpreter.

### *E.3 TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE*

- (a) A social worker shall be proficient in the technological skills and tools required for competent and ethical practice and shall seek appropriate training and consultation to stay current with emerging technologies.
- (b) Where reasonably possible, a social worker shall keep informed about technology that will increase the quality of program operations and service delivery; invest in and maintain such systems; and establish policies to ensure authorized access, security, and privacy in organization information systems.
- (c) A social worker who uses telephonic or other electronic means to provide services shall strive to become and remain knowledgeable about the dynamics of online/electronic relationships, the advantages and drawbacks of non-face-to-face interactions, and the ways in which technology-based social work practice can be safely and securely conducted.
- (d) A social worker who uses telephonic or other electronic means to provide services shall reasonably ensure that the client with whom he or she is working is also knowledgeable about, and comfortable with, such technology.
- (e) A social worker who uses telephonic or other electronic means to provide services shall abide by all regulation of their professional practice with the understanding that their practice and records may be subject to regulation in both the jurisdiction on which the client receives services and the jurisdiction in which the social worker provides the services. To practice in another jurisdiction you must be registered in that jurisdiction.
- (f) A social worker who uses electronic means to provide services shall make reasonable efforts to verify client identity and contact information, and prepare to respond in the case of an emergency.
- (g) A social worker shall select and develop online methods, skills, and techniques that are compatible with their clients' culture and environment.
- (h) When using or providing supervision and consultation by technological means, a social worker shall follow the standards that would be applied to a face-to-face supervisory relationship, and shall be competent in the technologies used.

### *E.4 LIMITS ON PRACTICE AND ADDING NEW SERVICES AND TECHNIQUES*

- (a) A social worker shall make reasonable and continuous efforts to upgrade and use effectively the values, knowledge and skills of professional practice.
- (b) A social worker shall limit her or his practice to areas in which the social worker has gained competence through education, training or supervised experience.
- (c) Where a social worker does not have sufficient knowledge/skill/ability to provide a service that is requested, the social worker shall:
  - (i) if time permits, develop the competence to complete the task;
  - (ii) decline to act; or

- (iii) obtain the client's consent to consult or collaborate with, or refer to, a social worker or other professional who is competent on that matter.
- (d) A social worker, when developing competency in a professional service or technique that is either new to the social worker or new to the profession, shall engage in ongoing consultation with other social workers or suitable professionals who are knowledgeable in the area and shall seek appropriate education and training in the area.

## F. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

**PRINCIPLE:** Social workers shall acknowledge the place of responsibility and privilege they hold in all professional relationships, and the potential for harm to others should that privilege be misused. Social workers shall consider the potential risk to others based on the nature of the professional relationship prior to entering any dual/multiple role relationship. Social workers recognize that they alone are responsible for managing the professional relationship in a manner that prevents harm to their client.

### F.1 DIGNITY OF CLIENTS

A social worker will not impose any stereotypes on a client based on behaviour, values or roles related to race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, income source or amount, political affiliation, disability or diagnosis, language, or national origin, that would interfere with the provision of professional services to the client.

- (a) A social worker shall use reasonable advocacy and other intervention activities to ensure that the dignity, individuality and rights of their clients are safeguarded.
- (b) A social worker shall respect client motivation, capacity and opportunity for change at all times during the professional relationship and use this knowledge appropriately to facilitate the attainment of intended outcomes.
- (c) A social worker's professional relationship with voluntary and involuntary clients shall be developed in the principle of mutuality.
- (d) In the case of the involuntary client, mutual agreements may not exist at the outset of the relationship but a social worker's reasonable adherence to the principle of mutuality is expected.
- (e) A social worker shall take care to reasonably manage all parameters of authority involved in social control responsibilities and act to protect clients from undue influence and abusive use of power or expert position.
- (f) When it is apparent that a client, voluntary or involuntary, has misunderstood the intended interdependence of the professional relationship, the social worker shall explain and renegotiate so that the client is fully advised and encouraged to participate in an atmosphere of mutuality.

- g) A social worker will recognize when the services being provided are no longer effective, necessary, or in the client's best interest and will discuss the options available with the client.

## *F.2 SUPERVISION AND RESEARCH*

- (a) A social worker shall respect the dignity of supervisees, students, and research subjects and shall comply with all relevant statutes and administrative rules concerning conduct toward supervisees, students, and research subjects.
- (b) A social worker who has the responsibility for employing and evaluating the performance of other staff members shall fulfill such responsibility in a fair, considerate, and equitable manner, using clearly defined criteria.
- (c) A social worker who has the responsibility for evaluating the performance of colleagues, employees, supervisees or students shall share their evaluations with them.
- (d) A social worker who is responsible for the administration and supervision of personnel shall make reasonable efforts to promote written policies and procedures to protect the confidentiality of personnel records.
- (e) A social worker providing practice/clinical supervision is responsible and accountable for the services provided by a student or supervisee. The social worker shall provide an adequate level of supervision to be aware of the supervisee's strengths and limitations and to meet the developmental needs of the student or supervisee.
- (f) When a social worker provides supervision, the supervision must be ethical, competent and consistent with these standards of practice. A social worker who is responsible for the supervision of others shall:
  - (i) be aware of the different types of supervision and multiple responsibilities of a supervisor;
  - (ii) participate in continuing competence activities related to the provision of supervision; and
  - (iii) keep appropriate records of supervision.
- (g) A social worker engaged in research shall ensure that the consent of participants in the research is voluntary and informed, without any implied deprivations or penalty for refusal to participate, and with due regard for participants' privacy and dignity.
- (h) A social worker engaged in research shall take reasonable actions to protect participants from unwarranted physical or mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger or deprivation.
- (i) A social worker will ensure that any research their clients are being asked to participate in has been approved through an ethics review process.

### *F.3 EXPLOITATION*

- (a) A social worker shall not exploit a professional relationship or a relationship with a supervisee, student, or research subject in any manner.
- (b) A social worker shall not exploit a dispute between a colleague and employer to obtain a position or otherwise advance the social worker's own interests.
- (c) A social worker shall contribute to and maintain a safe, respectful workplace environment.

### *F.4 IMPAIRED ABILITY TO PERFORM*

- (a) A social worker shall maintain a reasonable level of self-awareness necessary to appropriately manage personal needs, feelings, values and limitations in the context of a professional relationship.
- (b) A social worker shall maintain reasonable health and well-being as a recognized component of competent practice.
- (c) A social worker shall not initiate or continue a professional relationship when a social worker's ability to provide a professional service is impaired due to substance use/abuse, addictions, or a mental, emotional, or physical condition.
- (d) If a condition referred to in section F.4.(c) develops after a professional relationship has been initiated, a social worker shall:
  - (i) terminate or suspend the relationship in an appropriate manner;
  - (ii) notify the client in writing of the termination or suspension; and
  - (iii) assist the client in obtaining services from another professional if appropriate.
- (e) A social worker whose ability to provide professional services is impaired will seek help immediately to remedy the condition.
- (f) A social worker who is aware of a colleague who may be practicing while impaired is obligated to take reasonable measures to ensure that clients are not being harmed. Measures may include speaking directly with the colleague or reporting to a supervisor or the regulatory body as appropriate.

### *F.5 DUAL/MULTIPLE ROLE RELATIONSHIP*

A social worker shall be aware of the potential for harm when the social worker and the client also have a present or previous familial, social, sexual, emotional, financial, supervisory, administrative or legal relationship. Social workers recognize that their own unexamined needs and counter transference reactions may affect their ability to be objective towards assessing dual relationships. For this reason, social workers shall always keep the best interests of the other party in mind.

- (a) A social worker shall act to ensure that the difference between professional and personal relationships with clients is explicitly understood and respected, and that the social worker's behavior is appropriate and in the best interests of the client.
- (b) If a dual/multiple role relationship develops or is realized after the professional relationship has been initiated, a social worker shall:
  - (i) Discuss with the client the possibility of or actual dual/multiple role relationships and the possible consequences;
  - (ii) If there is a potential of harm to the social worker or client, terminate the professional relationship and explain the reasons for the termination to the client;
  - (iii) include a description of the dual/multiple role relationship in the client's record along with a record of the discussion of the relationship with the client.
- (c) The social worker shall assist the client in obtaining professional services from another social worker or another professional.
- (d) The social worker shall document all actions taken and the client's response in the client's record.
- (e) A dual/multiple role relationship does not excuse a social worker from providing professional services in an emergency situation such as family violence or child protection, or when the unique attributes and/or specialized skills or services are required and not otherwise available.
- (f) A social worker who continues to provide professional services when a dual/multiple role relationship may exist shall:
  - (i) consult with another social worker regarding the dual/multiple role relationship and subsequent provision of professional services to the client and include the contents of the consultation in the client's record.
  - (ii) In all cases when a dual/multiple role relationship exists the social worker is solely responsible for ensuring that appropriate professional boundaries are maintained and that the nature of the client-social worker relationship is protected.
  - (iii) Where a social worker's personal circumstances result in frequent contact with clients outside the practice setting, a social worker shall take reasonable measures to discuss with all clients how contacts outside the professional context will be managed to protect the client's interests.

## **F.6 PROHIBITED RELATIONSHIP**

In order to ensure there is no risk, exploitation, or potential for harm:

- (a) A social worker that has provided services to a client in the previous 24 months shall not enter into:

- (i) a financial relationship with a client where there is an ongoing financial exchange;
  - (ii) a sexual or romantic relationship with the client;
  - (iii) a close personal relationship with the client, including on social media.
- (b) A social worker who has provided psychotherapy or therapeutic counselling services to a client shall never engage in a sexual or romantic relationship with a client.

## G. PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

**PRINCIPLE:** Social workers will act to promote excellence in the social work profession.

### G.1 WITHIN THE PROFESSION

- (a) A social worker is legally and ethically obligated to adhere to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.
- (b) A social worker shall act in a manner that enhances the public trust in social work and social workers. A social worker will be aware of how personal behaviours, activities, and representations may reflect on the profession.
- (c) A social worker who has a concern regarding a colleague's ethics, practice, opinions, or behavior, shall make reasonable efforts to address the concern with the colleague. However, if there is a risk of harm to a client or the concern continues, the social worker shall consult with the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers.
- (d) A social worker who has reason to believe that a social worker has violated *The Social Workers Act*, the Standards of Practice, or the Code of Ethics, shall immediately inform the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers of the violation.
- (e) When information about a violation is obtained from a client, a social worker shall notify the client of the social worker's obligation to report the information to the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers.
- (f) If a client refuses to consent to release of their name, a social worker shall report the violation without providing information that would identify the client.
- (g) A social worker shall make continuous efforts to upgrade knowledge and skills through workshops, seminars, and educational opportunities as indicated by SASW policy regarding Continuing Professional Education (CPE).
- (h) A social worker shall have ongoing practice/clinical supervision or peer consultation appropriate to their field of practice and setting.

A social worker will promote the development of the social work profession through activities including mentoring, supervising students, participating in research, publishing, and presenting practice information that may be helpful to others, or similar activities.



## *G.2 OTHER PROFESSIONS AND COLLABORATION*

- (a) A social worker who has a concern with regard to another professional's ethics, practice, opinions, or behavior; shall make reasonable efforts to address the concern with that person. However, if there is a risk of harm to a client or the concern continues, the social worker shall consult with the relevant professional body.
- (b) A social worker who has reason to believe that there has been a violation of any other profession's standards shall inform the appropriate regulatory body of the violation.
- (c) When information about a violation is obtained from a client, a social worker shall notify the client of the social worker's obligation to report the information to the appropriate regulatory body.
- (d) If a client refuses to consent to release of their name, a social worker shall report the violation to the appropriate regulatory body without providing information that would identify the client.
- (e) A social worker will be respectful to and cooperate with colleagues, treat them with respect and represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views and findings of colleagues.
- (f) When there is a difference of opinion between a social worker and a colleague, the social worker shall use appropriate channels to express judgment on these matters, confining such comments to matters of fact and matters of their own knowledge. Where possible and appropriate, the social worker shall discuss any concerns with the colleague before taking any other action.

## *G.3 ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE WORKPLACE*

- (a) A social worker is accountable and responsible to the employer in the performance of their duties:
  - (i) A social worker who disagrees with the direction given by the employer or supervisor shall discuss any concerns directly with the employer/supervisor, providing a rationale for the disagreement and offering alternatives if appropriate.
  - (ii) If the social worker and the employer/supervisor continue to disagree, the social worker shall document the discussion and outcome in the appropriate record.
  - (iii) If an employer/supervisor demands that a social worker act in a manner that is contradictory to the social work Code of Ethics or Standards of Practice, the social worker is expected to apply professional judgment in deciding what action to take.
- (b) A social worker shall make reasonable efforts to prevent and eliminate discrimination and oppression in the workplace.
- (c) A social worker who intends to provide, or provides, professional social work services through more than one organization shall fully disclose all intentions and activities to each organization.

- (d) A social worker shall not engage clients in private practice when they are also clients of an organization where the social worker is employed; except when contractually agreed to with the employer.

#### *G.4 REPRESENTATION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND SERVICES*

- (a) A social worker shall identify and describe education, training, experience, professional affiliations, competence, nature of service, and actions in an honest and accurate manner.
- (b) Social Work credentials will be cited only when they have been received from an institution of higher education recognized by SASW.
- (c) A social worker shall take reasonable care to distinguish between public statements and actions made as a private citizen and those made as a representative of the social work profession.
- (d) A social worker shall not be associated with or permit his or her name to be used in connection with any service or product in such a way as to misrepresent:
  - (i) the service or product;
  - (ii) the degree of the social worker's responsibility for the service or product; or
  - (iii) the nature of the social worker's association with the service or product.
- (e) A social worker may take credit only for work she or he has done in connection with scholarly and research endeavours and must fairly credit contributions to the work made by others.
- (f) A social worker must reserve authorship on scholarly publications or reports to the persons who have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the publication or report.
- (g) Administrative, editorial, financial and directed work contributions must be acknowledged in appropriate footnotes or other acknowledgments.
- (h) A social worker shall not use fraud, misrepresentation or deception in:
  - (i) obtaining a certificate of registration;
  - (ii) assisting another person to obtain a social work certificate of registration or to pass a social work registration examination;
  - (iii) billing;
  - (iv) providing professional services;
  - (v) reporting the results of social work assessments, evaluations or professional services;
  - (vi) A social worker shall not misrepresent, directly or by implication, the academic or other qualifications of the social worker or the registration status of the social worker;
  - (vii) the purposes or characteristics of the institutions and organizations with which the social worker is associated.

#### G.5 AIDING UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE

- (a) A social worker shall not aid or abet another person in misrepresenting that person's professional credentials or in illegally representing that person as a social worker.
- (b) A social worker who is aware of a person who meets the requirements for mandatory registration under *The Social Workers Act* who is not registered shall notify that person of the obligation to apply for registration and the social worker's obligation to notify the SASW if the person does not apply for registration.

#### G.6 FEES AND STATEMENTS

- (a) A social worker shall disclose the fee schedule and policies related to fees to the client or to a third party payer at the outset of the relationship.
- (b) A social worker, or social work agency, shall have fee policies with regard to:
  - (i) late fees;
  - (ii) missed appointments; and
  - (iii) clients with financial difficulty.
- (c) A social worker, or social work agency, may properly make social work services available by charging a reduced fee or no fee at all to client(s) who would have difficulty in paying the fee.
- (d) A social worker, or social work agency, shall charge fees that reflect customary charges of other practitioners of similar standing in the community. A social worker shall not exploit a client by charging a fee that is excessive for the professional services performed.
- (e) A social worker's bill will reflect only services actually rendered and reasonable penalties for appointments missed or cancelled without adequate notice from the client.