

# Guidelines for Pandemics, Public Health Emergencies, Natural Disasters



## Preamble

During pandemics, public health emergencies and natural disasters, social workers are called upon to work in increasingly complex and dynamic social environments. They have over-arching tasks and roles and may be required to provide services and supports in areas of promotive, preventive and responsive efforts. Social workers may be redeployed or asked to perform duties outside of their normal scope of practice.

Social workers are not compelled to act when it would put themselves at risk.

The intensity and variety of changing factors in these situations can present challenges; therefore, social workers are encouraged to be mindful of using wellness strategies.

## Redeployment and Scope of Practice Considerations

**Prior to undertaking new tasks through redeployment or providing services outside of a social worker's normal scope of practice, social workers are encouraged to ensure competency by considering the following self-reflective questions:**

1. Do I have the appropriate education and training to provide this service safely?
2. Do I have adequate supervision/consultation to ensure I am providing the service safely and appropriately?
3. Does my personal/employer's professional liability insurance provide coverage for me to perform this service?
4. Is this service/task consistent with the *CASW Code of Ethics* *CASW Code of Ethics* and *SASW Standards of Practice for Registered Social Workers* *SASW Standards of Practice*
5. Have I documented decision-making steps?
6. Are there opportunities to advocate on behalf of the individuals whose service will be disrupted/reduced/eliminated?

## Mandated Social Work Services

- If virtual/telephonic practices are mandated, please refer to Standard E.3 Technology in Social Work Practice SASW Standards of Practice
- When considering modification, reduction or termination of services, social workers must ensure clear communication with clients regarding the provision of services. Whenever possible, options should be provided for alternate methods of service delivery and/or service providers to ensure ongoing access to services. Social workers must obtain necessary consents if arranging transfer of service to alternate providers.

(Adapted from the Manitoba College of Social Workers "Guidance for Members relating to Covid-19")

## THE EMERGENCY PLANNING ACT

In accordance with The Emergency Planning Act (2020), legislation in Saskatchewan provides the government with the power to facilitate and support the coordination of responses to public health events as they change over time. This legislation can authorize a health authority to put into effect an emergency plan authorizing a qualified person to render aid of a type that the person is qualified to provide. (*The Emergency Planning Act*, 1989-90, c. E-8.1, s18; 2021, c12, s.7)

All referenced material and guidance guidelines for social workers should align with the rules and regulations set by the provincial government. Social workers are encouraged to keep abreast of public health orders and directives.