



# **Standards of Practice for Social Workers In Newfoundland and Labrador**

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## STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

### INTRODUCTION

The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) regulates the practice of social work in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) under provincial legislation titled the Social Workers Act, SNL 2010, c.S-17.2. The vision is Excellence in Social Work.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) (2005) Code of Ethics sets forth the values and principles that guide professional social work practice. The NLCSW has adopted this Code of Ethics and the CASW (2005) Guidelines for Ethical Practice to guide the practice of registered social workers in NL.

The NLCSW (2020) Standards of Practice, which are informed by the CASW (2005) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice, outlines the practice requirements for social workers in NL to ensure safe, ethical and competent professional practice. There are twenty-four (24) standards contained in this document and there is overlap between the standards. These standards are applicable to all fields of social work practice including, but not limited to, direct practice, clinical work, community development, social policy, research, education, management and administration.

Social workers have a responsibility to adhere to the CASW (2005) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice and the NLCSW (2020) Standards of Practice. Social workers must read these documents in their entirety and understand how they are applied to practice.

### DEFINITIONS

#### Social Work

The *Social Workers Act* (2010) of NL defines social work as: the assessment, remediation and prevention of psycho-social problems and the enhancement of the social, psycho-social functioning and well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities by using social work knowledge, theory and skills to

- (i) provide direct counselling and therapy services to a client,
- (ii) develop, implement, manage or deliver human service programs, including those done in collaboration with other professions,
- (iii) contribute to the development and advancement of health and social policy, and,
- (iv) conduct research in the science, technique and practice of social work.

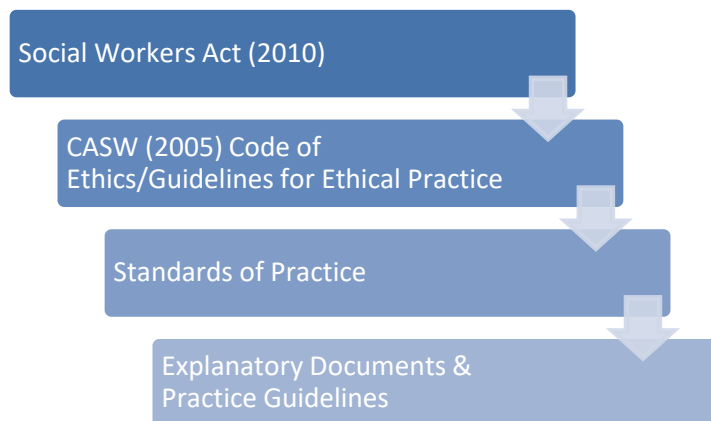
*(Definition updated September 30, 2020)*

## Social Worker

To refer to oneself as a social worker or to practice within the scope of practice of the social work profession in NL, an individual must meet the criteria for registration as outlined under the *Social Workers Act* (2010). Registered social workers are granted the RSW designation. Use of the RSW designation affirms that the individual has met the criteria for registration and has been granted use of the title and right to practice social work in NL.

**Client:** A person, family, group of persons, incorporated body, association or community on whose behalf a social worker provides or agrees to provide a service or to whom the social worker is legally obligated to provide service (CASW, 2005a, p. 10).

## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



Social workers are required to be familiar with and adhere to the following documents; *Social Workers Act* (2010), the CASW (2005) Code of Ethics, CASW (2005) Guidelines for Ethical Practice, the NLCSW (2020) Standards of Practice and the practice guidelines.

The NLCSW has several explanatory documents, which are integrated in the Standards of Practice, to highlight best practices and support social workers in practice. These documents include:

- Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document (2016)
- Standards for Social Work Recording Explanatory Document (2014)
- Standards for Technology Use in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document (2012)
- Standards for Supervision of Social Work Practice Explanatory Document (2011)
- Standards for Child Custody and Access Assessments Explanatory Document (2007)

## **CASW (2005) CODE OF ETHICS**

Ethical behavior lies at the core of every profession. Social workers practice in accordance with the CASW (2005) Code of Ethics and uphold the following core social work values:

Value 1: Respect for inherent dignity and worth of persons

Value 2: Pursuit of social justice

Value 3: Service to humanity

Value 4: Integrity in professional practice

Value 5: Confidentiality in professional practice

Value 5: Competence in professional practice

## **STANDARDS**

### **1) Registration**

Social work registration is required to practice within the scope of the profession and use the title social worker or RSW designation in NL. A Bachelor of Social Work from an accredited university or international equivalent, is the minimum educational requirement for social work registration.

- a) Social workers ensure that all requirements are met to maintain their annual registration as per the *Social Workers Act (2010)*.
- b) Social workers identify as a registered social worker at the onset of the professional relationship and provide their registration number when requested.
- c) Social workers are required to engage in continuing professional education as outlined in the NLCSW CPE Policy.

### **2) Competence**

Social workers are committed to offering the highest quality professional services to the public. Social workers have a professional responsibility to maintain proficiency in social work knowledge, theory and practice, to continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills, and to apply new knowledge in practice commensurate with their level of education, skill and competency.

- a) Social workers demonstrate commitment to maintaining and enhancing their knowledge, skills and expertise and engage in continuing professional education.
- b) Social workers seek to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge of and can articulate their use of social work theory, practice methods and intervention techniques.

- c) Social workers seek to ensure they have the necessary skills to carry out their work efficiently and effectively. These skills include, but are not limited to, communication, assessment, interviewing, and documentation.
- d) Social workers provide clients with information pertaining to their education and area of expertise and competence.
- e) Social workers do not claim formal social work education in an area of expertise or training solely by attending a lecture, demonstration, conference, workshop or similar teaching presentation.
- f) Social workers do not make false, misleading or exaggerated claims pertaining to practice or level of skill.
- g) Social workers assess whether a client's needs are outside the parameters of their expertise and provide clients with information pertaining to the option of a referral.

### **3) Impairment**

Social workers are responsible for ensuring their own fitness to practice and addressing impairments that may affect their ability to practice competently (psychological, emotional, cognitive, and/or physical factors).

- a) Social workers maintain a reasonable level of self-awareness to evaluate personal factors that affect their ability to practice competently.
- b) Social workers whose ability to practice is impaired will take steps to resolve the issue, including seeking help to remedy the condition.
- c) Social workers limit, suspend or terminate their practice accordingly when services cannot be effectively provided due to an impairment that is the result of a physical or mental health condition, and/ or addictions issue (*See standard on termination*).
- d) Social workers seek appropriate supervision/consultation when needing to limit or suspend practice to ensure continuity of client care.
- e) When limiting or suspending practice, social workers make reasonable efforts to refer clients to another social worker or professional.
- f) Social workers who are aware that a colleague may be practicing while impaired should take steps to ensure the best interests of clients. This may include talking directly with the social worker, consulting with one's supervisor, and/or informing the regulatory body.

### **4) Informed Consent**

Social workers promote the self-determination and autonomy of clients, actively encouraging them to make decisions on their own behalf. Informed consent is integral to the therapeutic

alliance between a client and social worker, and is in keeping with a client's right to self-determination, autonomy, dignity, privacy and respect. For consent to be valid, the client must have capacity to provide consent and it must be given voluntarily.

- a) Social workers seek informed consent from clients prior to the delivery of social work services and throughout the duration of the social worker-client relationship as necessary.
- b) Social workers document client informed consent in the client record and update as necessary.
- c) Social workers evaluate a client's capacity to give informed consent as early in the relationship as possible and throughout the duration of the social work relationship.
- d) Social workers provide clients with information on the social work services being provided, risks and benefits of the proposed intervention, and alternate options that exist.
- e) Social workers provide clients with information on how social work records will be maintained and who will have access to these records.
- f) Social workers provide clients with clear information on how long the proposed intervention will take and how termination will be addressed.
- g) Social workers provide information on the limits to confidentiality (*see standard on confidentiality*).
- h) Social workers provide information in a manner that is easily understood by the client and culturally appropriate.
- i) Social workers seek the informed consent of clients prior to the sharing of client information for research or academic teaching.
- j) In situations where capacity to provide consent is limited, social workers encourage self-determination to the greatest extent possible.

## **5) Documentation and Record Keeping**

Social work documentation is an essential component of social work practice. The primary purpose of social work recording is to provide a clear statement of social work assessment, intervention, and professional decision-making. (*See NLASW Standards for Social Work Recording Explanatory Document, 2014*). Documentation and recording are terms used interchangeably throughout the Standards.

- a) Social workers maintain timely, accurate and legible records of social work intervention(s) for each client.
- b) Documentation of social work interventions with clients are contained in one master file. The file may be electronic, paper or both.

- c) Social work records are formatted to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the social work intervention (s).
- d) Social workers include their name and professional designation in client notes.
- e) Recordings should be completed following the intervention or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter. The need to document a record more immediately may depend on the complexity of the case, degree of risk, impact on service delivery, and/or legislative requirements.
- f) Social work records should contain all information that is clinically relevant and significant to the service delivery. At a minimum, the social work record should include:
  - Client's name and contact information
  - Presenting issue and description of professional service requested
  - Client's informed consent
  - Copy of relevant documents (e.g., referrals, letters, court documents, etc.)
  - Professional assessment, goals, interventions, and outcomes
  - Progress notes & client contact (dated and in chronological order)
  - Electronic client communication that is of clinical significance
  - Communication with other professionals and collateral contacts, including consultation or supervision obtained to support service delivery
  - Clear statement of when and why the professional relationship is terminated
  - Fee for service agreements (private practice)
- g) Social work documentation includes a clear assessment, intervention strategy and termination plan.
- h) When documenting, all professional opinions need to be supported with facts, and professional observations must be distinguished from information provided directly by the client.
- i) Social work records should be free from jargon and emotive or derogatory language.
- j) Social workers protect client confidentiality and ensure that clients are aware of the limits of the confidentiality of social work documentation before initiating the social work relationship and throughout the relationship as needed.
- k) Social workers provide clients with information on how they can access their social work records that is in keeping with policy and legislation.
- l) If a client disagrees with the accuracy of a record and requests a correction, social workers inform clients of the policies of their employing organization. [Social workers in private practice are responsible for developing their own policies that are in keeping with the ethics and standards of the profession].
- m) Social workers are aware of and comply with legislative requirements and organizational policies for the retention, storage, and security of client files.
- n) Client records must be kept for a minimum of seven to ten years from date of last entry, unless otherwise specified by legislation or organizational policy. If the client is under



the age of 18 when the last entry is made, the client file should be kept for a minimum of 7 to 10 years from the date that the client turns or would turn eighteen. Social workers use professional judgment in deciding if records are needed to be maintained beyond this time frame.

- o) Errors to a case note must not be erased or deleted. If corrections need to be made, they should be noted as such and dated and initialed by the social worker.
- p) Records that are not clinically focused should contain at the minimum contact information for relevant partners and stakeholders, assessments, planning and implementation notes, records of meetings and communication with stakeholders, appropriate consent forms, pertinent research, and evaluations.

## **6) Confidentiality**

Client confidentiality in social work relationships is crucial to the delivery of social work services. Social workers respect a client's right to privacy and confidentiality and only disclose client information with the consent of clients, or when required by law or court order.

- a) Social workers ensure the confidentiality of client information obtained through the social work relationship.
- b) Social workers disclose client information to others with documented informed consent from the client.
- c) Social workers may disclose client information without consent when:
  - disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, imminent and foreseeable harm to self or others.
  - required by law or a court order.
  - necessary to defend against an allegation of professional misconduct.
  - In all instances, social workers disclose the least amount of confidential information to meet their obligations and protect confidential client information from unreasonable public exposure.
- d) When providing services to more than one individual with a relationship to each other (i.e., families, couples, groups), social workers seek agreement among all parties regarding individual rights to confidentiality.
- e) Social workers obtain client consent before photographing or taking audio or video recordings of clients.
- f) When working with minors:
  - Social workers are aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities as it relates to consent, treatment and service delivery.
  - Social workers clarify the limits to confidentiality with the client and their parent, guardian or legal representative.

- g) Social workers protect client information when engaged in teaching, research or supervisory activities.
- h) Social workers in non-clinical practice who are working with community groups, government agencies and organizations, keep information pertaining to the client (i.e., human resources, management, finances, etc.) confidential and seek consent before disclosure is made.
- i) Social workers working in non-clinical practice working with community groups, government agencies and organizations keep information pertaining to individuals involved in the service delivery confidential.

## **7) Collegial Relationships & Interdisciplinary Practice**

Social workers collaborate and consult with social work colleagues and colleagues from other professions to meet the needs of clients, and advance programming and social policy. Increasingly, social workers are also employed in organizations that provide services and programs through interdisciplinary teams. While, social workers are responsible for their own social work practice and decisions made within the context of practice, social workers are part of interdisciplinary teams where shared service delivery is provided.

- a) Social workers demonstrate respect, integrity and courtesy when relating to social work colleagues and colleagues from other professions.
- b) Social workers share their knowledge and expertise and communicate effectively with colleagues to promote the best interests of clients.
- c) Social workers seek advice and the expertise of social work colleagues and colleagues from other professions in the best interest of clients.
- d) Social workers acknowledge the work and contributions of colleagues and only take credit for their own work.
- e) Social workers inform clients about their role on the interdisciplinary team.
- f) Social workers obtain informed consent from clients prior to the delivery of social work services as appropriate (*see standard on informed consent*).
- g) Social workers provide information on how client information obtained through the delivery of social work services will be recorded as part of the team practice.
- h) Social workers may disclose client information to persons within their organization or team, who have an identified need to know this information.
- i) When differences of opinion arise amongst members of the interdisciplinary team, social workers discuss their concerns with the team member/colleague in an appropriate manner and in keeping with the Code of Ethics. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, social workers explore other conflict resolution options.

## 8) Technology

Technology refers to any mode of electronic communication used in the delivery of social work services (examples include, but are not limited to, e-mail, text messages, electronic records, e-therapy, on-line support groups, and telehealth). (See *NLASW Standards for Technology Use in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document, 2012*).

- a) Social workers seek proficiency in the use of technology in the workplace and practice within their competency, while continuing to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities.
- b) As part of the informed consent process, social workers inform clients about technologies that are being used in the delivery of social work services, including the inherent risks and opportunities.
- c) When providing e-services, social workers:
  - Make reasonable efforts to verify client identity and contact information.
  - Assess appropriateness of e-service delivery for each client, and where appropriate offer an alternative service or provide a referral to another professional.
  - Assess that use of technology is consistent with the client's cultural norms and practices.
  - Develop a plan in the event of technology failures or interruptions to ensure best interests of the client.
  - Maintain appropriate professional online boundaries (*see standards on dual and multiple relationships, social media and conflicts of interest*).
  - Are familiar with the resources that clients may avail of in their jurisdiction and integrate this into the informed consent process.
  - When referring clients to another profession for e-services, social workers assess the appropriateness of the service in the best interest of the client.
- d) Social workers document and protect all electronic communications in keeping with agency/organizational policies and ethical standards.
- e) Social workers develop risk management strategies and inform clients of precautions that are being taken to minimize potential breaches of client information such as encrypted e-mails, firewalls, and passwords.
- f) When social workers communicate with clients via e-mail/text, social workers discuss with clients the type of information appropriate for e-mail/text in keeping with organizational policies, the Code of Ethics and best practice guidelines. This information should be clearly documented in the client file.
- g) Social workers must be aware of and address issues relating to conflicts of interest and dual and multiple relationships as it pertains to the use of technology in practice.

## **9) Interjurisdictional Practice**

Social workers have a responsibility to be aware of interjurisdictional issues when providing therapy or social work services in another jurisdiction.

- a) Social workers who provide social work services across jurisdictions must comply with the regulatory requirements in the jurisdiction in which the social worker resides and the jurisdiction in which the client resides.
- b) Social workers engaged in interjurisdictional practice have the appropriate professional liability insurance.
- c) Social workers providing services to a client in another jurisdiction, comply with legislation and reporting requirements (i.e., reporting child protection concerns) in that jurisdiction.

## **10) Social Media**

Social media incorporates electronic mediums that foster online social interaction (i.e., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). As social media use continues to evolve and expand, social workers must consider their use of this technology within the realm of professional practice and ethical decision-making.

- a) Social workers establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with clients and former clients on social media platforms.
- b) Social workers protect the privacy and confidentiality of clients and former clients when using social media.
- c) Social workers are familiar with and abide by employer policies pertaining to social media use.
- d) Social workers inform clients of their social media policies at the onset of the professional relationship and throughout the relationship as necessary.

## **11) Jurisprudence**

Social workers practice within environments where there is a high degree of legal accountability.

- a) Social workers must be familiar with the laws and regulations relevant to their practice.
- b) Social workers comply with provincial and federal legislation that is applicable to their practice.
- c) Social workers seek employer consultation and review agency policies and procedures pertaining to legislative requirements impacting their practice.

- d) Social workers seek legal consultation as necessary to understand and interpret laws relevant to practice.

## **12) Ethical Decision-Making**

Ethical decision-making is integral to social work practice.

- a) Social workers are familiar with, and adhere to, the values and principles of the CASW (2005) Code of Ethics.
- b) Social workers identify ethical considerations in social work practice, and seek to resolve ethical issues/dilemmas that are consistent with social work ethics.
- c) Social workers examine their personal values and ensure that this does not have a negative impact on the provision of social work services.
- d) Social workers obtain consultation/supervision to assist in resolving complex ethical dilemmas where appropriate.
- e) When consultation occurs through a formal organizational structure or informally with a colleague, social workers share the least amount of information required to achieve the intended purpose of assisting the consultation process and resolving the ethical dilemma.
- f) Social workers document their ethical decision-making process and decisions.

## **13) Dual and Multiple Relationships**

Dual or multiple relationships occur when social workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, financial or business. These relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively. Social workers establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with the client's interest being paramount.

- a) Social workers evaluate potential or actual dual or multiple relationships to ensure that the client's interest remains primary.
- b) Where a dual or multiple relationship exists, social workers are responsible for ensuring that appropriate boundaries are established and maintained, and that the social worker-client relationship is safeguarded.
- c) Social workers do not engage in romantic relationships, sexual activities or sexual contact with clients, even when such contact is sought by clients.
- d) Social workers do not engage in romantic relationships, sexual activities or sexual contact with a relative of a client where there is risk of harm to the client or where it may impact professional decision-making.

## **14) Conflicts of Interest**

Social workers place professional service before personal goals or advantage, and use their power and authority in disciplined and responsible ways that serve society. Conflicts of interest, actual or potential, often arise within the parameters of dual relationships and professional boundaries. Social workers are aware that decision-making may be impacted due to relationships with other clients, colleagues, or third parties, and one's own values and beliefs and seek appropriate consultation.

- a) Social workers strive for impartiality in their professional practice, and refrain from imposing their personal values, opinions and preferences on clients.
- b) Social workers avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgement, or which may result in client harm.
- c) If a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, social workers disclose the conflict to relevant parties as appropriate and take steps to minimize harm to clients or colleagues.
- d) When social workers provide services to two or more individuals who have a relationship with each other (i.e., couples, family members, etc.), social workers provide clarity on their role and the nature of the professional relationships.
- e) Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among individuals receiving services (i.e., custody or divorce dispute), clarify their roles and responsibilities with all parties.
- f) Social workers examine and address conflicts of interest in a manner that gives priority to client interests and does not result in client harm (emotional, physical, financial, social or which may otherwise be identified as harm).
- g) When conflicts of interest cannot be resolved in an ethical manner, social workers assess whether the termination of the social worker-client relationship (with referral to another social worker or professional) is required.
- h) Social workers who provide services to, or contracts with, more than one organization, assess and advise if any conflicts of interest exist and take reasonable steps to address the conflict of interest.

## **15) Termination of the Professional Relationship**

The delivery of social work services is tied to the needs of the client and organizational policies. Social workers must ensure that the termination of the professional relationship is addressed in an ethical and appropriate manner with the client's needs being primary.

- a) Social workers renegotiate or terminate professional services when the services are no longer required or no longer meet the needs of clients.
- b) Social workers respect the right of voluntary clients to discontinue service, engage another practitioner or seek a second opinion.

- c) Social workers discuss client's needs, options and preferences before continuing or discontinuing services, or offering to seek transfer or referral.
- d) When obligated to interrupt, or terminate a professional relationship, social workers ensure clients are advised, and if possible, coordinate a referral to another professional.
- e) Social workers do not refer to another professional for a monetary gain or personal benefit.
- f) Social workers document decisions and actions related to termination of services.

## **16) Culture and Diversity**

Respect for diversity is a fundamental value of the social work profession. Culturally competent practice requires a commitment to increasing one's knowledge and appreciation for diverse cultures, embracing culture as a central focus in social work practice, and becoming aware of one's own culture, values and beliefs and how this impacts cross cultural practice. (*See NLASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice Explanatory Document, 2016*).

- a) Social workers demonstrate the use of effective intervention skills when working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- b) Social workers seek to understand the values, beliefs, traditions and historical context of clients and incorporate this knowledge into social work assessments and interventions.
- c) Social workers seek strategies to resolve potential communication misunderstandings and involve the proficient use of a cultural consultant and/or interpreter as necessary.
- d) Social workers engaged in the supervision of social work practice integrate cultural awareness and sensitivity in continued learning and skill development.
- e) Social workers ensure that cultural issues are addressed when providing social work services through electronic technology.

## **17) Involuntary Clients**

Social workers are often employed in areas of practice (i.e., child welfare, youth corrections, etc.), where clients are mandated through legislation or court order to avail of social work programs and services.

- a) When client participation in a service or program is required by law or court order, social workers engage clients in decision-making to the greatest extent possible.
- b) Within the principles of informed consent, social workers provide clients with on-going information and encourage self-determination to the greatest extent possible.

- c) Social workers provide involuntary clients with information pertaining to any limitations that apply to their right to refuse service and advise them how information will be shared with other parties.
- d) Where client consent is not necessary for the release of information, social workers attempt to seek informed consent where appropriate, unless such action would result in harm to the client or others.

### **18) Providing Supervision**

The ultimate objective of supervision is to provide clients the best possible service. Social workers who provide supervision seek to ensure that supervisees have appropriate access to supervision to enhance service delivery and professional practice. (*See NLASW Standards for Supervision of Social Work Practice Explanatory Document, 2011*).

- a) Social work supervisors recognize the power and authority inherent in their position within the workplace and exercise that power and authority appropriately.
- b) Social work supervisors have and continue to develop specialized knowledge and skills about supervision.
- c) Social work supervisors are knowledgeable about the specific field of social work practice of their supervisees.
- d) Social workers evaluate supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair, respectful and consistent with the expectation of the place of employment.
- e) Social work supervisors keep accurate and timely records of supervision.
- f) Social workers do not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with supervisees when there is a risk of exploitation of, or potential harm to the supervisee.

### **19) Complementary and Adjunct Therapies and Techniques**

Complementary and adjunct therapies and techniques refer to interventions used by social workers within the context of the social work relationship which are outside of the conventional practice of social work and are not the primary modality of treatment.

- a) Social workers who use complementary and adjunct therapies and techniques in practice must be competent in the use of these modalities and possess the appropriate skills and judgment for their effective use as demonstrated by their education and training.
- b) Social workers who use these therapies and techniques must assess whether the intervention is in the best interest of the client.



- c) Social workers must engage in a process of clear informed consent with the client prior to using these therapies and techniques in practice; including the provision of information on risks and benefits.
- d) Social workers maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

## 20) Private Practice

Social workers in private practice are involved in a broad range of activities including, but not limited to, the provision of individual, couple, family and group therapy, completion of assessments, leadership and consultation in organizational development and evaluation, facilitation of community dialogue, community consultation and development, provision of education, training and case consultation, and being responsive in critical incidents and emergencies.

- a) Social workers engaged in private practice maintain professional liability insurance.
- b) Social workers engage in private practice with appropriate competence, experience and expertise (*see standard on competence*).
- c) Social workers inform clients of any limitations, conflicts of interest or lack of competency in meeting client needs.
- d) Social workers in private practice who are providing face to face or e-services are responsible for developing policies pertaining to record keeping, maintenance and storage, confidentiality and informed consent, disclosure of information, fee structures (*See standard on technology*).
- e) As custodian of personal health information, social workers in private practice ensure all policies pertaining to the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information are in keeping with the *Personal Health Information Act*.
- f) Social workers ensure that clients are aware of their fee structure prior to the delivery of social work services.
- g) Social workers provide clients with information on their practice and fees with respect to cancellations, missed appointments and unpaid bills.
- h) Social workers do not charge or accept any fee from a client which is not fully disclosed to the client as part of the informed consent process.
- i) Social workers do not exploit a client by charging a fee for a service that is beyond what is needed to ensure the client's needs are met.
- j) Social workers charge only for the reasonable hours of client services, research, consultation and administrative work on behalf of a given client.
- k) Session invoices produced by social workers should clearly and accurately reflect the services provided.
- l) When services are covered by a third party, social workers clarify with all parties how confidential information will be recorded and shared.

- m) Social workers ensure a safe and comfortable environment for clients in accessing private services.
- n) Social workers do not solicit clients from their colleagues or place of work unless there is an explicit request for this service, or a similar service is not provided by one's employer. Social workers consult with their employer and seek guidance on agency policies.
- o) Social workers make reasonable efforts to ensure arrangements are made for clients to receive service during periods of foreseeable absences for the social worker.

## **21) Child Custody and Access**

Social workers who complete child custody and access assessments do so in a manner that is objective and fair to all parties. (*See NLASW Standards for Child Custody and Access Assessments Explanatory Document, 2007*).

- a) Social workers who complete child custody and access assessments do so in keeping with the best interests of the child/children.
- b) Interviews with parents and other collateral sources are to be completed to gather relevant information for the assessment. The social worker maintains a neutral relationship with both parents, with each being interviewed before recommendations for custody are documented.
- c) Social workers disclose any conflicts of interest between the social worker and parties involved in the court before the onset of the professional relationship.

## **22) Advocacy and Social Policy**

Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of all persons and advocate for the elimination of discrimination and oppression in all forms. Social workers are committed to the advancement of social justice and human rights, and advocate for change that is in the best interests of clients and for the overall benefit of society, the environment and global community.

- a) Social workers promote and advocate for high quality professional practice environments.
- b) Social workers make reasonable efforts to advocate for policies and programs that support the health and well-being of clients and are informed by the social determinants of health.
- c) Social workers demonstrate respect, honesty, integrity and professionalism in their advocacy efforts to promote social justice.

- d) Social workers ensure that the standard pertaining to client confidentiality is upheld when engaging in advocacy.

### **23) Research**

Social workers often conduct research in the science, technique and practice of social work. This research may be published in peer review journals or other social work publications that have a broad audience (academic, professional, or general).

- a) Social workers have a thorough understanding of, and competency in, research practices.
- b) Social workers are familiar with organizational/agency guidelines pertaining to research.
- c) Social workers seek appropriate ethics approval prior to engaging in social work research.
- d) Social workers obtain informed consent from participants, prior to their engagement in research.
- e) Social workers minimize risk to clients, when conducting research, as outlined in the CASW (2005) Guidelines for Ethical Practice.
- f) Social workers provide research participants with information on how their confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, through data collection and the reporting of findings.
- g) Social workers report research results accurately and objectively, acknowledging the contributions of others, and respecting copyright law.

### **24) Professionalism and Accountability**

Social workers promote and demonstrate excellence in the profession and practice of social work.

- a) Social workers adhere to the *Social Workers Act (2010)*, CASW (2005) Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Practice, and the NLCSW (2020) Standards of Practice.
- b) Social workers do not engage in activities or behaviors that diminish public trust in social workers or the social work profession.
- c) Social workers do not discriminate against any person due to culture, religion, social economic status, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability.
- d) Social workers carry out their work with honesty, reliability and diligence.
- e) Social workers must be cognizant of what personal information can be accessed about them in the public domain, including social networking sites, and how this information may possibly affect their professional practice and the social work profession.

- f) Social workers concerned about the professional practice of a colleague shall take reasonable steps to address the issue. This may include talking directly with the social worker, consulting with one's supervisor, and/or informing the regulatory body.

## CONCLUSION

The NLCSW (2020) *Standards of Practice* are part of the regulatory framework for social work in Newfoundland and Labrador and outlines the requirements for ethical and competent social work practice. The document also provides guidance and support to social workers in diverse fields of practice, and educates employers and the public on the standards for social work practice. Social workers may also use this document in assessing their continuing professional education needs. The goal is excellence in social work practice.

## GLOSSARY

**Advocacy:** Championing the rights of individuals or communities through direct intervention or through empowerment (Barker, 2014, p. 10).

**Boundaries:** The separation or safe space that exists to give each person a sense of legitimate control in a relationship and to set limits that establish an ethically/legally safe connection; safety for clients is often monitored (Spencer, Massing & Gough, 2017, 322).

**Boundary Crossings:** Actions that may break the traditional separation between worker and client but that are undertaken with neither harmful intent nor with exploitation and that are intended to meet the client's needs, not the social workers (Spencer, Massing & Gough, 2017, 322).

**Boundary Violations:** Actions that are intentional on the part of the social worker, that are exploitive, and that serve only the professional's interests (Spencer, Massing & Gough, 2017, 322).

**Competence:** The ability to fulfill the requirements of a job or other obligation. Competence in social work includes possession of all relevant educational and experiential requirements....and the ability to carry out work assignments and achieve social work goals while adhering to the values and the code of ethics of the profession (Barker, 2014, p. 84).

**Confidentiality:** A professional value that demands that professionally acquired information be kept private and not shared with third parties unless the client provides informed consent or a professional or legal obligation exists to share such information without client informed consent (CASW, 2005a, p. 10).

**Conflicts of Interest:** Conflicts of interest occur when a social worker's services to or relationship with a client is compromised, or might be compromised, because of decisions in relation to another client, a colleague, herself or himself, or some other third party" (Reamer, 2009, p. 41). Conflicts of interest can be actual or potential, and may involve clients and former clients.

**Dual Relationship:** A relationship a social worker might have with a client or former client outside the professional or therapeutic relationship (business, social, financial, personal).

**Informed Consent:** Voluntary agreement reached by a capable client based on information about foreseeable risks and benefits associated with the agreement (e.g., participation in counselling or agreement to disclose social work report to a third party)" (CASW, 2005a, p.10).

**Professionalism:** The degree to which an individual possesses and uses the knowledge, skills and qualification of a profession and adheres to its values and ethics when serving the client (Barker, 2014, p. 338).

**Social Determinants of Health:** The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) refer to the social and economic conditions that impact on the health and well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities. They include education, socioeconomic status, employment, housing, positive early life experiences, access to social supports, and food security.

**Social work record:** A written or electronic document that contains client information, professional observations, clinical decisions, intervention strategies, and outcomes generated throughout the delivery of social work services.

**Standard of Practice:** The standard of care ordinarily expected of a competent social worker. It means that the public is assured that a social worker has the training, the skill and the diligence to provide them with social work services (CASW, 2005a, p. 11).

**Technology in Social Work:** Refers to any mode of electronic communication used in the delivery of social work services (examples include but are not limited to e-mail, text messages, electronic records, social media, e-therapy, on-line support groups, and telehealth).

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