

Quality Assurance Matters



Informed Consent

The Quality Assurance Committee is appointed by the NLCSW Board of Directors. One of its' activities is to promote high practice standards in social work to ensure ethical, professional and high-quality service delivery in the public interest.

In keeping with the [2024 CASW Code of Ethics](#) and [NLCSW Standards of Practice](#), the QA Matters series has been designed to place a spotlight on practice standards social workers must adhere to in professional practice. This release focuses on informed consent.

Social workers have an ethical and legal responsibility to seek informed consent from clients prior to the delivery of services and throughout the duration of the social worker-client relationship. Informed consent is integral to the therapeutic alliance between a client and social worker. For consent to be valid, the client must have the capacity to provide consent, and it must be given voluntarily. Informed consent intersects with much of the work of social workers and is to be considered in the context of client capacity, research, electronic practice, private practice, limits of confidentiality, self-determination, disclosure and other areas.

Access NLCSW's full range of informed consent resources at [NLCSW/Informed Consent](#). The committee encourages social workers to review these resources and keep an eye to monthly Updates for new documents that are released. Reviewing these resources can be claimed as continuing professional education (CPE) credits as per [NLCSW's CPE Policy](#).

Informed Consent Standard

Social workers must:

- evaluate a client's capacity to give informed consent.
- seek informed consent from clients prior to the delivery of social work service.
- revisit informed consent throughout the social worker-client relationship as needed.
- document client informed consent in the client record and update as necessary.
- seek informed consent from a client's legally authorized representative as appropriate.
- seek to provide information in a manner that is easily understood and culturally appropriate.

Informed consent includes:

- Service provision and length.
- Addressing termination.
- The social worker's knowledge, expertise and therapeutic approach.
- Risks, benefits and limitations.
- Alternate options.