

Canadian Association of Social Workers

# Code of Ethics, Values and Guiding Principles

2024



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# Introduction

## Acknowledgement

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) wishes to acknowledge the members of its' Federation Code Committee for their leadership, guidance, and commitment over several years leading to the development of the Code of Ethics (herein, the Code). CASW thanks Joan Davis Whelan, President and Chair, Kelly MacWilliams (PEI), Karen Wasylenka (SASW), Leya Eguchi (BC), Barb Temmerman (MCSW), Jan Christianson-Wood (Past President) (MAN), Debbie Reimer (NS), Miguel LeBlanc (NBASW-ATTSNB) and Maxine Salopree (AB). The CASW Federation Code Committee would like to acknowledge Fred Phelps, Executive Director, for his guidance and leadership over the four years of the Code development.

CASW appreciates the participation of nearly 2,000 members across all areas of social work practice who shared their time, knowledge, perspectives, and wisdom in developing the Code by reviewing drafts and providing feedback. CASW acknowledges the input from 238 service users who provided views on social workers' ethical responsibilities.

CASW also acknowledges that other codes of ethics and resources have been used in the development of the Code (permissions granted), in particular those of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), 2020, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2021, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2019, and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), 2018.

## Land Acknowledgement

CASW's national office is located on the traditional, unceded, and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg People, a land now known as Ottawa, Ontario. This land remains home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. CASW is a national federation comprised of Partner Organizations across the land now known to many as Canada. So, while the national office is in Ottawa, CASW's work takes place on the traditional land of many different nations across Turtle Island.

## Purpose of the Code

The purpose of the Code is to serve as a foundation for the ethical practice of social work in Canada. All values, principles and guidelines have equal importance and work together to describe the ethical conduct, behaviour, and professionalism necessary to provide ethical social work services in Canada.

Ethical behaviour comes from a social worker's commitment to ethical practice. Both the spirit and the letter of the Code guide social workers as they act in good faith and with a genuine desire to make sound judgements.

The CASW Code of Ethics articulates the values, principles, and guidelines of social work practice for the social work profession. The Code is not a set of rules that prescribes how social workers should act in all situations. Regulatory bodies in the provinces and territories are governed by legislation to protect the public interest. Regulatory bodies set the standards of practice that put into action the ethical behaviour required of a professional social worker to ensure safe, ethical and competent professional practice.

The Code of Ethics is consistent with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) International Declaration of Ethical Principles of Social Work (2014)<sup>1</sup>, which requires members of CASW to uphold the values and principles established by both CASW and IFSW.

## Terms

Throughout the Code, the terms “all people” and “people” include all individuals, families, groups, and communities, irrespective of their participation in social work services.

The term “service users” includes individuals (clients, patients, residents, etc.), parents and substitute decision-makers, families, groups, communities, and populations who access or receive social work services.

## Professional Values

Social workers uphold seven core values which are:

1. Respecting the Dignity and Worth of All People
2. Promoting Social Justice
3. Pursuing Truth and Reconciliation
4. Valuing Human Relationships
5. Preserving Integrity in Professional Practice
6. Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality
7. Providing Competent Professional Services

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<sup>1</sup> Reference: <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>



## How to Use this Code

The Code of Ethics is grounded in the seven values of the profession. Each value is accompanied by Guiding Principles, Context for Practice statements, and Guidelines:



Guiding Principles **define the parameters** for expected ethical behaviour and align with the value.



Context for Practice statements **supplement each Guiding Principle** and **provide additional information** on how principles are to be applied in practice.



Guidelines **align with the Context for Practice statements** and describe specific behaviours that support guiding principles for ethical practice.

**CASW members are encouraged to review the Guiding Principles and the Context for Practice statements when judiciously considering an ethical concern or a dilemma.** Ethical decision-making involves sensitivity to ethical issues. It includes gathering relevant facts, considering the circumstances from multiple points of view, and contemplating a decision option that best respects the rights of all involved and does the greatest good and least harm. Social workers can turn to the Guidelines for more direction on the behaviours that align with Guiding Principles. Social workers are encouraged to seek supervision and consultation with their provincial or territorial regulatory body when dealing with an ethical concern.



## Value 1: Respecting the Dignity and Worth of All People

### Guiding Principle 1.1

#### Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of all people.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers value all people as individually worthy of respect, equality, and freedom. Social workers foster individual well-being, autonomy, justice, and personal and social responsibility, with due consideration for the rights of all people.

**Guidelines:** Social workers in all areas of practice demonstrate support for the right of all people to experience equality, freedom, and respect by:

- 1.1.1 advocating for the **human rights** of individuals, groups, and communities;
- 1.1.2 respecting and validating the contribution of others;
- 1.1.3 advocating for the protection of the human rights of all people.

### Guiding Principle 1.2

#### Social workers promote the self-determination and autonomy of all people.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers demonstrate respect for the right of every person to participate in making decisions in all matters affecting them based on **informed consent**, consistent with their capacity while considering the rights of others.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect for **service users'** rights to **self-determination** and autonomy by:

- 1.2.1 advising them of their rights and responsibilities regarding the purpose, extent and nature of the social work service being offered;
- 1.2.2 discussing the service options, potential risks and benefits and proposed social work interventions;
- 1.2.3 advising of their right to a second opinion or to refuse or cease services at any time when services are not mandated;
- 1.2.4 notifying them of their right to initiate a formal complaint process regarding services;
- 1.2.5 advising them of the requirements to record information and their right to access their professional records;
- 1.2.6 working in partnership with service users by acknowledging they are experts in their lives, promoting their well-being and active participation in decisions about goals, alternatives, and service options; limiting those rights when their decisions or actions pose a serious, imminent, or foreseeable risk to themselves, others, or when it is needed to protect them from being harmed by others;
- 1.2.7 taking the steps required to ensure they have access to all information and resources necessary to participate in decision-making;

- 1.2.8 advising service users of any legally mandated authority and its scope and making explicit all specific limitations at the onset of the professional relationship;
- 1.2.9 notifying **involuntary service users** as soon as possible regarding decisions taken about them, except where there is evidence or reasonable belief that the information may bring about or exacerbate self-harm or harm to individuals or the public;
- 1.2.10 partnering with service users to ensure as much autonomy as possible in all cases where the service users' rights to self-determination is limited by the law, the social worker's role, or duty of care;<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2.11 being self-aware of personal beliefs and moral positions that may negatively impact service users' right to self-determination or to receiving social work services.

### Guiding Principle 1.3

## Social workers uphold the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people consistent with applicable rights and legislation.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers adhere to basic human rights principles of fairness and equality for all people and understand that supporting the advancement of social, political, and cultural rights protects people and allows them to develop to their fullest potential.

**Guidelines:** Social workers **advocate** for the rights and freedoms of all service users to develop to their fullest potential by advocating and promoting:

- 1.3.1 the rights of Indigenous Peoples outlined in the *United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021);<sup>3</sup>
- 1.3.2 the rights of people as outlined in the Canadian Constitution<sup>4</sup> and provincial and territorial human rights legislation;
- 1.3.3 their rights to protection and equality before the law;
- 1.3.4 their right to linguistic and religious freedom and to freely practise their culture;
- 1.3.5 access to education and employment opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> Duty of Care: a person or organization's responsibility or legal obligation to avoid acts or omissions that could likely cause harm to others. The responsibility of a person or business to act as a reasonable person would in a similar situation. Canadian Public Health Association <https://www.cpha.ca/duty-care-checklist>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, SS 2021, c. 14, from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-2.2/page-1.html>

<sup>4</sup> Constitution Act, 1982, *Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedom* from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-12.html>

#### Guiding Principle 1.4

### Social workers respect the status, rights, diversity and needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers respect, acknowledge and understand the inherent rights of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit People, consistent with the Constitution of Canada, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2021).<sup>5</sup> Social workers undertake to engage with **cultural humility** in their practice.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect and support for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit People by:

- 1.4.1 understanding that community involvement plays a central role for restoration, **resilience** and healing of historical trauma;
- 1.4.2 understanding the importance of developing good relationships is essential in working with individuals, families, and communities;
- 1.4.3 learning the customs, beliefs, and practices of the communities they work with to build cultural safety and foster trust;
- 1.4.4 respecting the significance Elders and cultural advisors bring to social work practice and valuing the knowledge, skills, and wisdom they bring to ensure families' safety and well-being;
- 1.4.5 ensuring that they have current **trauma-informed** practice knowledge and that they take a **trauma-informed approach** when working with families and communities;
- 1.4.6 understanding Indigenous world views and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples to have Indigenous social work models of practice to protect the integrity of their values, practises and beliefs;
- 1.4.7 recognizing the diversity within the different First Nation communities and between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people;
- 1.4.8 ensuring that within the context of a supervisory (clinical or management) relationship, supervision for Indigenous social workers is provided in a culturally relevant, safe, and responsive manner.

#### Guiding Principle 1.5

### Social workers uphold the rights of all people to receive services in a manner that considers intersecting factors of exclusion and respects all manner of diversity.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers understand services must be offered in a manner that respects service users' ethnicity, national origin, age, economic status, gender, gender identity

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<sup>5</sup> *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, SS 2021, c. 14, from <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-2.2/page-1.html>



or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, culture, varying abilities, language, religion, values, and beliefs. Social workers apply a trauma-informed and strength-based approach when providing services to all people. Social workers enhance their relationship with **diverse service users** by engaging in ongoing learning related to cultures, beliefs and practices and respecting their rights to receive services free of bias or judgement. Social workers advocate for equity and inclusion of all people in their workplaces.

**Guidelines:** Social workers respect all manner of diversity by:

- 1.5.1 engaging in ongoing critical self-reflection;
- 1.5.2 acknowledging and reflecting on personal and professional **privilege**;
- 1.5.3 recognizing service users as experts in their own culture;
- 1.5.4 advocating for **equitable, diverse, and inclusive** workplaces;
- 1.5.5 seeking knowledge about and demonstrating an understanding of the **intersecting factors of exclusion** and all forms of diversity;
- 1.5.6 understanding **trauma** and resilience and the impact on individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- 1.5.6 consulting other service providers or advocates (e.g. a cultural interpreter, knowledge keeper, Elder or spiritual leader) to assist in providing culturally safe and appropriate services.

#### Guiding Principle 1.6

Social workers respect the rights of service users to make decisions based on voluntary consent when possible.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers understand and support children's, youth's, and adults' right to make informed choices and give assent or consent to services, consistent with their **capacity**. Social workers safeguard service users' right to make informed decisions even when a legal order limits their rights.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect for services users to provide informed consent by:

- 1.6.1 ascertaining their capacity to give informed consent to services as early as possible in and throughout the relationship;
- 1.6.2 recognizing that in some cases, their ability to give informed consent is limited because of incapacity or because they are involuntary participants in services, or because their actions pose a serious threat to themselves or others;
- 1.6.3 taking all reasonable steps to ascertain their views in situations where they cannot give informed consent because of inability to fully understand or communicate their decision;
- 1.6.4 recognizing when a service user's ability to give informed consent is limited by duty of care (e.g. intent to self-harm), the law (e.g. child abuse) or court order while assisting service users to attain as much self-determination as possible;

- 1.6.5 advising service users involved with services involuntarily of any limitations that apply to their right to refuse services, including those related to how information will be shared with other parties.

### Guiding Principle 1.7

## Social workers uphold the rights of every person, group, and community to be free from violence or threat of violence.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers are knowledgeable about the conditions that can threaten the safety and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Social workers understand the impact of violence as a significant public health issue. Social workers recognize that violence occurs across the lifespan and all areas of society and is rooted in power and control. Social workers advocate for the safety and well-being of all persons and take appropriate interventions to maximize their safety and well-being.

**Guidelines:** Social workers advocate for individuals, groups, and communities to be free from violence or the threat of violence by:

- 1.7.1 becoming knowledgeable about the signs of intimate partner violence and screening for this when working with families or couples and taking steps to protect survivors and their children;
- 1.7.2 understanding the National calls for justice<sup>6</sup> directed at social service providers and advocating for changes in society, systems, communities, and organizations to prevent violence;
- 1.7.3 being knowledgeable about the signs of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and the sexual exploitation of children and youth and taking the necessary measures to protect their safety and well-being and, where circumstances require, fulfil their professional duty to report specified under child protection legislation in their jurisdiction;
- 1.7.4 refraining from engaging in any behaviours that may cause physical or emotional harm to another person;
- 1.7.5 advocating for the right to work in a healthy and safe workplace that is free from violence in all its forms.

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<sup>6</sup> Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the National inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>



## Value 2: Promoting Social Justice

### Guiding Principle 2.1

Social workers uphold the principles of social justice related to the rights of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to receive fair and equitable access to services, resources, and opportunities and to be free of oppression, racism, and discrimination.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers seek to understand the social determinants of health to understand the ways in which educational, racial, socioeconomic, and other social inequities influence the well-being of all people. Social workers advocate for all people to receive fair and equitable access to services, benefits, and opportunities regardless of geographic location and, where possible, to receive services in the language of their choice.

**Guidelines:** Social workers uphold and promote **social justice** principles by advocating for:

- 2.1.1 fair and equitable access to public services and benefits for all people, particularly those most in need, including those with varying abilities;
- 2.1.2 the level of services required to meet the needs of Indigenous and other **equity-deserving** groups and communities;
- 2.1.3 the rights of all people to have meaningful participation in decision-making in accordance with their abilities and taking into account their racial, ethnic, linguistic, spiritual, and cultural needs;
- 2.1.4 the equal status, rights, and privileges of French and English-speaking Canadians in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms<sup>7</sup> and the Official Languages Act<sup>8</sup>; and uphold policies and legislation in provinces and territories that protect language rights;
- 2.1.5 the right of people to receive services in the French or English language and not through the services of a translator;
- 2.1.6 the right of Indigenous People to use their languages in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Act<sup>9</sup> and where possible, to receive services in their traditional language;
- 2.1.7 the right of all people to have an independent, competent professional interpreter or translator when necessary;

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<sup>7</sup> Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*

<sup>8</sup> Official Languages Act (RSC, c. 31 (4<sup>th</sup> Supp.)) 5, Part 1 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*

<sup>9</sup> Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, SBC 2019, c 44.

- 2.1.8 the ability to access and provide various communication methods to support individuals who are differently abled (e.g. American Sign Language, Symbol and Letter Boards, Speech generating devices, etc.).

### Guiding Principle 2.2

Social workers advocate for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be free from racism, systemic racism, and discrimination as stipulated in the *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.<sup>10</sup>

**Context for Practice:** Social workers build their knowledge and understanding of **systemic racism** and **discrimination** and the social, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical impacts on the well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be free from racism and discrimination by advocating for:

- 2.2.1 changes to organizational policies and practices in delivering services that are oppressive, racist, and discriminatory;
- 2.2.2 broader systems change to policy, social programs, and legislative change to end oppression, racism, and discrimination.

### Guiding Principle 2.3

Social workers advocate for the rights of all individuals, families, groups, and communities to be free from oppression, exclusion, racism, and discrimination.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers learn about oppression, racism and discrimination and the resulting impact on all people. Social workers understand how people can be further disadvantaged by intersecting factors that result in layers of oppression, **exclusion, racism**, and discrimination.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect for all people facing oppression, exclusion, racism, and discrimination by advocating for:

- 2.3.1 individuals, families, groups, and communities;
- 2.3.2 change to organizational policy and practice in the delivery of services;
- 2.3.3 broader system change to policy, social programs, and legislative change.

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<sup>10</sup> ibid

## Guiding Principle 2.4

# Social workers advocate for the stewardship of natural resources and the protection of the environment for the common good of all people.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers promote the protection of the environment, land, air, water, plants, and animals as essential to the well-being of all people. Social workers identify how climate change and other environmental factors exacerbate social inequalities between individuals and communities.

**Guidelines:** Social workers advocate for the common good of all people by supporting and promoting:

- 2.4.1 awareness related to the disproportionate impact that climate change and other environmental factors have on vulnerable people;
- 2.4.2 broad social and government protections, policy, and legislation to protect the environment;
- 2.4.3 government-sponsored educational programs for all members of society, including individual, organizational and community responsibilities toward environmental quality;
- 2.4.4 government policy on the continuous improvement of the environment, land, air, water, plants and animals, the efficient use of natural resources and the protection of ecosystems;
- 2.4.5 Indigenous Peoples right to steward their own lands and waters and to participate in decisions in all matters potentially impacting the safety of the land and their people for the well-being of their communities;
- 2.4.6 the inclusion of Indigenous laws, knowledge, practices, and ways of knowing in the protection of the land, air, water, plants, and animals.



## Value 3: Pursuing Truth and Reconciliation

### Guiding Principle 3.1

## Social workers uphold the values and principles of reconciliation.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers demonstrate respect and understanding that Indigenous Peoples have treaty, constitutional, human, and self-governance rights. Social workers acknowledge that **reconciliation** is a reciprocal learning process based on respectful engagement, relationship building and an authentic commitment to meaningful change in social work practice.

**Guidelines:** Social workers uphold the guiding principles outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Reports<sup>11</sup> by:

- 3.1.1 learning the history of Indigenous Peoples and colonialism, the impact of residential schools, and the enduring intergenerational impact on individuals, families, and communities;
- 3.1.2 developing insight into the social work profession’s historical role in colonialism and ongoing discriminatory practices;
- 3.1.3 understanding intergenerational trauma and the resulting impact on culture, language, and identity with families and communities;<sup>12</sup>
- 3.1.4 engaging in allyship<sup>13</sup> through building trust, respectful relationships and developing solidarity with Indigenous People;
- 3.1.5 advocating for institutional and systemic changes in education, child welfare, health, and justice systems where First Nation, Métis and Inuit people continue to face inequities;
- 3.1.6 advocating for treaty rights and supporting Indigenous Peoples’ rights to self-governance.

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<sup>11</sup> Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future (2015). *Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada*; What we have learned (2015). *Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: *Calls to Action* (2015), from <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/#trc-reports>

<sup>12</sup> Fast, E., & Collin-Vézina (2019). Historical Trauma, Race-Based Trauma, and Resilience of Indigenous Peoples: A Literature Review. *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 14(1), 166–181; Joo-Castro, L., & Emerson, A. (2021). Understanding historical trauma for the holistic Care of Indigenous Populations: A scoping review. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 39(3), 285–305; MacDonald, C., & Steenbeek, A. (2015). The Impact of Colonization and Western Assimilation on Health and Wellbeing of Canadian Aboriginal People. *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 10(1), 32–46.

<sup>13</sup> Social work allyship with Indigenous People involves reconciliation of historical and contemporary harms, indigenizing systems, advocating for self-governance, and restoring equity through elevating Indigenous voices, world view, and pedagogy”. (Smith, Puckett and Simon, 2015; Guimond, 2020)

### Guiding Principle 3.2

## Social workers acknowledge Indigenous world views in their practice.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers seek to enhance their knowledge of Indigenous world views and incorporate their learnings into practice with families and communities. Social workers recognize Western perspectives that shape organizations, structures, and approaches to their practice and strive to influence systemic change.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect for Indigenous world views by:

- 3.2.1 advocating for organizational change to policy and practice;
- 3.2.1 integrating Indigenous world views, diversity of culture within Nations and the significance of family and community into practice;
- 3.2.2 respecting local traditional values, customs, and beliefs in developing relationships with families and communities;
- 3.2.3 acknowledging the role of Elders, and Traditional Knowledge Keepers and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into practice.



## Value 4: Valuing Human Relationships

### Guiding Principle 4.1

Social workers place the well-being and interests of all people at the centre of their relationships.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers view all people as unique and cultivate positive professional relationships with service users based on respect, empathy, and compassion, and without judgement. Social workers value positive working relationships with colleagues and respect their contributions toward the well-being of service users.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate that people are at the centre of their relationships by:

- 4.1.1 demonstrating compassion, respect, trustworthiness and being non-judgemental;
- 4.1.2 showing respect and value for service users' experiences and working in partnership with service users when planning services, providing interventions, and advocating on their behalf;
- 4.1.3 treating colleagues in their own and other professions with respect, integrity, and courtesy;
- 4.1.4 limiting consultations to those who possess knowledge, expertise and **competence** related to the subject of the consultation and within the confines of the law.

### Guiding Principle 4.2

Social workers continually develop self-awareness and practise self-reflection to guide their practice and personal well-being.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers examine their personal values, cultural beliefs, assumptions, and moral positions. Social workers acknowledge the impact that helping others can have on practice and personal well-being. Social workers actively seek out supervision, consultation or mentoring. Social workers are knowledgeable about the impact and risk factors related to burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and the importance of self-care.

**Guidelines:** Social workers strengthen their practice and well-being by:

- 4.2.1. developing awareness of their own personal beliefs or moral positions and ensuring they do not take precedence over a service user's rights and best interests;
- 4.2.2 refraining from imposing their personal values, views, and preferences on service users;
- 4.2.3 participating in supervision, consultation, or other relevant supports available to strengthen practice;
- 4.2.4 practicing self-care and seeking professional services to address vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue when necessary.





## Value 5: Preserving Integrity in Professional Practice

### Guiding Principle 5.1

Social workers act with integrity are honest, responsible, trustworthy, and accountable.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers maintain high standards of professional conduct and are honest, responsible, trustworthy and accountable to service users and to colleagues in their own and other professions. Social workers adhere to the values and ethical principles as laid out in this Code and the ethical standards of their provincial or territorial regulatory body. Accountability to the public includes registration with the profession's regulatory body where provincial or territorial regulatory legislation exists.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate integrity in professional conduct by:

- 5.1.1 accurately representing themselves (e.g. educational qualifications, professional registration, professional designation, professional experience, cultural identity, etc.) within the context of a professional relationship;
- 5.1.2 making true, honest, and accurate claims regarding the nature and scope of service and past or anticipated service outcomes;
- 5.1.3 taking appropriate action where a breach of professional practice and professional ethics occurs consistent with the Code, the standards of their provincial or territorial regulatory body;
- 5.1.4 informing service users of any factor, condition or pressure that affects their ability to practise at the earliest opportunity;
- 5.1.5 advising service users, colleagues, and employers as early as possible when services will be interrupted or terminated and facilitating a referral to another service provider or program;
- 5.1.6 registering with relevant social work regulatory bodies in jurisdictions where they engage in social work practice or use the title 'social worker'.

### Guiding Principle 5.2

Social Workers maintain appropriate professional boundaries with service users.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers are responsible for setting clear and appropriate boundaries to prevent any sexual or intimate relationship or any other form of exploitation of service users. Social workers maintain appropriate **professional boundaries** throughout the professional relationship and following termination in accordance with applicable provincial or territorial standards or legislation.

**Guidelines:** Social workers maintain appropriate professional boundaries by:

- 5.2.1 limiting their involvement in the personal affairs of service users to matters related to the service being provided;
- 5.2.2 refraining from communication with service users using technology applications for personal or non-work-related purposes;
- 5.2.3 avoiding any romantic or intimate relationship, sexual activity or sexual contact with service users or their immediate family;
- 5.2.4 seeking supervision and consultation about the potential blurring of professional and personal boundaries;
- 5.2.5 avoiding any romantic or intimate relationship, sexual activity or sexual contact with social work students who they are supervising or teaching or over whom they have authority;
- 5.2.6 refraining from sexually harassing, threatening, or exploiting any person.

### Guiding Principle 5.3

Social workers are aware of potential conflicts of interest and avoid situations where their personal interests may interfere with their professional obligations.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers do not take advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to advance their personal, religious, political, business, or financial interests. Social workers recognize the conditions that may cause exploitation and avoid **conflicts of interest**.

**Guidelines:** Social workers avoid conflicts of interest by:

- 5.3.1 taking steps to mitigate conflicts where close personal relationships with service users or with colleagues already exist;
- 5.3.2 discussing potential or actual conflicts of interest with service users and taking all reasonable steps to protect their interests, including termination of the professional relationship with appropriate referrals to another professional.

### Guiding Principle 5.4

Social workers in private practice act with integrity in all business practices.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers in private practice are responsible to conduct their business with integrity and transparency.

**Guidelines:** Social workers maintain honest business practises by:

- 5.4.1 securing adequate malpractice, defamation, and liability insurance and maintaining registration with the profession's regulatory body where legislation allows;

- 5.4.2 seeking consultation with the regulatory body in another jurisdiction to determine the requirements before providing services in another jurisdiction;
- 5.4.3 establishing and implementing clear policies, procedures and practices for documentation, storage, retention, security, and destruction of records;
- 5.4.4 disclosing at the outset of the relationship with service users, the fee schedule for social work services, including the possibility of pursuing civil remedies to secure payment for services;
- 5.4.5 limiting the fee to what was agreed upon at the onset of the professional relationship;
- 5.4.6 limiting bartering arrangements to circumstances when they are considered (1) an accepted practice for professionals in the local community, (2) essential for the provision of services, (3) negotiated without coercion, (4) entered into for the benefit of service users and (5) with their informed consent;
- 5.4.7 ensuring that the practice advertised on websites, telecommunications, telehealth web-based platforms and social media is accurate, current, and does not elicit testimonials or endorsements.

In addition, social workers who are in private practice and have an employer relationship (e.g. employed full-or part-time) limit:

- 5.4.8 refraining from soliciting service users for their private practice from their colleagues or their place of employment
- 5.4.9 accepting referrals from their employer only when the organization does not provide a similar service and in accordance with established policies regarding such referrals.



## Value 6: Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

### Guiding Principle 6.1

Social workers uphold the interests of service users, members of the public, and other professionals in developing and safeguarding the trust placed in the confidential relationship.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers demonstrate respect for the trust and confidence placed in them by service users, members of the public, and other professionals by considering their values and beliefs related to privacy and **confidentiality** and by respecting their right to control whether or when their information will be shared with third parties. Social workers protect confidentiality across all manner of service provision or communication in all settings and social media environments.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate respect for the trust and confidence placed in the confidential relationship by:

- 6.1.1 considering the values, customs, and beliefs of service users and how they wish confidentiality to apply within their cultural context;
- 6.1.2 informing young service users (e.g. children and youth) and their parents or legal guardians of young people's rights and social work practises related to privacy and confidentiality with children and youth;
- 6.1.3 treating information gained in the professional relationship as confidential, limiting its use to only professional purposes;
- 6.1.4 providing service users accurate information regarding who will have access to their records, their right to seek avenues of complaint, and the limitations on confidentiality (see guiding principle 6.3 regarding limits);
- 6.1.5 obtaining and documenting informed consent before audio or video-recording service users or permitting observation of services by a third party either in person or virtually;
- 6.1.6 refraining from referring to service users in public or semi-public areas (e.g. hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, restaurants etc.), including on social media platforms;
- 6.1.7 taking steps to address a breach of confidentiality should it occur and notifying service users of the breach of confidential information as soon as possible.

### Guiding Principle 6.2

Social workers respect the right to confidentiality of information shared and documented in a professional context.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers have a duty to uphold people's right to privacy and to the confidentiality of information shared and documented in official written or electronic records. Social workers maintain professional documentation in accordance with the values and

principles of the Code, and the ethical standards of their provincial or territorial regulatory body.

**Guidelines:** Social workers uphold people’s right to privacy and confidentiality of information shared and documented by:

- 6.2.1 timely and accurate documentation of professional interventions and information with an appreciation that service users or others may view the record in accordance with legislation;
- 6.2.2 limiting documentation to pertinent information that meets employer policies and the professional standards of practice requirements when sharing records across professions or agencies;
- 6.2.3 advising service users of the right to access their official records according to the policies of the organization and provincial or territorial regulations;
- 6.2.4 advising service users of the appeal process and their right to a review if they are denied access to their official records;
- 6.2.5 protecting the anonymity of third parties when providing service users with access to their records which may involve masking (or redacting) third-party information;
- 6.2.6 advising service users of reporting or complaint resolution mechanisms related to access to or correction of records;
- 6.2.7 ascertaining that service users’ written or electronic records are stored securely and taking reasonable measures to prevent unauthorized access;
- 6.2.8 transferring or disposing of service users’ written or electronic records in accordance with applicable legislation governing records;
- 6.2.9 employing reasonable precautions to protect confidential information in the event of the termination of practice, incapacity, or death.

### Guiding Principle 6.3

## Social workers are transparent about the limits of confidentiality in their professional practice.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers discuss service users’ rights to confidentiality and the limits of those rights, as well as the nature of confidentiality, in all contexts, both at the earliest opportunity and throughout the professional relationship.

**Guidelines:** Social workers inform service users of the limits to privacy and confidentiality related to:

- 6.3.1 the individual rights of children and adolescents, couples, families, or groups sharing information in service provision, which may or may not be respected by all;
- 6.3.2 agency or organizational practices or policies that involve routine consultation with supervisors or professional colleagues;
- 6.3.3 practices or policies that involve supervisor or preceptor relationships with students in an educational or instructional context;

- 6.3.4 the measures to protect the anonymity of evaluation or research participant data, including when and how data will be disposed of or destroyed;
- 6.3.5 information shared through various sources of communication such as computers, electronic mail, facsimile machines, telephone answering machines and other electronic technology;
- 6.3.6 honouring confidentiality agreements in the delivery of **electronic social work services**;
- 6.3.7 the location where private and confidential data resides, including when data resides on servers or data centers outside of Canada.

#### Guiding Principle 6.4

Social workers disclose confidential information with valid consent in accordance with applicable legislation or without consent when required by law or court order or allowed by legislation.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers support service users' right to self-determination by obtaining their informed consent or that of persons legally authorized to consent on their behalf for permission to disclose confidential information to concerned parties. Social workers must disclose information when required by law or court order or when necessary to prevent serious, imminent, or foreseeable harm to service users or other members of society. In all instances, social workers disclose the minimum required and pertinent information necessary to achieve the desired purpose.

**Guidelines:** Social workers support service users' right to self-determination related to the disclosure of confidential information by:

- 6.4.1 informing service users or their legal representatives of the nature of the information and how it will be disclosed;
- 6.4.2 informing service users of the risks and benefits of disclosing their information at the earliest opportunity, except when this could bring about or exacerbate serious harm to service users or the public.
- 6.4.3 notifying service users or legal representatives when access to their records may be officially authorized or required by law without their consent if this does not involve risks to others;
- 6.4.4 respecting the confidentiality rights of deceased service users by seeking informed consent of a deceased person's legal representative to disclose information;

- 6.4.5 obtaining assent<sup>14</sup> from young children before disclosing their information to parents or legal guardians unless judged not to be in their best interest and limiting disclosures to the minimum and pertinent information required;
  - 6.4.6 addressing confidentiality breaches in accordance with the values and principles of the Code, and their provincial or territorial regulatory body;
  - 6.4.7 maintaining identifying service user information in the context of teaching, training, or supervisory purposes or with consultants confidential unless they obtain informed consent and there is a compelling need for disclosure of identifying information.
- In addition, when disclosing confidential information related to service users, professional colleagues or others, social workers:
- 6.4.8 who determine that a person is at risk of harm, self-harm or has intent to harm others, will share this information with relevant parties, including the police where appropriate;
  - 6.4.9 who determine that a child is harmed and may require protection, will disclose that information to the proper authorities as required by law;
  - 6.4.10 will act based on the assessed level and/or imminent or foreseeable risk, prevailing professional standards and practices or applicable legislation or court order;
  - 6.4.11 will limit disclosure of confidential information about a social worker or professional colleague to the minimum and relevant information required by law or disciplinary body.

### Guiding Principle 6.5

## Social workers preserve privacy and confidentiality in the provision of electronic social work services.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers maintain privacy and confidentiality and communicate with service users regarding the implications of using technology, telecommunication, and telehealth or web-based platforms (herein, technology application) in service provision.

**Guidelines:** Social workers preserve privacy and confidentiality in the provision of electronic social work services by:

- 6.5.1 determining that service users: (1) have access to and can use the technology application; (2) understand the purpose and operation of the technology application (3) have their needs met and (4) that services users' identity is protected;
- 6.5.2 using available safeguards (e.g. password protection, encryption, secure firewalls) when sharing confidential information using digital or other electronic technology or data storage devices (e.g. USB stick, flash drive) or when using digital communications (e.g., email communications, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, etc.);

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<sup>14</sup> Assent, the expression of approval or agreement, relates to children and youth under the legal age to provide consent. "Assent should be sought, and strong indicators of dissent should be given serious consideration." Canadian Pediatric Society position statement; Medical decision-making in pediatrics: Infancy to adolescence. Retrieved at <https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/medical-decision-making-in-paediatrics-infancy-to-adolescence>

- 6.5.3 following applicable legislation governing the provision of electronic social work services in the province or territory where they are regulated, or practise, and where the service user resides;
- 6.5.4 obtaining informed consent when using electronic search engines to gather information about service users, including searching on social media platforms, except in exceptional circumstances to protect those at risk.

In addition, informing service users:

- 6.5.5 of available secure communication channels and that communication via telephone, video, text, or electronic messaging provides limited security and protection of confidential information;
- 6.5.6 of potential risks and consequences of sharing confidential information on the Internet, social media, text messaging, and videoconferencing sites;
- 6.5.7 that they are not permitted to disclose or post digital or other electronic communications from social workers or other services users without informed consent.





## Value 7: Providing Competent Professional Services

### Guiding Principle 7.1

Social workers continuously develop their professional knowledge and skill at the level required to provide competent professional services.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers engage in lifelong learning, professional development, and self-reflection to provide evidence-informed inclusive services to diverse service users and to enhance their professional knowledge, skill, and expertise.

**Guidelines:** Social workers provide competent professional services by:

- 7.1.1 offering the best possible standard of service provision and being accountable for their practice
- 7.1.2 engaging in continuing professional development to foster knowledge, skills, and abilities in working with diverse service users;
- 7.1.3 taking responsible steps (e.g. education, training, research, consultation, and supervision) to ensure current and ongoing professional competence;
- 7.1.4 practicing using the best available evidence (evidence-informed practice), including Indigenous knowledge<sup>15</sup> and evidence-informed practices with other diverse communities;
- 7.1.5 engaging in meaningful reflective practice in the context of professional experiences;
- 7.1.6 collaborating with professional colleagues and other disciplines to promote and expand ideas, knowledge, theory and skills, experience and opportunities that improve professional expertise and service provision;
- 7.1.7 upholding provincial and territorial regulations for continuing professional education requirements, where such regulations exist;
- 7.1.8 facilitating access for staff under their direction to ongoing training and professional education and advocating for adequate resources to meet staff development needs.

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<sup>15</sup> Government of Canada (2022, September). *Indigenous Knowledge. What is Indigenous Knowledge?* from <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/programs/aboriginal-consultation-federal-environmental-assessment/indigenous-knowledge-policy-framework-initiative.html>; Baskin, C. 2016. *Strong helpers' teachings: The value of Indigenous knowledges in the helping professions*. 2d ed. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

### Guiding Principle 7.2

**Social workers practise within their level of competence and seek appropriate guidance when services required are beyond their competence.**

**Context for Practice:** Social workers in all roles and settings demonstrate due care for the interests and safety of service users by restricting professional practice to areas of proven competence and by consulting appropriate sources when services required are beyond their competence, including making necessary referrals to other services to meet the needs of service users.

**Guidelines:** Social workers demonstrate concern for the interest and safety of service users by:

- 7.2.1 representing themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license or registration, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience;
- 7.2.2 seeking appropriate professional consultation or supervision for professional social work practice whenever possible;
- 7.2.3 questioning or intervening with colleagues about any concerns related to incompetence or impairment in professional practice and assisting colleagues in taking remedial action whenever possible;
- 7.2.4 communicating concerns about colleagues' incompetence or impairment of professional practice through appropriate channels established by employers, regulatory bodies, or other professional organizations.

### Guiding Principle 7.3

**Social workers contribute to the ongoing development of the social work profession and current and future social workers.**

**Context for Practice:** Social workers in formal or informal supervisory, consultation, mentorship or in education roles strive toward excellence in the ongoing development of the profession and of current and future practitioners.

**Guidelines:** Social workers contribute to the ongoing development of the profession by:

- 7.3.1 engaging in discussions about the profession, its theories, methods, and practices;
- 7.3.2 providing supervision, consultation, mentorship, or instruction only within their areas of knowledge and competence based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession;
- 7.3.3 fostering learner or novice practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the social work profession, the Code of Ethics, and their ethical responsibilities to agencies, supervisors, and service users;
- 7.3.4 recognizing and communicating that their role in supervising or mentoring learners or novice practitioners is limited to the professional context.

## Guiding Principle 7.4

# Social workers contribute to the knowledge base and advancement of knowledge in the social work profession.

**Context for Practice:** Social workers contribute to the advancement of knowledge in varied areas of practice and are guided by Canadian guidelines<sup>16</sup> for ethical practices when conducting research with human participants. When engaged in non-research activities (e.g. quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, secondary use of anonymous information, performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements) social workers consider independent guidance (e.g. institutional practices, best practice guidelines, etc.) to address any potential ethical issues. Social workers follow ethical guidelines for reporting findings and conduct ethical reporting of research findings.

**Guidelines:** Social workers contribute to the knowledge base and advancement of knowledge by:

- 7.4.1 promoting or engaging in research, scholarship or creative activities that contribute to the profession;
- 7.4.2 promoting or engaging in the evaluation of programs or outcomes and quality assurance or improvement projects.

When engaging in research activities involving human subjects, social workers:

- 7.4.3 place research participants' interests and well-being above all other objectives, including the search for knowledge;
- 7.4.4 consult Canadian guidelines<sup>17</sup> to ensure whether the activity undertaken constitutes research or non-research and determine whether it requires research ethics board (REB) review and approval;
- 7.4.5 submit research proposals to an appropriate independent scientific and ethical review (e.g. REB) prior to implementation of the research;
- 7.4.6 uphold the human dignity of humans involved in research through the application of the core ethical principles<sup>18</sup> of respect for persons, concern for welfare and justice in the research process;
- 7.4.7 educate themselves, their students, and their colleagues about responsible research practices with vulnerable individuals<sup>19</sup>, Indigenous Peoples, or other distinct communities<sup>20</sup> (e.g. research based on membership in a specific community);
- 7.4.8 take appropriate steps to provide research participants access to appropriate supportive services as required;

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<sup>16</sup> Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) (2022, December). *Tri-Council Policy Statement. Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human*, herein, TCPS 2 (2022) from [https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique\\_tcps2-eptc2\\_2022.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html)

<sup>17</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 2: Scope and Approach. Section A: Research requiring research ethics board review.

<sup>18</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 1: Ethics Framework, Section B: Core Principles.

<sup>19</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 1: Ethics Framework, Section B: Respect for Persons and Concern for Welfare.

<sup>20</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 9: Research Involving First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples of Canada.

- 7.4.9 offer children and others whose ability to provide consent is limited or compromised<sup>21</sup>, an opportunity to express their assent or objection to research participation and give their views due regard;
- 7.4.10 follow ethical guidelines related to partial disclosure or deception<sup>22</sup> in research or related to issues that are particularly germane to qualitative research;<sup>23</sup>
- 7.4.11 store research material securely and for the required period as indicated by relevant research ethics guidelines or applicable legislation
- 7.4.12 report research results accurately and objectively while respecting academic integrity and copyright law;
- 7.4.13 take responsibility and credit for works they have performed and to which they have contributed and acknowledge the work and the contributions made by others;
- 7.4.14 inform research participants or authorized third parties or communities of research results when requested.

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<sup>21</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 4: Fairness and Equity in Research Participation. Research involving participants who lack decision-making capacity.

<sup>22</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 3: The Consent Process. Exceptions to the requirement to seek prior consent (p. 56).

<sup>23</sup> TCPS2 (2022). Chapter 10. Qualitative Research.

# Glossary

## Advocate

The act of directly representing or defending others. In social work, championing the rights of individuals or communities through direct intervention or through empowerment. It is an ethical obligation of the profession.<sup>24</sup>

## Capacity

The ability to understand information relevant to a decision and to appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of choosing to act or not to act. Capacity is specific to each decision; thus, a person may be capable of deciding about a place of residence, for example, but not capable of deciding about treatment. Capacity can change over time.<sup>25</sup>

## Child and Age of Consent

The Convention on the Rights of the Child passed by the United Nations in 1959 and ratified by Canada in 1990, define a child as a person under the age of 18 years unless national law recognizes an earlier age of majority. The age of majority differs in provinces and territories in Canada.<sup>26</sup>

## Conflict of Interest

A situation in which a social worker has a personal, financial, or other professional interest or obligation which gives rise to a reasonable apprehension that the interest or obligation may influence the social worker in exercising his or her professional responsibilities. One of the hallmarks of a conflict-of-interest situation is that a reasonable person, informed of all of the circumstances, would have a reasonable apprehension (in the sense of reasonable expectation or concern) that the interest might influence the social worker. The influence need not be actual but may simply be perceived.<sup>27</sup>

## Confidentiality

A professional value that stresses that professionally acquired information be kept private and not shared with third parties unless the service user provides informed consent, or a professional or legal obligation exists to share such information without the service user's informed consent.

## Competence

The demonstrated ability of an individual to accomplish an activity, task, or professional act.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The Social Work Dictionary, 4th Edition, Robert L. Barker, 1999

<sup>25</sup> Etchells, E.; G. Sharpe; C. Elliott and P. Singer. (1996). Bioethics for clinicians: 3: Capacity. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 155, 657–661

<sup>26</sup> Government of Canada Age of Consent to Sexual Activity, retrieved June 27 2023 <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/faq.html#Canada's%20Age%20of%20Consent>.

<sup>27</sup> Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW) Standards of Practice 2022, p. 36

<sup>28</sup> Ordre Professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec (2005) Core competencies of social workers.

Montreal, PQ found in Crockwell, Lisa. The Ethics of Competence. Practice Matters Nov 2012 retrieved at [Practice\\_Matters\\_Competence.pdf \(nlcsw.ca\)](#)

## Cultural Diversity

Integrated patterns of diverse and unique human behaviour, including attitudes, thoughts, communications, actions, traditions, customs, beliefs, and values. Culture also encompasses diversity based on race, ethnicity, religion, ability, disability, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender identity, age and generational differences.<sup>29</sup>

## Cultural Humility

The attitude and practice of working with clients at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels with a presence of humility while learning, communicating, offering help, and making decisions in professional practice and settings. Cultural humility is other-oriented.<sup>30</sup>

## Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people that deprives them of or limits their access to opportunities and advantages that are available to other members of society based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability and conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.<sup>31</sup>

## Diverse Service Users

The variety of cultural backgrounds, heritage, languages, beliefs and spiritual practices, identities and experiences among the individuals, couples, families, groups, communities and organizations that social workers serve.

## Electronic Social Work Services

The use of computers (including the Internet, social media, online chat, text, and email) and other electronic means (such as cell phones, tablets, landline telephones, and video technology) to (a) provide information to the public, (b) deliver social work services to clients, (c) communicate with clients, (d) manage confidential information and case records, (e) store and access information about clients, and (f) arrange payment for professional services.<sup>32</sup>

## Equity Deserving Group

Defined as “a group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Some preference is given to the term “equity-

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<sup>29</sup> National Association of Social Workers. Standards and Indicators for Cultural Diversity retrieved at <https://nscsw.org/practice/standards-of-practice/standard-five> /<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/Standards-and-Indicators-for-Cultural-Competence-in-Social-Work-Practice>

<sup>30</sup> National Association of Social Workers. Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/NASW-Practice-Standards-Guidelines/Standards-and-Indicators-for-Cultural-Competence-in-Social-Work-Practice>

<sup>31</sup> Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology—Glossaries and vocabularies—TERMIUM Plus®—Resources of the Language Portal of Canada—Canada.ca (noslangues-ourlangues.gc.ca).

<sup>32</sup> New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (NBASW), Standards Regarding Telehealth Services, the Use of Technology and Social Work Practice. 2020 retrieved from <https://www.nbasw-atsnb.ca/assets/Uploads/Standards-Regarding-Telehealth-Services-EN.pdf>

deserving group” because it highlights that equity should be achieved from a systemic, cultural, or societal change and the burden of seeking equity should not be placed on the group.<sup>33</sup>

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

A conceptual framework that promotes the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially populations that have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, and other factors. Equity involves providing resources according to the need to help diverse populations achieve their highest state of health and other functioning. Diversity refers to the representation or composition of various social identity groups in an organization, or community. Inclusion strives for an environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences.<sup>34</sup>

## Human Rights

Describe how we instinctively expect to be treated as persons. Human rights define what we are all entitled to a life of equality, dignity, respect, and a life free from discrimination. Fundamental human rights include the right to live free from torture, the right to live free from slavery, the right to own property, as well as the right to equality and dignity, and to live free from all forms of discrimination. In Canada, your human rights are protected by provincial, territorial, federal and international laws.<sup>35</sup>

## Informed Consent

For consent (i.e. to treatment, participation in counselling or program, or agreement to disclose professional information to a third party) to be considered valid, it must be an “informed” consent. The service user must have been given an adequate explanation about the nature of the proposed assessment, referral, treatment, intervention or record disclosure, its anticipated outcome,, and the significant risks to the service user that may result in providing consent, and alternatives available. The information must be such that it will allow the patient to reach an informed decision. In situations where the service user is deemed to not be mentally capable, the discussion must take place with the substitute decision-maker.<sup>36</sup>

## Intersectionality

Denotes how individuals occupancy of more than one social category, such as ethnicity, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, permanent or temporary limits on a person’s ability, and other identity factors that result in inequality, discrimination, exclusion, and disadvantage.<sup>37</sup>

## Intersecting Factors of Exclusion

A lack of belonging, acceptance and recognition derived from intersecting factors such as gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, disability, migrant experiences, health or economic status.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology—Glossaries and vocabularies—TERMIUM Plus®—Resources of the Language Portal of Canada—Canada.ca (noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca)

<sup>34</sup> American Psychological Association. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework (2021) retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/framework>

<sup>35</sup> Canadian Human Rights Commission retrieved from <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/about-human-rights/what-are-human-rights>

<sup>36</sup> Consent: A guide for Canadian physicians. Fourth edition: May 2006 / Updated: April 2021. Retrieved June 27, 2023 <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/handbooks/consent-a-guide-for-canadian-physicians#capacity%20to%20consent>.

<sup>37</sup> Intersectionality: From Theory to Practice. Annual Review of Law and Social Science. 15. 247—265. 10.1146annurev-lawsocsci-101518-042942

<sup>38</sup> Leave No One Behind. 2022 retrieved at <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

## Involuntary Service Users

People whose involvement with social workers is mandated by law, including families in the child protection system who are subject to a court order, users of mental health services who are under a legal order to remain in a hospital or required to participate in mental health services, people with a cognitive disorder who are assessed as being unable to voluntarily participate, and people involved in the criminal justice system who are the subject of a court order such as probation or court-ordered assessment.

## Privilege

The advantages enjoyed by a person or group of people due to their membership in a given social group or category. Usage examples: gender privilege, linguistic privilege, racial privilege, socioeconomic privilege, and privilege derived from role and authority.<sup>39</sup>

## Professional Boundaries

A set of guidelines, expectations and rules that set limits for safe, acceptable, and effective behaviour by social workers. Modern professional boundaries are derived from a variety of sources. Some are from law or government policy, some are laid down and codified in quality standards, some are generally understood as good practice, and some will be found in organizations' policies and procedures. They are driven by many factors and as a result "professional boundaries" is a catch-all term for a very varied collection of rules and guidelines.<sup>40</sup>

## Racism

An ideology that establishes a hierarchy between races or ethnic groups. There is no scientific basis for the concept of race.<sup>41</sup>

## Reconciliation

In the context of Crown-Indigenous relations, the process of repairing and improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and governments. Acknowledging the past and present effects of colonialism in Canada is essential to this process. For reconciliation to move forward, concrete actions must be taken by non-Indigenous people, governments, and institutions to correct the historical and ongoing wrongs done to Indigenous Peoples. First Nations, Inuit and Métis may have different perspectives on reconciliation, as these Peoples have not had the same experiences with colonialism.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology—Glossaries and vocabularies—TERMIUM Plus®—Resources of the Language Portal of Canada—Canada.ca (noslangues-ourlangues.gc.ca)

<sup>40</sup> Cooper, Frank. (2012) Professional Boundaries in Social Work and Social Care. A Practical Guide to Understanding, Maintaining and Managing Your Professional Boundaries. Retrieved from [https://bhdp.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exicpb716/files/boundaries\\_for\\_carers.pdf](https://bhdp.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exicpb716/files/boundaries_for_carers.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid



## Resilience

An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change, the ability to regulate emotions, attention, and behaviour.<sup>43</sup>

First Nation, Métis and Inuit resiliency is rooted in language, culture, and spirituality in both individual and collective processes contributing to strengthening the individual and collective identities coexisting in balance with the land.

## Self-Determination

A core social work value that refers to the right to self-direction and freedom of choice without interference from others. Self-determination is codified in practice through mechanisms of informed consent. Social workers may be obligated to limit self-determination when a client lacks capacity or to prevent harm.<sup>44</sup>

Self-Determination in an Indigenous social work context refers to Indigenous people fully consenting and actively participating in decision-making where outcomes benefit the overall well-being of the individual, family, and community.<sup>45</sup>

## Social Exclusion

People who are socially excluded are more economically and socially vulnerable and tend to have diminished life experiences. Social exclusion describes a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state.<sup>46</sup> Indigenous social exclusion resulting from colonialism and current social policies impacts education, income and employment and the inequitable distribution of resources.<sup>47</sup>

## Service User(s)

Individuals (clients, patients, residents, etc.), parents and substitute decision-makers, families, groups, communities, and populations who access or receive social work services.

## Social Worker

A person who is duly registered to practise social work in a province or territory; or where mandatory registration does not exist, a person with social work education from an institution recognized by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW) or an institution from outside of Canada that has been approved by CASW, who is practising social work and who voluntarily agrees to be subject to this Code of Ethics.

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<sup>43</sup> Whitney, Elizabeth. Resilience for Social Workers: How to Increase Flexibility, Energy, and Engagement in the Face of Challenge. The New Social Worker, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/resilience-for-social-workers-how-to-increase-flexibility-energy-engagement-in-face-of-challenge/>

<sup>44</sup> Regehr, C. and B. J. Antle. (1997). Coercive influences: Informed consent and court-mandated social work practice. Social Work, 42(3), 300–306.

<sup>45</sup> Retrieved from <https://raisingthevillage.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Outcome5-Self-Determination.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Children and Youth Crime Prevention Through Social Development. retrieved from [http://ccsd.ca/resources/CrimePrevention/c\\_exclusion.htm](http://ccsd.ca/resources/CrimePrevention/c_exclusion.htm)

<sup>47</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.ccsa-nccah.ca/docs/determinants/RPT-HealthInequalities-Reading-Wien-EN.pdf>

## Social Justice

The belief that people from all identity groups have the same rights, opportunities, access to resources, and benefits. It acknowledges that historical inequalities exist and must be addressed and remedied through specific measures, including advocacy to confront discrimination, oppression, and institutional inequalities, with a recognition that this process should be participatory, collaborative, inclusive of difference, and affirming of personal agency. Social justice is a foundational value and aspiration of the social work profession.<sup>48</sup>

## Systemic Racism

Systemic racism (also known as institutional racism) is a concept whereby social structures produce inequalities based on racial discrimination. Racialized people thus face challenges due to racism from both individuals and institutions (health, education, penal system, etc.). Systemic racism is a concept different from that of individual racism.<sup>49</sup>

## Trauma and Trauma Informed Practice

A strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma. It emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Atteberry Ash, Brittanie. Defining Social Justice (2020) retrieved from <https://socialwork.du.edu/news/defining-social-justice>

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<sup>50</sup> Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families. (2017) retrieved from [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/child-teen-mental-health/trauma-informed\\_practice\\_guide.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/child-teen-mental-health/trauma-informed_practice_guide.pdf), gov.bc.ca/traumainformedpractice