



CASWE-ACFTS
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA FORMATION EN TRAVAIL SOCIAL

Intersectoral Committee Relationship Agreement

Purpose

The purpose of the Intersectoral Committee is to promote communication, connection and collaboration among the three sectors (education, association and regulation) and to strengthen the social work profession in Canada.

This agreement is established between the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators and the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (hereafter referred to as "the Organizations", "the pillars") to promote collaborative and respectful relationships aimed at advancing the social work profession. Recognizing the distinct roles and contributions of each pillar, the Organizations commit to principles of trust, respect, and open communication.

Objectives

1. Mutual Respect

Each Organization acknowledges the importance of mutual respect among the three pillars of the social work profession. We commit to valuing the contributions and expertise of one another and supporting:

- mandatory registration for all social workers in Canada
- accredited social work programs
- membership with the national professional association

2. Collaboration

The Organizations agree to collaborate on initiatives that enhance the social work profession. This includes sharing resources, knowledge, and best practices.

3. Intent to Communicate

We declare our intent to communicate respectfully, actively listening and seeking to understand, while working together, to exchange information to advance our shared goals in the social work profession.

Principles and Values

1. **Commitment to Honesty and Trust**

The Organizations commit to honesty and transparency in our interactions, fostering an environment of mutual trust and respect. We will engage in open and straightforward communication to strengthen our partnership.

2. **Commitment to Active Collaboration**

The organizations commit to proactive partnerships advancing the profession. We recognize the importance of working together to achieve our respective mandates. The organizations commit to actively communicating on issues that may include overlapping mandates or responsibilities.

3. **Respect for Distinct Roles**

Each Organization recognizes and respects the skills, governance/legislative authority, and respective mandates of the other Organizations. We will honor each other's contributions and areas of expertise understanding that some issues are intersectoral.

4. **Addressing Disagreements**

In the event of disagreements, the Organizations agree to approach such situations with a mindset of collaboration. We will attempt to resolve conflicts directly between the pillars, prioritizing dialogue over divisiveness, ensuring discussion and resolution.

5. **Non-Disparagement**

The Organizations will not promote, circulate, or issue petitions/public statements against the work or decisions of another pillar. We commit to maintaining a constructive and respectful atmosphere in all of our interactions.

6. **Calling In vs. Calling Out**

The Organizations will commit to “calling each other in” rather than “calling each other out” when addressing disputes. This approach fosters understanding and constructive dialogue rather than public confrontation.

Operational and Decision-Making Process

The Intersectoral Committee will function in accordance with the Operational Guidelines (Appendix 1). Decisions will be made by consensus (as outlined in Appendix 2).

The decision-making process will be guided by the following criteria:

- Issue has relevance to all three sectors
- There is shared recognition that the issue requires attention
- Clear roles and responsibilities are identified for each sector in addressing the issue

Outcome unifies and strengthens the social work profession

Review & Timelines

This agreement will be reviewed every two years to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. The review will assess progress made, any challenges encountered and the overall impact on the collaborative relationship between the pillars.

Conclusion

By signing this agreement, the Organizations affirm their commitment to fostering a collaborative, respectful, and trusting relationship that advances the social work profession. We look forward to working together to achieve our common goals.

Signatures



Barb Whitenect
President, Canadian Association of Social Workers



Marie-Pier Rivest
President, Canadian Association for Social Work Education



Barb Temmerman
President, Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators

Appendices

Appendix 1: Operational Guidelines

The Intersectoral Committee:

- The Intersectoral Committee will be composed of a maximum of 2 representatives from the Canadian Association of Social Work (CASW), the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR) and the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) totalling not more than 6 persons

Intersectoral Committee Chair:

- Each sector will chair the Intersectoral Committee for a two-year term, on a rotating basis. The Chair is responsible for planning and coordinating meetings and ensuring that meeting minutes are recorded and disseminated.

Committee Meetings:

- Committee meetings will be held virtually as required and in-person when possible. Task groups will meet by videoconference as required but will do much of their work by email.

Task Groups:

- Task groups may be established as needed to carry out specific, time-limited tasks. Task groups will be chaired by a member of the Intersectoral Committee, but participants may be recruited from elsewhere within the profession, with equal representation from CASW, CCSWR and CASWE unless there is consensus. Task groups will use a consultative process to engage key stakeholders and constituencies in identifying needs and issues and will ensure consistent feedback loops to the Intersectoral Committee.

Costs:

- Each participant organization will be responsible for sharing the costs of face-to-face meetings and funding attendance of its own representatives.

Communications:

- The Intersectoral Committee members will communicate in accordance with the Intersectoral Committee Relationship Agreement.
 - As much as possible, activities carried out by the Intersectoral Committee will make use of existing communication networks, newsletters, listserves, etc.
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Appendix 2: Consensus Decision-Making

What is consensus?

Consensus is a process for group decision-making. It is a method by which an entire group of people can come to an agreement. The input and ideas of all participants are gathered and synthesized to arrive at a final decision acceptable to all. Through consensus, we are not only working to achieve better solutions, but also to promote the growth of community and trust.

Consensus vs. Voting

Voting is a means by which we choose one alternative from several. Consensus, on the other hand, is a process of synthesizing many diverse elements together. Voting is a win or lose model, in which people are more often concerned with the numbers it takes to “win” than with the issue itself. Voting does not take into account individual feelings or needs. In essence, it is a quantitative, rather than qualitative, method of decision-making. With consensus people can and should work through differences and reach a mutually satisfactory position. It is possible for one person’s insights or strongly held beliefs to sway the whole group. No ideas are lost, each member’s input is valued as part of the solution. A group committed to consensus may utilize other forms of decision making (individual, compromise, majority rules) when appropriate; however, a group that has adopted a consensus model will use that process for any item that brings up a lot of emotions, is something that concerns people’s ethics, politics, morals or other areas where there is much investment.

What does consensus mean?

Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks that the decision made is necessarily the best one possible or even that they are sure it will work. What it does mean is that in coming to that decision, no one felt that her/his position on the matter was misunderstood or that it wasn't given a proper hearing. Hopefully, everyone will think it is the best decision; this often happens because, when it works, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than could individuals. Consensus takes more time and member skill, but uses lots of resources before a decision is made, creates commitment to the decision and often facilitates creative decision. It gives everyone some experience with new processes of interaction and conflict resolution, which is basic but important skill building. For consensus to be a positive experience, it is best if the group has 1) common values, 2) some skill in group process and conflict resolution, or a commitment to let these be facilitated, 3) commitment and responsibility to the group by its members and 4) sufficient time for everyone to participate in the process.

Consensus

Stresses the cooperative development of a decision and the active search for common ground rather than differences. Everyone's support is needed to finalize the decision, so softer or culturally undervalued voices are actually encouraged and attended to.

The decision will usually garner greater commitment to follow through on a decision, because everyone was involved in making it.

Both feelings and logical arguments are considered important. When a decision is not favourable to the whole group, the time is often taken to find creative and often better solutions.

A Few Disadvantages of Consensus

- The group can be dominated by outspoken members.
- Sometimes takes a bit longer- can lead to boredom and frustration if not facilitated properly.
- Individuals can block decisions to further their own power.
- Groups that have one person in charge and groups that have little in common or opposing goals may experience difficulty implementing consensus

Rules for Consensus

Consensus does not mean that everyone agrees with the decision, but that everyone is willing to live with it.

Standing aside

If you do not agree with the direction that the group is heading in, but you are not willing to stop the rest of the group from going ahead with a generally accepted idea, you can choose to stand aside. This should only be done after you have clearly articulated your concerns and there has been discussion from the group about your concerns. If there are more than one or two people standing aside, it would be wise to continue to search for other ideas and compromises.

Blocking

One individual has the power to block a decision, even if it goes against something that the rest of the group agrees to. Again, this should only be done after lengthy discussion, and only in situations where you feel that the decision is morally wrong and would harm the group or other people in some way. Good conflict management skills are necessary in these situations to try and work out solutions.

Forming the consensus proposals

During discussions a proposal for resolution is put forward. It is amended and modified through more discussion, or withdrawn if it seems to be a dead end. During this discussion period it is

important to articulate differences clearly. It is the responsibility of those who are having trouble with a proposal to put forth alternative suggestions. The fundamental right of consensus is for all people to be able to express themselves in their own words and of their own will. The fundamental responsibility of consensus is to assure others of their right to speak and compromise with synthesis. When a proposal seems to be well understood by everyone, and there are no new changes asked for, the facilitator(s) can ask if there are any objections or reservations to it. If there are no objections, there can be a call for consensus. If there are still no objections, then after a moment of silence you have your decision. Once consensus does appear to have been reached, it really helps to have someone repeat the decision to the group so everyone is clear on what has been decided.

Difficulties in reaching consensus

If a decision has been reached, or is on the verge of being reached that you cannot support, there are several ways to express your objections:

Non-support (“I don’t see the need for this, but I’ll go along.”)

Reservations (“I think this may be a mistake but I can live with it”)

Standing aside (“I personally can’t do this, but I won’t stop others from doing it”)

Blocking (“I cannot support this or allow the group to support this. It is immoral.” If a final decision violates someone’s fundamental moral values they are obligated to block consensus)

Withdrawing from the group- Obviously, if many people express non-support or reservations or stand aside or leave the group, it may not be a viable decision even if no one directly blocks it. This is what is known as a “lukewarm” consensus and it is just as desirable as a lukewarm beer or a lukewarm bath.

If consensus is blocked and no new consensus can be reached, the group stays with whatever the previous decision was on the subject, or does nothing if that is applicable. Major philosophical or moral questions that will come up with each affinity group will have to be worked through as soon as the group forms.

Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator keeps track of WHAT the group is talking about and HOW the group is talking about it!

- Your role is to “make easy” the functioning of the group
- Everything you do or say must be checked with the group
- Facilitation should be shared. Everyone should know what it’s like to guide the group
- Everyone should try to “self-facilitate”. We are all equally responsible for making the meeting run effectively
- If you start getting personally involved in the discussion or debate, ask someone else to facilitate awhile

Your Function as a Facilitator is to:

1. Guide the Agenda

- Start a check-in round
- Review and revise the agenda with the group
- Monitor time

2. Keep the discussion on topic

- Point out tangents, watch out for repetition
- Reiterate original goal of the discussion or ask the group to clarify the original

3. Clarify and Rephrase

- If a member is being misunderstood, or not listened to, rephrase their statement and check out the accuracy of your statement. Do not act as an advocate.

References

- [Camosun Relationship Agreement](#)
- [Evergreen Relationship MOU](#)
- [FNHA Relationship Agreement](#)
- [Learning for Justice: Speaking Up](#)