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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the manual is to clarify and assist the individuals involved our Social Work Field Education Program. Field education is an integral part of the overall Bachelor of Social Work curriculum. Students complete this component of their social work education through participation in supervised field placement experiences at agencies or institutions that have entered into a contractual arrangement with the UW-River Falls Social Work Program. Field education provides students with the opportunity to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values and skills they are learning in the classroom into a practice setting. It also provides an opportunity for students and for the social work faculty to further assess each student's readiness to practice social work.

The main purpose of undergraduate social work education at the University of WI-River Falls is to prepare students to assume the responsibilities of entry level generalist social work practice. It is designed to prepare students for leadership roles as they involve themselves in issues of social and economic justice. As the signature pedagogy of the profession, a quality field placement experience is essential to this purpose.

Field Placement is part of an integrated senior experience. During the senior year, students take a sequence of courses which are designed to comprise a total learning and integrative experience. The two senior seminars (480-481), Advanced Interviewing (424) and Theory and Practice II (426) are designed to make a complete experience covering all curriculum objectives. These courses each utilize field placement experiences to facilitate integrating the knowledge, values and skills learned in the classroom with practice.

Purpose and Design of the Manual

This manual was prepared as a guide to assist the social work students and their Field Supervisors in understanding the philosophical orientation, specific expectations and requirements for field placement. It begins with the design of the program which includes the mission statement and then lists the program’s 10 core competencies which operationalize that mission. These competencies serve as guidelines for the entire social work curriculum and so logically are the basis for the structure and content of field placement. Next the manual describes the admission and termination processes for field placement. It includes the standards for field settings and Field Supervisors which are required by the Council on Social Work Education (C.S.W.E.), our accrediting body, and then outlines the roles and responsibilities of the major components of field placement. Added as an appendix is the current C.S.W.E. curriculum policy statement and the NASW Code of Ethics. All field related forms and documents can be found on our website at www.uwrf.edu/sowk

PROGRAM DESIGN

The Social Work Program builds its curriculum from a liberal arts foundation that is designed to facilitate the acquisition and integration of knowledge, abilities, and ethics in order to form a foundation for lifelong learning.

The interdisciplinary foundation includes the ability to communicate effectively; comprehend the inter-relatedness of past and present human experience; apply scientific principles to the human and natural world; engage in inquiry and critical thinking; develop and appreciate the responsibilities of individuals to themselves, each other, society, and the world (UW-RF General Education Mission Statement, 2004).
### Department of Social Work’s Mission Statement

The primary mission of the Social Work Program at UW-River Falls is to prepare undergraduate students for ethical and competent generalist social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. As graduates, students are expected to be enlightened as citizens, appreciative of diversity, committed to human rights, social justice and prepared to be life-long-learners who will contribute to the knowledge base of their profession. The Program commits itself to being an active, contributing part of the university community and the region within which the campus is located. (Program’s Mission Statement, 2011)

### Social Work Program 10 Core Competencies

Accreditation standards require that the baccalaureate social work curriculum prepares graduates for generalist practice through mastery of a set of core competencies. These core competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. UW-RF Social Work students delineate the educational goals and objectives of the Social Work Program through demonstration of specific competencies that serve to inform and aid evaluation of those students’ preparation for generalist social work practice. These competencies serve as a link between what may be observed or demonstrated in student knowledge, value and skill performance, and the program’s curriculum expectations. In a general way, these competencies and accepted practice standards operationalize the educational objectives for students, faculty, and administration and provide a common set of definitions to gauge performance and behavior. The ten core competencies are listed below.

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conducts oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

The completion of a BSW at UW-RF requires the student to proceed through three stages of admission. The first stage involves securing admission to UW-RF and declaring social work as a major. The second is applying for formal admission to the major itself. The last step is the application for admission to field placement, which is a requirement for graduation with a BSW degree. Because students will be working directly with individuals in a helping relationship, it is necessary that they meet certain standards for admission to field placement.

Requirements for Admission to Field Placement

1. Admission to the social work major at UW-RF.
2. Completion of the following courses: SWK 300, SWK 325, and SWK 350.
3. Attainment of a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.25 overall on a 4.0 scale at the time of application.
4. Attainment of a minimum cumulative social work (all social work courses) grade point average of 2.50 on a 4.0 scale at the time of application (including a grade of "C" or better in all social work courses).
5. Grades for course work accepted at UW-River Falls as transfer credit will be included in the computation of both cumulative and social work course G.P.A.
6. Completion of the on-line Application for Field Placement.
7. Agreement to take SWK 480 and 424 concurrently with field placement in the fall semester as well as SWK 426 and 481 concurrently with field placement in the spring semester.
8. Valid driver’s license
9. Agreement to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics.
10. Approval of the social work faculty.

Procedure for Admission to Field Placement

Students seeking admission to social work field placement must do the following:

1. Secure a copy of the Social Work Field Manual at www.uwrf.edu/sowk
2. By the second Monday in February, the following must be submitted via the on-line Application for Field Placement located on the programs website.
   a. Completed the on-line Application for Field Placement form which includes:
      - Current unofficial transcript
- Updated professional resume
- Copy of valid driver’s license
- Proof of current automobile insurance coverage

Upon receipt of all required admission materials, the social work faculty will:

1. Review the application materials.
2. Request an individual interview with the Field Placement Coordinator to discuss the student’s field application.
3. Notify applicants in writing within sixty (60) days of the decision regarding admission to the field placement program. (Responsibility of Field Placement Coordinator)

Students have the right to appeal a denial of admission to social work field placement according to the procedures outlined in the Student Handbook at [http://www.uwrf.edu/sowk](http://www.uwrf.edu/sowk)

**Securing the Field Placement**

At the beginning of the spring semester, the Field Placement Coordinator meets with the juniors to provide an orientation to the process for applying for and securing a field placement. Students will be given directions on how to complete the on-line Application for Field Placement, an explanation of the process of securing a placement and information about potential agency settings with due dates for all material. Students will then be asked to arrange for a personal interview with the Field Placement Coordinator to discuss their field application. The application and outcome of the interview will be considered for acceptance into the field program. Once the student is accepted into field, per the process described above, the Field Placement Coordinator will begin the process of coordinating field placements. The Field Coordinator will contact current Field Supervisors and identify and meet with additional potential supervisors in order to match agencies with students.

The Coordinator will contact the appropriate Field Supervisor giving that person the name and student’s application to the field. Once the agency has indicated that they would be interested in offering a placement opportunity, the student is responsible for making an appointment with the potential Field Supervisor, making available a current resume and whatever else is required for application to that particular agency. The Field Supervisor will interview the student and together they will determine whether this is an appropriate placement. Both the Field Supervisor and student will let the Field Placement Coordinator know if this placement is a good match. If both the student and Field Supervisor are in agreement, then the placement will be confirmed via an email by the Field Placement Coordinator.

If a student is not offered the placement after the interview she/he will meet with the Field Coordinator to talk about another possibility. If a student interviews in three agencies and is not successful in securing a placement, the Field Coordinator may choose not to offer any further placements. (Placements that do not work out because of factors not related to the student’s interview do not count toward the three.) Next, the student would need to meet with the faculty as a whole to talk about how to proceed. The options would be for the Field Placement Coordinator to continue seeking further interviews; for the Program to require further coursework on the part of the student or for the student to be discontinued as a social work major. The student has the right to appeal any such decision per the appeal process described in the Social Work Student Handbook.

Process is as follows:

1. Student receives approval of admission to field.
2. Field Coordinator offers student a potential placement with contact information.
3. Student informs the Field Coordinator, via email, whether or not he/she wishes to interview with this placement. If not interested, the student and Field Coordinator will continue a conversation about alternative placements.

4. Student arranges interview with potential Field Supervisor and completes interview.

5. Student notifies Field Coordinator as to whether he/she wants this placement or not.

6. Student writes thank you note to interviewer(s).

7. If student wants placement, she/he informs Field Supervisor of that fact if that wasn’t made clear at interview.

8. Field Coordinator makes contact with interviewer to find out whether or not student is accepted.

9. If student does not want or get placement, he/she will communicate with the Field Coordinator who will secure another interview.

10. When student’s placement is finalized, Field Coordinator will send a written confirmation to the Field Supervisor with a copy to the student.

Upon agreement that an agency has accepted a social work student for a field placement, the Field Supervisor will be asked to complete a *Field Supervisor Information Form* on-line. This form gathers information from the Field Supervisor needed for the social work program’s accreditation standards. No student will be allowed to begin a placement until this form is completed.

**Other Requirements for Field Placement**

1. Students will perform a total of 450 hours from September – May at their respective agency. 225 hours will be completed by the last day of the fall semester and 225 hours will be completed by the spring semester.

2. Students will track their monthly field hours using the *Monthly Fieldwork Hours* form.

3. Students meet with their Faculty Liaison for 50 minutes once per week as a group.

4. Students complete *Field Placement Journals* which are submitted weekly to the Faculty Liaison.

5. Students complete the *Field Placement Learning Agreement* as indicated in the SOWK 472 Syllabus and are responsible to obtain signatures from the Field Supervisor and Faculty Liaison.

6. The students will complete any other assignments required by their Faculty Liaison.

**Learning Agreement**

At the beginning of each placement, the student and the Field Supervisor will complete the *Field Placement Learning Agreement* within 30 days of the student starting their placement. This will then be reviewed by the Faculty Liaison, Field Supervisor, and student at the first liaison meeting. The *Field Placement Learning Agreement* is based upon the Social Work Program’s core competencies which form the basis for the entire social work curriculum. It is in placement, that each of the 10 core competencies are achieved. The learning agreement then serves as the basis for evaluating the student's performance in field placement.

**Evaluation**

**Student:** *Evaluation for Field Placement* must be completed by the Field Supervisor and then reviewed with the student. It is then reviewed with the Faculty Liaison, at a mid-term and final site visit, who will use it as a basis for advising the student as well as grading the field experience.

**Field Supervisor:** The Field Supervisor is evaluated by the student who has been in the field placement and the Faculty Liaison assigned to that field placement. The evaluation is considered as the Field
Placement Coordinator plans for the next year's placements. Any problem areas identified in that evaluation will be discussed with the Field Supervisor.

**Faculty Liaison:** The Faculty Liaison is evaluated by the students assigned to his/her section of SWK 472. The evaluations are submitted to the Program Director who is responsible for communicating any concerns to the Faculty Liaison. The social work faculty at River Falls is serious about the continued growth and improvement of the program. Feedback from students as well as outside sources is invaluable to that process.

**Grading**

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Liaison to determine the student's final grade with input from the Field Supervisor. The primary sources of information for grading the field placement is based on the outcome of a student’s field evaluation, timeliness of field paperwork, attendance and participation in field seminar, adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics, initiative and creativity, demonstration of personal growth and development, and use of theory into practice.

The following are the guidelines faculty will use in determining the students final grade based on the quality of work at the field placement AND in the classroom setting:

**A** = Successful completion of assigned tasks including those in the agency in a manner considered **outstanding**.
- Prompt and regular attendance at all activities.
- Diligent adherence to NASW Code of Ethics.
- Demonstration of **superior** initiative and creativity.
- Demonstration of an **outstanding** capacity for personal growth and development
- Demonstration of **outstanding** use of knowledge and skills learned during coursework.

**B** = Successful completion of tasks including those in the agency as well as the student logs, and any other assignments in a manner considered **above average**.
- Regular attendance in class and at activities. Notifies field liaison and field supervisor of absence in advance.
- Adherence to NASW Code of Ethics.
- Demonstration of **very good** initiative and creativity.
- Demonstration of an **unusually good** capacity for personal growth and development.
- Demonstration of **unusually good** use of knowledge and skills learned during coursework.

**C** = Successful completion of most tasks in a manner considered **average** but a marked failure to complete a few others in an acceptable manner; and/or;
- Attendance and/or promptness in class and/or at agency are problematic. Fails to notify field supervisor or field liaison of absence in advance.
- Minor difficulties adhering to the NASW Code of Ethics. Remedied with proper consultation and supervision.
- Demonstrates **some** initiative and creativity.
- Demonstrates **some** capacity for personal growth and development.
- Demonstration of **good** use of knowledge and skills learned during coursework.

**D** = Successful completion of many tasks but marked failure to complete others in an acceptable manner; and/or;
- Severe problems with being tardy or absent from class and/or the agency.
Several problems with adherence to NASW Code of Ethics. (These are areas of code violations that would require immediate termination from field.)

- Demonstration of use of some knowledge and skills learned during coursework.

F = Failure to complete many tasks; and/or
- Is tardy or absent and fails to remedy the problem when addressed.
- Lack of adherence to NASW Code of Ethics.
- Failure to demonstrate use of knowledge and skills learned during coursework.

**Termination**

The policies and procedures related to terminating a student from the social work program are described in the *Student Handbook* at www.uwrf.edu/sowk. A student may be terminated from a particular field placement and then may or may not be terminated from the program as a whole.

If a Field Supervisor finds that a student is having difficulties in the placement, the student's Faculty Liaison must be contacted as soon as possible. Hopefully, any difficulties can be resolved. If, however, problems are so severe as to be irresolvable, the student will be immediately removed from that placement. At this time, depending upon the nature of the situation, either a new placement will be secured or the process will begin for the removal of that student from the program through the termination process described in the *Student Handbook*.

**Employment in Field Placement**

Students are not employed as Field Students. Students are not encouraged to be employed by the agency where they have a field placement. If a student is offered a position in their field placement agency toward the end of the academic year, it is possible to take that position with agreement of the Field Placement Coordinator, Field Supervisor and Social Work Program Director if certain conditions are met. These conditions include:

1. The Supervisor for new position is not the Field Supervisor.
2. The clients served by the student are not the same clients being served while in the Field Placement.
3. There is a clear understanding that what happens while the student is employed will not affect their field placement status. The exception to this is that when there is disciplinary action because of a serious violation of the NASW Code of Ethics, that disciplinary action may affect the student’s status as a field student. It is expected that the Faculty Liaison would be immediately notified if any such action is being contemplated.
4. Before employment is offered, the agency Director writes a letter to the Social Work Program Director indicating the above three conditions and will have received a form agreement from the Program Director.

**Using Current Employment for Field Placement**

Rarely is a student allowed to do their field practicum at an agency in which they are employed. It requires the approval of the Field Placement Coordinator. Students’ assignments and field education supervision are different than those associated with the student’s employment. Factors to be considered include; how long the student has worked for the agency, the job description for the paid position, job description for the practicum, agency supervision patterns, collaboration with agency staff/supervisors and additional contract considerations.

**STANDARDS FOR FIELD PLACEMENT AGENCIES**

Field settings and Field Supervisors are selected based upon the Program Mission and the Program/Field Objectives as well as those standards set by social work faculty and C.S.W.E.
Agencies and Field Supervisors are expected to:

1. Complete an on-line Agency Profile to be eligible to be matched with students applying for field placements.
2. Complete a Field Supervisor Information Form to be eligible to supervise a field student.
3. Value and be committed to the education of generalist undergraduate social work students.
4. Demand high standards of professional ethics and practice.
5. Provide a variety of services through service delivery methods reflective of generalist social work practice and allow for the achievement of the 10 core competencies.
6. Provide supervision by a social worker having a masters or a baccalaureate degree from an accredited social work program unless special arrangements are made with the Field Coordinator. Supervisors with a BSW must possess two years of practice experience.
7. Allot time for Field Supervisors to attend meetings, workshops, and seminars.
8. Provide adequate space and provisions for students to fulfill academic and agency requirements.
9. Allow opportunities for attendance and participation at agency meetings that include staff and program development as well as case conferences.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Social Work Program**

Since the field placement is a vital part of the education of social work students, the Social Work Program recognizes the importance of the agencies' contributions in promoting educational goals desired by both the Social Work Program and community agencies. The Social Work Program is responsible for selection and approval of agencies involved in the field placement program.

The Social Work Program retains primary responsibility for the quality of the educational experience and carries out that responsibility through ongoing communication with the Field Supervisor.

The Social Work Program will provide the agency with all necessary and useful information regarding the student assigned to the agency, about the UW-River Falls Social Work Program, and about Council on Social Work Education's requirements.

The Social Work Program will assume responsibility for providing the agency with all necessary consultation and support in carrying out the educational program. It will provide learning objectives and guidelines to plan the educational program for students and guidelines for evaluation of the students' progress. The Social Work Program may provide training for Field Supervisors to support their efforts to help students identify with the purposes, values, and ethics of the profession; foster the integration of empirical and practice-based knowledge; and promote the development of professional competence.

**Field Placement Coordinator**

The Field Placement Coordinator organizes and develops appropriate field experiences for students. This responsibility includes the selection of agencies, development of new agency placements, actual placement of the student in the agency, and ongoing evaluation of participating agencies appropriateness as field placements. The Field Placement Coordinator may meet with potential Field Supervisors before a student is placed as a field student in that agency. The Coordinator and Supervisor discuss placement requirements and expectations, curricular content, possible competency related experiences, and changes in the program. If a mutual decision is
made to place a student in a particular agency, the Field Placement Coordinator offers an orientation and possible further training for the Field Supervisor. The Coordinator will provide both the student and Field Supervisor with an updated *Field Placement Manual*.

The Field Coordinator holds meetings with students ready for field placement regarding the requirements, expectations and opportunities for placement during the upcoming Fall semester. He/She also facilitates the student applying for placement and securing a placement which will meet the educational needs of the student.

**Faculty Liaison**

Faculty Liaisons will maintain regular contact with students under their supervision, once the student has been placed in the agency. Faculty Liaisons are to review the *Field Placement Learning Agreement* and *Field Placement Evaluation* (completed by the student and the Field Supervisor) at appropriate times, with the Field Supervisor and the student. In addition to this, the Faculty Liaison maintains contact with the Field Supervisor to ensure a rich learning experience for the students which is consistent with the Social Work Program's philosophy and objectives. The Liaison meets with the field students as a group once per week to process their field activities and provide support when needed. The Faculty Liaison will be responsible for grading all students in field.

**Agency**

The agency, which agrees to participate in the education of social work students, is responsible for providing an environment which is conducive to the educational function. In consultation with the Social Work Program, the agency shall determine the number of field placement positions available. The field placement student shall be accepted as a member of the staff with roles which are congruent with the service functions of the agency and will be provided with a suitable working environment. The agency must be able to allocate sufficient time for field placement supervision, training, and meetings with the Faculty Liaison as agreed upon. Specific listings of standards for Field Settings are described earlier in the Manual.

**Field Supervisor**

The Field Supervisor assumes responsibility for orienting the student to the agency, its services, and its personnel, as well as its role in the total network of community social services. The Field Supervisor shall provide the student with ongoing supervision and evaluation. This will involve meeting with the student for a minimum of one hour weekly. She/he should inform the student and the Faculty Liaison if the student's level of performance is not satisfactory so that proper steps can be taken to correct any difficulty.

Each Field Supervisor is asked to prepare an *Evaluation for Field Placement* at the end of each semester. It is expected that this will be shared with the field student prior to presenting it in a final evaluation conference with the student, Field Supervisor and Faculty Liaison. Field Supervisors are expected to participate in an initial orientation session and subsequent training sessions conducted by the Field Placement Coordinator.

**Student**

Following the procedures established by the Social Work Program, students are responsible for working out an approved field placement with the Field Placement Coordinator. The student must register for SWK 472, SWK 424/426 and SWK 480/481 concurrently. The student must meet with the Faculty Liaison weekly. Once the field experience begins, the student is responsible for completing the *Learning Agreement for Field Placement* with the
assistance of their Field Supervisor. This agreement serves as a contract delineating expectations held for the student as both an agency service provider and a field student in the Social Work Program. The field placement student will be expected to complete a minimum of 450 hours in the field placement agency/agencies.

Students are expected to take appropriate responsibility for their own professional development during field placement. They are expected to use supervision appropriately, demonstrate initiative and dependability as they assume responsibilities for work with clients. It is their responsibility to act within the ethical guidelines of professional practice per the NASW Code of Ethics and state codes of conduct.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do Most Students Feel Nervous and Inadequate Beginning A Practicum?
Yes, probably a majority of students beginning a new practicum experience some anxiety. Anxiety often indicates that they want to do well and are aware that they have much to learn. Changes and new experiences involve an element of risk, which is always a little scary. CONsciously, or unconsciously, students may think, “what if I don’t do well in this practicum?” “What if my field instructor is too critical or expects too much?” “What if I can’t help my clients?” Logistical concerns can also be a source of anxiety, “where will I go for lunch?” or “what if I am late on the first day?” Many of these concerns can usually be managed by thinking ahead. Students should also realize that it is okay to feel anxious - it is common experience - and that making specific plans often helps reduce some of the anxiety.

What Can I Expect on the First Day of a New Practicum?
A typical first day includes introductions, maybe starting to read the agency manual, conversations with the field supervisor about expectations and tasks. It may well include sitting in with the supervisor and/or other social workers as they work with clients. Agencies vary significantly in how quickly students are exposed to clients directly.

How Should I Dress for the Practicum Agency?
Generally speaking, dress conservatively, neither too formally nor informally. You certainly may contact your Field Supervisor prior to being placement and ask about appropriate dress. If the staff dresses informally then dress similarly.

Will I Be Asked to Share A Desk or An Office?
Students do not always find that they have their own private office in the agency. Often they share an office with other students or a worker in the agency. Ideally students should have their own desk and phone. Some agencies are often critically short of space and it is sometimes the case that students have to share desks and phones. If you share an office and you need private space for meeting with clients, the agency should have private interviewing space available for scheduled use.

How Do I Make Field Placement Work for Me?
Students have a great deal of responsibility for the quality of their own field placement. This will be a topic for class discussion during the first few weeks of the Senior Integrative Seminar, SWK 480. Field Supervisors are repositories of knowledge about the agency, the clientele and the profession of social work. They have been chosen by the Social Work Program because they are good teachers and role models. The time students spend with their Field Supervisors should be an opportunity for them to grow professionally, by availing themselves for their Field Supervisors’ greater store of practice experience and knowledge. But in order for this to happen, students must be ready to talk about how they learn best, demonstrate their openness to honest feedback, and be
prepared to give accurate feedback to their Supervisors. Students need to take appropriate risks in spite of feeling anxious and unsure at the same time they are ready to ask for guidance when help is needed. Students need to take responsibility for making good use of supervisory conferences, coming prepared and organized. Students need to be assertive in asking for new experiences when that is appropriate and using agency resources other than their Supervisor. Students need to keep their Faculty Liaisons informed about how the placement is going and be prepared to seek help from that Liaison when that help is needed.

**What Do I Do If I Get Sick or Am Running Late and Miss My Appointments?**
It is probably inevitable that at some time during the practicum students will become ill or experience a problem that may cause them to miss scheduled appointments. Students should immediately inform the agency and the field instructor. Missed time from the field placement must be made up during the semester or at the end of the placement.

**What If I am Asked to Work Outside of My Scheduled Hours?**
There may be occasions when students are asked to work days or evenings beyond their scheduled time in the agency. Although students shouldn’t be required to work outside of their hours unless that was discussed as part of the initial placement arrangements, it is not at all unusual for any social worker to put in extra time, or adjust their hours to accommodate some special agency or client need. If students can put in some extra hours without cost to employment or school demands, that is up to the student and Supervisor to work out. Many students find extra hours useful as they involve themselves in a wider range of agency-related activities. With the agreement of the Supervisor, students can adjust regular hours to accommodate these “extra” duties. If there is a any difficulty over these “extra” hours, it is important for the student to talk to their Faculty Liaison about the situation.

**Should I Inform the Client that I Am a Student?**
Most agencies ask that students identify themselves as students, and often provide a name tag that signifies student, or intern status. It is also recommended that students indicate their status in the signing of any notes or reports in the official client record. Most agency Field Supervisors countersign any agency records or documents signed by students.
SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM FACULTY AND STAFF

Faculty

Ogden Rogers, PhD, LCSW, (WI) ACSW  
Program Director  
ogden.w.rogers@uwrf.edu  
715-425-3319

Jennifer Gervais, MSW, LICSW (MN)  
Associate Lecturer  
Field Placement Coordinator  
jennifer.gervais@uwrf.edu  
715-425-3262

Christine Beseman-Durocher, MSW, LICSW (MN)  
Faculty Liaison  
christine.beseman-durocher@uwrf.edu  
715-425-3262

Staff

Jerri Peterson  
Program Assistant  
715-425-3774  
FAX 715-425-3800  
jerralyn.peterson@uwrf.edu

Western Wisconsin Partnership Staff

Jennifer Borup, Director  
715-425-3370  
jennifer.e.borup@uwrf.edu

Mary Lou Bean, Training Specialist  
715-425-0612  
mary.lou.bean@uwrf.edu

Kelli Bowe, Training Manager  
715-425-0612  
Kelli.bowe@uwrf.edu

Karla Hasart, Program Manager  
715-425-0612  
Karla.hasart@uwrf.edu

Western WI Partnership  http://www.uwrf.edu/wwpartnership
APPENDIX A
Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards 2008

Purpose: Social Work Practice, Education, and Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards

The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person and environment construct, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, social work’s purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons.

Social work educators serve the profession through their teaching, scholarship, and service. Social work education—at the baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral levels—shapes the profession’s future through the education of competent professionals, the generation of knowledge, and the exercise of leadership within the professional community.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) uses the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit baccalaureate and master’s-level social work programs. EPAS supports academic excellence by establishing thresholds for professional competence. It permits programs to use traditional and emerging models of curriculum design by balancing requirements that promote comparability across programs with a level of flexibility that encourages programs to differentiate.

EPAS describe four features of an integrated curriculum design: (1) program mission and goals; (2) explicit curriculum; (3) implicit curriculum; and (4) assessment. The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards are conceptually linked. Educational Policy describes each curriculum feature. Accreditation Standards (in italics) are derived from the Educational Policy and specify the requirements used to develop and maintain an accredited social work program at the baccalaureate (B) or master’s (M) level.

1. Program Mission and Goals

Educational Policy 1.0—Program Mission and Goals
The mission and goals of each social work program address the profession’s purpose, are grounded in core professional values (EP 1.1), and are informed by context (EP 1.2).

Educational Policy 1.1—Values
Service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, human rights, and scientific inquiry are among the core values of social work. These values underpin the explicit and implicit curriculum and frame the profession’s commitment to respect for all people and the quest for social and economic justice.

Educational Policy 1.2—Program Context
Context encompasses the mission of the institution in which the program is located and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting. Programs are further influenced by their historical, political, economic, social, cultural, demographic, and global contexts and by the ways they elect to engage these factors. Additional factors include new knowledge, technology, and ideas that may have a bearing on contemporary and future social work education and practice.

Accreditation Standard 1.0—Mission and Goals
The social work program’s mission and goals reflect the profession’s purpose and values and the program’s context.

1.0.1 The program submits its mission statement and describes how it is consistent with the profession’s purpose and values and the program’s context.
1.0.2 The program identifies its goals and demonstrates how they are derived from the program’s mission.
2. Explicit Curriculum

Educational Policy 2.0—The Social Work Curriculum and Professional Practice
The explicit curriculum constitutes the program’s formal educational structure and includes the courses and the curriculum. Social work education is grounded in the liberal arts, which provide the intellectual basis for the professional curriculum and inform its design. The explicit curriculum achieves the program’s competencies through an intentional design that includes the foundation offered at the baccalaureate and master’s levels and the advanced curriculum offered at the master’s level. The BSW curriculum prepares its graduates for generalist practice through mastery of the core competencies. The MSW curriculum prepares its graduates for advanced practice through mastery of the core competencies augmented by knowledge and practice behaviors specific to a concentration.

Educational Policy 2.1—Core Competencies
Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The ten core competencies are listed below [EP 2.1.1–EP 2.1.10(d)], followed by a description of characteristic knowledge, values, skills, and the resulting practice behaviors that may be used to operationalize the curriculum and assessment methods. Programs may add competencies consistent with their missions and goals.

Educational Policy 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
Social workers serve as representatives of the profession, its mission, and its core values. They know the profession’s history. Social workers commit themselves to the profession’s enhancement and to their own professional conduct and growth. Social workers
• advocate for client access to the services of social work;
• practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development;
• attend to professional roles and boundaries;
• demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication;
• engage in career-long learning; and
• use supervision and consultation.

Educational Policy 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers
• recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice;
• make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics; and, as applicable, of the International Federation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles;3
• tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts; and
• apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.

Educational Policy 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information. Social workers
• distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom;
• analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation; and
• demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.
Educational Policy 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice.
Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers

- recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;
- gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups;
- recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and
- view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

Educational Policy 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. Social workers

- understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination;
- advocate for human rights and social and economic justice; and
- engage in practices that advance social and economic justice.

Educational Policy 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers

- use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and
- use research evidence to inform practice.

Educational Policy 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development. Social workers

- utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and
- critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

Educational Policy 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
Social work practitioners understand that policy affects service delivery, and they actively engage in policy practice. Social workers know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers

- analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being; and
- collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.

Educational Policy 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice.
Social workers are informed, resourceful, and proactive in responding to evolving organizational, community, and societal contexts at all levels of practice. Social workers recognize that the context of practice is dynamic, and use knowledge and skill to respond proactively. Social workers
• continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services; and
• provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.

Educational Policy 2.1.10(a)–(d) — Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.

Educational Policy 2.1.10(a) — Engagement
Social workers
• substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities;
• use empathy and other interpersonal skills; and
• develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes.

Educational Policy 2.1.10(b) — Assessment
Social workers
• collect, organize, and interpret client data;
• assess client strengths and limitations;
• develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives; and
• select appropriate intervention strategies.

Educational Policy 2.1.10(c) — Intervention
Social workers
• initiate actions to achieve organizational goals;
• implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities;
• help clients resolve problems;
• negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients; and
• facilitate transitions and endings.

Educational Policy 2.1.10(d) — Evaluation
Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.

Educational Policy B2.2 — Generalist Practice
Generalist practice is grounded in the liberal arts and the person and environment construct. To promote human and social well-being, generalist practitioners use a range of prevention and intervention methods in their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The generalist practitioner identifies with the social work profession and applies ethical principles and critical thinking in practice. Generalist practitioners incorporate diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice. They recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. They engage in research-informed practice and are proactive in responding to the impact of context on professional practice. BSW practice incorporates all of the core competencies.

Educational Policy M2.2 — Advanced Practice
Advanced practitioners refine and advance the quality of social work practice and that of the larger social work profession. They synthesize and apply a broad range of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge and skills. In areas of specialization, advanced practitioners assess, intervene, and evaluate to promote human and social well-being. To do so they suit each action to the circumstances at hand, using the discrimination learned
through experience and self-improvement. Advanced practice incorporates all of the core competencies augmented by knowledge and practice behaviors specific to a concentration.

**Educational Policy 2.3—Signature Pedagogy: Field Education**

Signature pedagogy represents the central form of instruction and learning in which a profession socializes its students to perform the role of practitioner. Professionals have pedagogical norms with which they connect and integrate theory and practice. In social work, the signature pedagogy is field education. The intent of field education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and field—are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies.

**Accreditation Standard B2.0—Curriculum**

The 10 core competencies are used to design the professional curriculum. The program

- **B2.0.1** Discusses how its mission and goals are consistent with generalist practice as defined in EP B2.2.
- **B2.0.2** Identifies its competencies consistent with EP 2.1 through 2.1.10(d).
- **B2.0.3** Provides an operational definition for each of its competencies used in its curriculum design and its assessment [EP 2.1 through 2.1.10(d)].
- **B2.0.4** Provides a rationale for its formal curriculum design demonstrating how it is used to develop a coherent and integrated curriculum for both classroom and field (EP 2.0).
- **B2.0.5** Describes and explains how its curriculum content (knowledge, values, and skills) implements the operational definition of each of its competencies.

**Accreditation Standard M2.0—Curriculum**

The 10 core competencies are used to design the foundation and advanced curriculum. The advanced curriculum builds on and applies the core competencies in an area(s) of concentration. The program

- **M2.0.1** Identifies its concentration(s) (EP M2.2).
- **M2.0.2** Discusses how its mission and goals are consistent with advanced practice (EP M2.2).
- **M2.0.3** Identifies its program competencies consistent with EP 2.1 through 2.1.10(d) and EP M2.2.
- **M2.0.4** Provides an operational definition for each of the competencies used in its curriculum design and its assessment [EP 2.1 through 2.1.10(d); EP M2.2].
- **M2.0.5** Provides a rationale for its formal curriculum design (foundation and advanced), demonstrating how it is used to develop a coherent and integrated curriculum for both classroom and field (EP 2.0).
- **M2.0.6** Describes and explains how its curriculum content (relevant theories and conceptual frameworks, values, and skills) implements the operational definition of each of its competencies.

**Accreditation Standard 2.1—Field Education**

The program discusses how its field education program

- **2.1.1** Connects the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practice setting, fostering the implementation of evidence-informed practice.
- **B2.1.2** Provides generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate the core competencies.
- **M2.1.2** Provides advanced practice opportunities for students to demonstrate the program’s competencies.
- **2.1.3** Provides a minimum of 400 hours of field education for baccalaureate programs and 900 hours for master's programs.
- **2.1.4** Admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education.
- **2.1.5** Specifies policies, criteria, and procedures for selecting field settings; placing and monitoring students; maintaining field liaison contacts with field education settings; and evaluating student learning and field setting effectiveness congruent with the program’s competencies.
- **2.1.6** Specifies the credentials and practice experience of its field instructors necessary to design field learning opportunities for students to demonstrate program competencies. Field instructors for baccalaureate students hold a baccalaureate or master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. Field instructors for master's students hold a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. For cases in which a field instructor does not hold a CSWE-accredited social work degree, the program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective and describes how this is accomplished.
2.1.7 Provides orientation, field instruction training, and continuing dialog with field education settings and field instructors.
2.1.8 Develops policies regarding field placements in an organization in which the student is also employed. To ensure the role of student as learner, student assignments and field education supervision are not the same as those of the student’s employment.

3. Implicit Curriculum

Educational Policy 3.0—Implicit Curriculum: The Learning Environment
The implicit curriculum refers to the educational environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented. It is composed of the following elements: the program’s commitment to diversity; admissions policies and procedures; advisement, retention, and termination policies; student participation in governance; faculty; administrative structure; and resources. The implicit curriculum is manifested through policies that are fair and transparent in substance and implementation, the qualifications of the faculty, and the adequacy of resources. The culture of human interchange; the spirit of inquiry; the support for difference and diversity; and the values and priorities in the educational environment, including the field setting, inform the student’s learning and development. The implicit curriculum is as important as the explicit curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program’s graduates. Heightened awareness of the importance of the implicit curriculum promotes an educational culture that is congruent with the values of the profession.

Educational Policy 3.1—Diversity
The program’s commitment to diversity—including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation—is reflected in its learning environment (institutional setting; selection of field education settings and their clientele; composition of program advisory or field committees; educational and social resources; resource allocation; program leadership; speaker series, seminars, and special programs; support groups; research and other initiatives; and the demographic make-up of its faculty, staff, and student body).

Accreditation Standard 3.1—Diversity
3.1.1 The program describes the specific and continuous efforts it makes to provide a learning environment in which respect for all persons and understanding of diversity and difference are practiced.
3.1.2 The program describes how its learning environment models affirmation and respect for diversity and difference.
3.1.3 The program discusses specific plans to improve the learning environment to affirm and support persons with diverse identities.

Educational Policy 3.2—Student Development
Educational preparation and commitment to the profession are essential qualities in the admission and development of students for professional practice. To promote the social work education continuum, BSW graduates admitted to MSW programs are presented with an articulated pathway toward a concentration. Student participation in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs are important for the student’s professional development.

Accreditation Standard 3.2—Student Development: Admissions; Advisement, Retention, and Termination; and Student Participation

Admissions
B3.2.1 The program identifies the criteria it uses for admission.
M3.2.1 The program identifies the criteria it uses for admission. The criteria for admission to the master’s program must include an earned bachelor’s degree from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting association.
3.2.2 The program describes the process and procedures for evaluating applications and notifying applicants of the decision and any contingent conditions associated with admission.
M3.2.3 BSW graduates entering MSW programs are not to repeat what has been mastered in their BSW programs. MSW programs describe the policies and procedures used for awarding advanced standing. These policies and procedures should be explicit and unambiguous. Advanced standing is awarded only to graduates holding degrees from baccalaureate social work programs accredited by CSWE, those
recognized through its International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service, or covered under a memorandum of understanding with international social work accreditors.

3.2.4 The program describes its policies and procedures concerning the transfer of credits.
3.2.5 The program submits its written policy indicating that it does not grant social work course credit for life experience or previous work experience. The program documents how it informs applicants and other constituents of this policy.

Advisement, retention, and termination
3.2.6 The program describes its academic and professional advising policies and procedures. Professional advising is provided by social work program faculty, staff, or both.
3.2.7 The program spells out how it informs students of its criteria for evaluating their academic and professional performance, including policies and procedures for grievance.
3.2.8 The program submits its policies and procedures for terminating a student's enrollment in the social work program for reasons of academic and professional performance.

Student participation
3.2.9 The program describes its policies and procedures specifying students' rights and responsibilities to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs.
3.2.10 The program demonstrates how it provides opportunities and encourages students to organize in their interests.

Educational Policy 3.3—Faculty
Faculty qualifications, including experience related to the program’s competencies, and an appropriate student-faculty ratio are essential for developing an educational environment that promotes, emulates, and teaches students the knowledge, values, and skills expected of professional social workers. Through their teaching, scholarship, and service—as well as their interactions with one another, administration, students, and community—the program’s faculty models the behavior and values expected of professional social workers.

Accreditation Standard 3.3—Faculty
3.3.1 The program identifies each full and part-time social work faculty member and discusses her/his qualifications, competence, expertise in social work education and practice, and years of service to the program. Faculty who teach social work practice courses have a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and at least two years of social work practice experience.
3.3.2 The program discusses how faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offerings in class and field; class size; number of students; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities. To carry out the ongoing functions of the program, the full-time equivalent faculty-to-student ratio is usually 1:25 for baccalaureate programs and 1:12 for master's programs.
B3.3.3 The baccalaureate social work program identifies no fewer than two full-time faculty assigned to the program, with full-time appointment in social work, and whose principal assignment is to the baccalaureate program. The majority and no fewer than two of the full-time faculty has either a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program, with a doctoral degree preferred, or a baccalaureate degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and a doctoral degree preferably in social work.
M3.3.3 The master's social work program identifies no fewer than six full-time faculty with master's degrees in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and whose principal assignment is to the master's program. The majority of the full-time master's social work program faculty has a master's degree in social work and a doctoral degree preferably in social work.
3.3.4 The program describes its faculty workload policy and discusses how the policy supports the achievement of institutional priorities and the program's mission and goals.
3.3.5 Faculty demonstrate ongoing professional development as teachers, scholars, and practitioners through dissemination of research and scholarship, exchanges with external constituencies such as practitioners and agencies, and through other professionally relevant creative activities that support the achievement of institutional priorities and the program’s mission and goals.
3.3.6 The program describes how its faculty models the behavior and values of the profession in the program’s educational environment.

Educational Policy 3.4—Administrative Structure
Social work faculty and administrators, based on their education, knowledge, and skills, are best suited to make decisions regarding the delivery of social work education. They exercise autonomy in designing an administrative
and leadership structure, developing curriculum, and formulating and implementing policies that support the education of competent social workers.

**Accreditation Standard 3.4—Administrative Structure**

3.4.1 The program describes its administrative structure and shows how it provides the necessary autonomy to achieve the program’s mission and goals.

3.4.2 The program describes how the social work faculty has responsibility for defining program curriculum consistent with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards and the institution’s policies.

3.4.3 The program describes how the administration and faculty of the social work program participate in formulating and implementing policies related to the recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion, and tenure of program personnel.

3.4.4 The program identifies the social work program director. Institutions with accredited BSW and MSW programs appoint a separate director for each.

**B3.4.4(a)** The program describes the BSW program director’s leadership ability through teaching, scholarship, curriculum development, administrative experience, and other academic and professional activities in social work. The program documents that the director has a master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program with a doctoral degree preferred or a baccalaureate degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and a doctoral degree, preferably in social work.

**B3.4.4(b)** The program provides documentation that the director has a full-time appointment to the social work program.

**B3.4.4(c)** The program describes the procedures for determining the program director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. To carry out the administrative functions of the program, a minimum of 25% assigned time is required at the baccalaureate level. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.

**M3.4.4(a)** The program describes the MSW program director’s leadership ability through teaching, scholarship, curriculum development, administrative experience, and other academic and professional activities in social work. The program documents that the director has a master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. In addition, it is preferred that the MSW program director have a doctoral degree, preferably in social work.

**M3.4.4(b)** The program provides documentation that the director has a full-time appointment to the social work program.

**M3.4.4(c)** The program describes the procedures for determining the program director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. To carry out the administrative functions of the program, a minimum of 50% assigned time is required at the master’s level. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.

3.4.5 The program identifies the field education director.

**3.4.5(a)** The program describes the field director’s ability to provide leadership in the field education program through practice experience, field instruction experience, and administrative and other relevant academic and professional activities in social work.

**3.4.5(b)** The program documents that the field education director has a master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and at least 2 years of postbaccalaureate or postmaster’s social work degree practice experience.

**B3.4.5(c)** The program describes the procedures for determining the field director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education. To carry out the administrative functions of the field at least 25% assigned time is required for baccalaureate programs. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.

**M3.4.5(c)** The program describes the procedures for determining the field director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education. To carry out the administrative functions of the field at least 50% assigned time is required for master’s programs. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.

**Educational Policy 3.5—Resources**

Adequate resources are fundamental to creating, maintaining, and improving an educational environment that supports the development of competent social work practitioners. Social work programs have the necessary resources to support learning and professionalization of students and program improvement.

**Accreditation Standard 3.5—Resources**
3.5.1 The program describes the procedures for budget development and administration it uses to achieve its mission and goals. The program submits the budget form to demonstrate sufficient and stable financial supports that permit program planning and faculty development.

3.5.2 The program describes how it uses resources to continuously improve the program and address challenges in the program’s context.

3.5.3 The program demonstrates sufficient support staff, other personnel, and technological resources to support itself.

3.5.4 The program submits the library form to demonstrate comprehensive library holdings and/or electronic access and other informational and educational resources necessary for achieving its mission and goals.

3.5.5 The program describes and demonstrates sufficient office and classroom space and/or computer-mediated access to achieve its mission and goals.

3.5.6 The program describes its access to assistive technology, including materials in alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print, books on tape, assistive learning systems).

4. Assessment

Educational Policy 4.0—Assessment
Assessment is an integral component of competency-based education. To evaluate the extent to which the competencies have been met, a system of assessment is central to this model of education. Data from assessment continuously inform and promote change in the explicit and implicit curriculum to enhance attainment of program competencies.

Accreditation Standard 4.0—Assessment

4.0.1 The program presents its plan to assess the attainment of its competencies. The plan specifies procedures, multiple measures, and benchmarks to assess the attainment of each of the program’s competencies (AS B2.0.3; AS M2.0.4).

4.0.2 The program provides evidence of ongoing data collection and analysis and discusses how it uses assessment data to affirm and/or make changes in the explicit and implicit curriculum to enhance student performance.

4.0.3 The program identifies any changes in the explicit and implicit curriculum based on the analysis of the assessment data.

4.0.4 The program describes how it makes its constituencies aware of its assessment outcomes.

4.0.5 The program appends the summary data for each measure used to assess the attainment of each competency for at least one academic year prior to the submission of the self-study.

Code of Ethics
of the National Association of Social Workers
Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 2008 NASW Delegate Assembly

The 2008 NASW Delegate Assembly approved the following revisions to the NASW Code of Ethics:

1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity

(c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

2.01 Respect

(a) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.
(b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals. Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues’ level of competence or to individuals’ attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

4.02 Discrimination

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

6.04 Social and Political Action

(d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

Preamble

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession’s focus on individual wellbeing in a social context and the wellbeing of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing,
supervision, consultation administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals’ needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession’s history, are the foundation of social work’s unique purpose and perspective:

- service
- social justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence.

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

**Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics**

Professional ethics are at the core of social work. The profession has an obligation to articulate its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. The *NASW Code of Ethics* sets forth these values, principles, and standards to guide social workers’ conduct. The *Code* is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve.

The *NASW Code of Ethics* serves six purposes:

1. The Code identifies core values on which social work’s mission is based.
2. The Code summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession’s core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice.
3. The Code is designed to help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
4. The Code provides ethical standards to which the general public can hold the social work profession accountable.
5. The Code socializes practitioners new to the field to social work’s mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards.
6. The Code articulates standards that the social work profession itself can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct. NASW has formal procedures to adjudicate ethics complaints filed against its members.* In subscribing to this *Code*, social workers are required to cooperate in its implementation, participate in NASW adjudication proceedings, and abide by any NASW disciplinary rulings or sanctions based on it.
The *Code* offers a set of values, principles, and standards to guide decision making and conduct when ethical issues arise. It does not provide a set of rules that prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. Specific applications of the *Code* must take into account the context in which it is being considered and the possibility of conflicts among the *Code*’s values, principles, and standards. Ethical responsibilities flow from all human relationships, from the personal and familial to the social and professional.

Further, the *NASW Code of Ethics* does not specify which values, principles, and standards are most important and ought to outweigh others in instances when they conflict. Reasonable differences of opinion can and do exist among social workers with respect to the ways in which values, ethical principles, and ethical standards should be rank ordered when they conflict. Ethical decision making in a given situation must apply the informed judgment of the individual social worker and should also consider how the issues would be judged in a peer review process where the ethical standards of the profession would be applied.

Ethical decision making is a process. There are many instances in social work where simple answers are not available to resolve complex ethical issues. Social workers should take into consideration all the values, principles, and standards in this *Code* that are relevant to any situation in which ethical judgment is warranted. Social workers’ decisions and actions should be consistent with the spirit as well as the letter of this *Code*.

In addition to this *Code*, there are many other sources of information about ethical thinking that may be useful. Social workers should consider ethical theory and principles generally, social work theory and research, laws, regulations, agency policies, and other relevant codes of ethics, recognizing that among codes of ethics social workers should consider the *NASW Code of Ethics* as their primary source. Social workers also should be aware of the impact on ethical decision making of their clients’ and their own personal values and cultural and religious beliefs and practices. They should be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly. For additional guidance social workers should consult the relevant literature on professional ethics and ethical decision making and seek appropriate consultation when faced with ethical dilemmas. This may involve consultation with an agency based or social work organization’s ethics committee, a regulatory body, knowledgeable colleagues, supervisors, or legal counsel.

Instances may arise when social workers’ ethical obligations conflict with agency policies or relevant laws or regulations. When such conflicts occur, social workers must make a responsible effort to resolve the conflict in a manner that is consistent with the values, principles, and standards expressed in this Code. If a reasonable resolution of the conflict does not appear possible, social workers should seek proper consultation before making a decision.

The *NASW Code of Ethics* is to be used by NASW and by individuals, agencies, organizations, and bodies (such as licensing and regulatory boards, professional liability insurance providers, courts of law, agency boards of directors, government agencies, and other professional groups) that choose to adopt it or use it as a frame of reference. Violation of standards in this *Code* does not automatically imply legal liability or violation of the law. Such determination can only be made in the context of legal and judicial proceedings. Alleged violations of the *Code* would be subject to a peer review process. Such processes are generally separate from legal or administrative procedures and insulated from legal review or proceedings to allow the profession to counsel and discipline its own members.

A code of ethics cannot guarantee ethical behavior. Moreover, a code of ethics cannot resolve all ethical issues or disputes or capture the richness and complexity involved in striving to make responsible choices within a moral community. Rather, a code of ethics sets forth values, ethical principles, and
ethical standards to which professionals aspire and by which their actions can be judged. Social workers’ ethical behavior should result from their personal commitment to engage in ethical practice. The *NASW Code of Ethics* reflects the commitment of all social workers to uphold the profession’s values and to act ethically. Principles and standards must be applied by individuals of good character who discern moral questions and, in good faith, seek to make reliable ethical judgments.

**Ethical Principles**

The following broad ethical principles are based on social work’s core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

**Value: Service**

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.*

Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return (pro bono service).

**Value: Social Justice**

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers challenge social injustice.*

Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers’ social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

**Value: Dignity and Worth of the Person**

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.*

Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients’ socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients’ interests and the broader society’s interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.

**Value: Importance of Human Relationships**

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.*

Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

**Value: Integrity**

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.*

Social workers are continually aware of the profession’s mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical
standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

**Value: Competence**

**Ethical Principle:** Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.

Social workers continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

**Ethical Standards**

The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all social workers. These standards concern (1) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to clients, (2) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to colleagues, (3) social workers’ ethical responsibilities in practice settings, (4) social workers’ ethical responsibilities as professionals, (5) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the social work profession, and (6) social workers’ ethical responsibilities to the broader society.

Some of the standards that follow are enforceable guidelines for professional conduct, and some are aspirational. The extent to which each standard is enforceable is a matter of professional judgment to be exercised by those responsible for reviewing alleged violations of ethical standards.

1. **SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO CLIENTS**

1.01 **Commitment to Clients**

Social workers’ primary responsibility is to promote the wellbeing of clients. In general, clients’ interests are primary. However, social workers’ responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised. (Examples include when a social worker is required by law to report that a client has abused a child or has threatened to harm self or others.)

1.02 **Self Determination**

Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Social workers may limit clients’ right to self-determination when, in the social workers’ professional judgment, clients’ actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others.

1.03 **Informed Consent**

(a) Social workers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services, limits to services because of the requirements of a third-party payer, relevant costs, reasonable alternatives, clients’ right to refuse or withdraw consent, and the time frame covered by the consent. Social workers should provide clients with an opportunity to ask questions.

(b) In instances when clients are not literate or have difficulty understanding the primary language used in the practice setting, social workers should take steps to ensure clients’ comprehension. This may include providing clients with a detailed verbal explanation or arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator whenever possible.

(c) In instances when clients lack the capacity to provide informed consent, social workers should
protect clients’ interests by seeking permission from an appropriate third party, informing clients consistent with the clients’ level of understanding. In such instances social workers should seek to ensure that the third party acts in a manner consistent with clients’ wishes and interests. Social workers should take reasonable steps to enhance such clients’ ability to give informed consent.

(d) In instances when clients are receiving services involuntarily, social workers should provide information about the nature and extent of services and about the extent of clients’ right to refuse service.

(e) Social workers who provide services via electronic media (such as computer, telephone, radio, and television) should inform recipients of the limitations and risks associated with such services.

(f) Social workers should obtain clients’ informed consent before audiotaping or videotaping clients or permitting observation of services to clients by a third party.

1.04 Competence

(a) Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.

(b) Social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques.

(c) When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps (including appropriate education, research, training, consultation, and supervision) to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from harm.

1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity

(a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

(b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients’ cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

(c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

1.06 Conflicts of Interest

(a) Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Social workers should inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients’ interests primary and protects clients’ interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients’ interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client.

(b) Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to
further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

(c) Social workers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers should take steps to protect clients and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. (Dual or multiple relationships occur when social workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.)

(d) When social workers provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), social workers should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered clients and the nature of social workers’ professional obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services. Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (for example, when a social worker is asked to testify in a child custody dispute or divorce proceedings involving clients) should clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.

1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality

(a) Social workers should respect clients’ right to privacy. Social workers should not solicit private information from clients unless it is essential to providing services or conducting social work evaluation or research. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.

(b) Social workers may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent from a client or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of a client.

(c) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that social workers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. In all instances, social workers should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose; only information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made should be revealed.

(d) Social workers should inform clients, to the extent possible, about the disclosure of confidential information and the potential consequences, when feasible before the disclosure is made. This applies whether social workers disclose confidential information on the basis of a legal requirement or client consent.

(e) Social workers should discuss with clients and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of clients’ right to confidentiality. Social workers should review with clients circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the social worker-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.

(f) When social workers provide counseling services to families, couples, or groups, social workers should seek agreement among the parties involved concerning each individual’s right to confidentiality and obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information shared by others. Social workers should inform participants in family, couples, or group counseling that social workers cannot guarantee that all participants will honor such agreements.
(g) Social workers should inform clients involved in family, couples, marital, or group counseling of the social worker’s, employer’s, and agency’s policy concerning the social worker’s disclosure of confidential information among the parties involved in the counseling.

(h) Social workers should not disclose confidential information to third-party payers unless clients have authorized such disclosure.

(i) Social workers should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Social workers should not discuss confidential information in public or semipublic areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.

(j) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients during legal proceedings to the extent permitted by law. When a court of law or other legally authorized body orders social workers to disclose confidential or privileged information without a client’s consent and such disclosure could cause harm to the client, social workers should request that the court withdraw the order or limit the order as narrowly as possible or maintain the records under seal, unavailable for public inspection.

(k) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients when responding to requests from members of the media.

(l) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients’ written and electronic records and other sensitive information. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients’ records are stored in a secure location and that clients’ records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.

(m) Social workers should take precautions to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of information transmitted to other parties through the use of computers, electronic mail, facsimile machines, telephones and telephone answering machines, and other electronic or computer technology. Disclosure of identifying information should be avoided whenever possible.

(n) Social workers should transfer or dispose of clients’ records in a manner that protects clients’ confidentiality and is consistent with state statutes governing records and social work licensure.

(o) Social workers should take reasonable precautions to protect client confidentiality in the event of the social worker’s termination of practice, incapacitation, or death.

(p) Social workers should not disclose identifying information when discussing clients for teaching or training purposes unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information.

(q) Social workers should not disclose identifying information when discussing clients with consultants unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information or there is a compelling need for such disclosure.

(r) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of deceased clients consistent with the preceding standards.

1.08 Access to Records

(a) Social workers should provide clients with reasonable access to records concerning the clients. Social workers who are concerned that clients’ access to their records could cause serious misunderstanding or harm to the client should provide assistance in interpreting the records and consultation with the client regarding the records. Social workers should limit clients’ access to their records, or portions of their records, only in exceptional circumstances when there is compelling
evidence that such access would cause serious harm to the client. Both clients’ requests and the rationale for withholding some or all of the record should be documented in clients’ files.

(b) When providing clients with access to their records, social workers should take steps to protect the confidentiality of other individuals identified or discussed in such records.

1.09 Sexual Relationships

(a) Social workers should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current clients, whether such contact is consensual or forced.

(b) Social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with clients’ relatives or other individuals with whom clients maintain a close personal relationship when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Sexual activity or sexual contact with clients’ relatives or other individuals with whom clients maintain a personal relationship has the potential to be harmful to the client and may make it difficult for the social worker and client to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Social workers—not their clients, their clients’ relatives, or other individuals with whom the client maintains a personal relationship—assume the full burden for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

(c) Social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with former clients because of the potential for harm to the client. If social workers engage in conduct contrary to this prohibition or claim that an exception to this prohibition is warranted because of extraordinary circumstances, it is social workers—not their clients—who assume the full burden of demonstrating that the former client has not been exploited, coerced, or manipulated, intentionally or unintentionally.

(d) Social workers should not provide clinical services to individuals with whom they have had a prior sexual relationship. Providing clinical services to a former sexual partner has the potential to be harmful to the individual and is likely to make it difficult for the social worker and individual to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

1.10 Physical Contact

Social workers should not engage in physical contact with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result of the contact (such as cradling or caressing clients). Social workers who engage in appropriate physical contact with clients are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern such physical contact.

1.11 Sexual Harassment

Social workers should not sexually harass clients. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, sexual solicitation, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

1.12 Derogatory Language

Social workers should not use derogatory language in their written or verbal communications to or about clients. Social workers should use accurate and respectful language in all communications to and about clients.

1.13 Payment for Services

(a) When setting fees, social workers should ensure that the fees are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the services performed. Consideration should be given to clients’ ability to pay.

(b) Social workers should avoid accepting goods or services from clients as payment for professional
services. Bartering arrangements, particularly involving services, create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in social workers’ relationships with clients. Social workers should explore and may participate in bartering only in very limited circumstances when it can be demonstrated that such arrangements are an accepted practice among professionals in the local community, considered to be essential for the provision of services, negotiated without coercion, and entered into at the client’s initiative and with the client’s informed consent. Social workers who accept goods or services from clients as payment for professional services assume the full burden of demonstrating that this arrangement will not be detrimental to the client or the professional relationship.

(c) Social workers should not solicit a private fee or other remuneration for providing services to clients who are entitled to such available services through the social workers’ employer or agency.

1.14 Clients Who Lack Decision Making Capacity

When social workers act on behalf of clients who lack the capacity to make informed decisions, social workers should take reasonable steps to safeguard the interests and rights of those clients.

1.15 Interruption of Services

Social workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, disability, or death.

1.16 Termination of Services

(a) Social workers should terminate services to clients and professional relationships with them when such services and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the clients’ needs or interests.

(b) Social workers should take reasonable steps to avoid abandoning clients who are still in need of services. Social workers should withdraw services precipitously only under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects. Social workers should assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services when necessary.

(c) Social workers in fee for service settings may terminate services to clients who are not paying an overdue balance if the financial contractual arrangements have been made clear to the client, if the client does not pose an imminent danger to self or others, and if the clinical and other consequences of the current nonpayment have been addressed and discussed with the client.

(d) Social workers should not terminate services to pursue a social, financial, or sexual relationship with a client.

(e) Social workers who anticipate the termination or interruption of services to clients should notify clients promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or continuation of services in relation to the clients’ needs and preferences.

(f) Social workers who are leaving an employment setting should inform clients of appropriate options for the continuation of services and of the benefits and risks of the options.

2. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

2.01 Respect

(a) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.
(b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals. Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues’ level of competence or to individuals’ attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.
(c) Social workers should cooperate with social work colleagues and with colleagues of other professions when such cooperation serves the wellbeing of clients.

2.02 Confidentiality

Social workers should respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions. Social workers should ensure that such colleagues understand social workers’ obligation to respect confidentiality and any exceptions related to it.

2.03 Interdisciplinary Collaboration

(a) Social workers who are members of an interdisciplinary team should participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the wellbeing of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the social work profession. Professional and ethical obligations of the interdisciplinary team as a whole and of its individual members should be clearly established.

(b) Social workers for whom a team decision raises ethical concerns should attempt to resolve the disagreement through appropriate channels. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, social workers should pursue other avenues to address their concerns consistent with client wellbeing.

2.04 Disputes Involving Colleagues

(a) Social workers should not take advantage of a dispute between a colleague and an employer to obtain a position or otherwise advance the social workers’ own interests.

(b) Social workers should not exploit clients in disputes with colleagues or engage clients in any inappropriate discussion of conflicts between social workers and their colleagues.

2.05 Consultation

(a) Social workers should seek the advice and counsel of colleagues whenever such consultation is in the best interests of clients.

(b) Social workers should keep themselves informed about colleagues’ areas of expertise and competencies. Social workers should seek consultation only from colleagues who have demonstrated knowledge, expertise, and competence related to the subject of the consultation.

(c) When consulting with colleagues about clients, social workers should disclose the least amount of information necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

2.06 Referral for Services

(a) Social workers should refer clients to other professionals when the other professionals’ specialized knowledge or expertise is needed to serve clients fully or when social workers believe that they are not being effective or making reasonable progress with clients and that additional service is required.

(b) Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should take appropriate steps to facilitate an orderly transfer of responsibility. Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should disclose, with clients’ consent, all pertinent information to the new service providers.
(c) Social workers are prohibited from giving or receiving payment for a referral when no professional service is provided by the referring social worker.

2.07 Sexual Relationships

(a) Social workers who function as supervisors or educators should not engage in sexual activities or contact with supervisees, students, trainees, or other colleagues over whom they exercise professional authority.

(b) Social workers should avoid engaging in sexual relationships with colleagues when there is potential for a conflict of interest. Social workers who become involved in, or anticipate becoming involved in, a sexual relationship with a colleague have a duty to transfer professional responsibilities, when necessary, to avoid a conflict of interest.

2.08 Sexual Harassment

Social workers should not sexually harass supervisees, students, trainees, or colleagues. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, sexual solicitation, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

2.09 Impairment of Colleagues

(a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague’s impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.

(b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague’s impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

2.10 Incompetence of Colleagues

(a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague’s incompetence should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.

(b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague is incompetent and has not taken adequate steps to address the incompetence should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

2.11 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues

(a) Social workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues.

(b) Social workers should be knowledgeable about established policies and procedures for handling concerns about colleagues’ unethical behavior. Social workers should be familiar with national, state, and local procedures for handling ethics complaints. These include policies and procedures created by NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, employers, agencies, and other professional organizations.

(c) Social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should seek resolution by discussing their concerns with the colleague when feasible and when such discussion is likely to be productive.
(d) When necessary, social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should take action through appropriate formal channels (such as contacting a state licensing board or regulatory body, an NASW committee on inquiry, or other professional ethics committees).

(e) Social workers should defend and assist colleagues who are unjustly charged with unethical conduct.

3. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRACTICE SETTINGS

3.01 Supervision and Consultation

(a) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation should have the necessary knowledge and skill to supervise or consult appropriately and should do so only within their areas of knowledge and competence.

(b) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

(c) Social workers should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with supervisees in which there is a risk of exploitation of or potential harm to the supervisee.

(d) Social workers who provide supervision should evaluate supervisees’ performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

3.02 Education and Training

(a) Social workers who function as educators, field instructors for students, or trainers should provide instruction only within their areas of knowledge and competence and should provide instruction based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession.

(b) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should evaluate students’ performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

(c) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients are routinely informed when services are being provided by students.

(d) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with students in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the student. Social work educators and field instructors are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

3.03 Performance Evaluation

Social workers who have responsibility for evaluating the performance of others should fulfill such responsibility in a fair and considerate manner and on the basis of clearly stated criteria.

3.04 Client Records

(a) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflects the services provided.

(b) Social workers should include sufficient and timely documentation in records to facilitate the delivery of services and to ensure continuity of services provided to clients in the future.

(c) Social workers’ documentation should protect clients’ privacy to the extent that is possible and appropriate and should include only information that is directly relevant to the delivery of services.
(d) Social workers should store records following the termination of services to ensure reasonable future access. Records should be maintained for the number of years required by state statutes or relevant contracts.

3.05 Billing

Social workers should establish and maintain billing practices that accurately reflect the nature and extent of services provided and that identify who provided the service in the practice setting.

3.06 Client Transfer

(a) When an individual who is receiving services from another agency or colleague contacts a social worker for services, the social worker should carefully consider the client’s needs before agreeing to provide services. To minimize possible confusion and conflict, social workers should discuss with potential clients the nature of the clients’ current relationship with other service providers and the implications, including possible benefits or risks, of entering into a relationship with a new service provider.

(b) If a new client has been served by another agency or colleague, social workers should discuss with the client whether consultation with the previous service provider is in the client’s best interest.

3.07 Administration

(a) Social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet clients’ needs.

(b) Social workers should advocate for resource allocation procedures that are open and fair. When not all clients’ needs can be met, an allocation procedure should be developed that is nondiscriminatory and based on appropriate and consistently applied principles.

(c) Social workers who are administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that adequate agency or organizational resources are available to provide appropriate staff supervision.

(d) Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment for which they are responsible is consistent with and encourages compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to eliminate any conditions in their organizations that violate, interfere with, or discourage compliance with the Code.

3.08 Continuing Education and Staff Development

Social work administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development for all staff for whom they are responsible. Continuing education and staff development should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to social work practice and ethics.

3.09 Commitments to Employers

(a) Social workers generally should adhere to commitments made to employers and employing organizations.

(b) Social workers should work to improve employing agencies’ policies and procedures and the efficiency and effectiveness of their services.

(c) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that employers are aware of social workers’
ethical obligations as set forth in the *NASW Code of Ethics* and of the implications of those obligations for social work practice.

(d) Social workers should not allow an employing organization’s policies, procedures, regulations, or administrative orders to interfere with their ethical practice of social work. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that their employing organizations’ practices are consistent with the *NASW Code of Ethics*.

(e) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organization’s work assignments and in its employment policies and practices.

(f) Social workers should accept employment or arrange student field placements only in organizations that exercise fair personnel practices.

(g) Social workers should be diligent stewards of the resources of their employing organizations, wisely conserving funds where appropriate and never misappropriating funds or using them for unintended purposes.

3.10 Labor Management Disputes

(a) Social workers may engage in organized action, including the formation of and participation in labor unions, to improve services to clients and working conditions.

(b) The actions of social workers who are involved in labor management disputes, job actions, or labor strikes should be guided by the profession’s values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Reasonable differences of opinion exist among social workers concerning their primary obligation as professionals during an actual or threatened labor strike or job action. Social workers should carefully examine relevant issues and their possible impact on clients before deciding on a course of action.

4. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS PROFESSIONALS

4.01 Competence

(a) Social workers should accept responsibility or employment only on the basis of existing competence or the intention to acquire the necessary competence.

(b) Social workers should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions. Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work. Social workers should routinely review the professional literature and participate in continuing education relevant to social work practice and social work ethics.

(c) Social workers should base practice on recognized knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics.

4.02 Discrimination

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

4.03 Private Conduct

Social workers should not permit their private conduct to interfere with their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities.
4.04 Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception

Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

4.05 Impairment

(a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

(b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

4.06 Misrepresentation

(a) Social workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and actions engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the social work profession, a professional social work organization, or the social worker's employing agency.

(b) Social workers who speak on behalf of professional social work organizations should accurately represent the official and authorized positions of the organizations.

(c) Social workers should ensure that their representations to clients, agencies, and the public of professional qualifications, credentials, education, competence, affiliations, services provided, or results to be achieved are accurate. Social workers should claim only those relevant professional credentials they actually possess and take steps to correct any inaccuracies or misrepresentations of their credentials by others.

4.07 Solicitations

(a) Social workers should not engage in uninvited solicitation of potential clients who, because of their circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence, manipulation, or coercion.

(b) Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client’s prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current clients or from other people who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

4.08 Acknowledging Credit

(a) Social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed.

(b) Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others.

5. SOCIAL WORKERS' ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

5.01 Integrity of the Profession

(a) Social workers should work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.

(b) Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through
appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.

(c) Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession. These activities may include teaching, research, consultation, service, legislative testimony, presentations in the community, and participation in their professional organizations.

(d) Social workers should contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics. Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession’s literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.

(e) Social workers should act to prevent the unauthorized and unqualified practice of social work.

5.02 Evaluation and Research

(a) Social workers should monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs, and practice interventions.

(b) Social workers should promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge.

(c) Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice.

(d) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should carefully consider possible consequences and should follow guidelines developed for the protection of evaluation and research participants. Appropriate institutional review boards should be consulted.

(e) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should obtain voluntary and written informed consent from participants, when appropriate, without any implied or actual deprivation or penalty for refusal to participate; without undue inducement to participate; and with due regard for participants’ wellbeing, privacy, and dignity. Informed consent should include information about the nature, extent, and duration of the participation requested and disclosure of the risks and benefits of participation in the research.

(f) When evaluation or research participants are incapable of giving informed consent, social workers should provide an appropriate explanation to the participants, obtain the participants’ assent to the extent they are able, and obtain written consent from an appropriate proxy.

(g) Social workers should never design or conduct evaluation or research that does not use consent procedures, such as certain forms of naturalistic observation and archival research, unless rigorous and responsible review of the research has found it to be justified because of its prospective scientific, educational, or applied value and unless equally effective alternative procedures that do not involve waiver of consent are not feasible.

(h) Social workers should inform participants of their right to withdraw from evaluation and research at any time without penalty.

(i) Social workers should take appropriate steps to ensure that participants in evaluation and research have access to appropriate supportive services.

(j) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should protect participants from unwarranted physical or mental distress, harm, danger, or deprivation.
(k) Social workers engaged in the evaluation of services should discuss collected information only for professional purposes and only with people professionally concerned with this information.

(l) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should ensure the anonymity or confidentiality of participants and of the data obtained from them. Social workers should inform participants of any limits of confidentiality, the measures that will be taken to ensure confidentiality, and when any records containing research data will be destroyed.

(m) Social workers who report evaluation and research results should protect participants’ confidentiality by omitting identifying information unless proper consent has been obtained authorizing disclosure.

(n) Social workers should report evaluation and research findings accurately. They should not fabricate or falsify results and should take steps to correct any errors later found in published data using standard publication methods.

(o) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest and dual relationships with participants, should inform participants when a real or potential conflict of interest arises, and should take steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes participants’ interests primary.

(p) Social workers should educate themselves, their students, and their colleagues about responsible research practices.

6. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BROADER SOCIETY

6.01 Social Welfare

Social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels, and the development of people, their communities, and their environments. Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and should promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice.

6.02 Public Participation

Social workers should facilitate informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.

6.03 Public Emergencies

Social workers should provide appropriate professional services in public emergencies to the greatest extent possible.

6.04 Social and Political Action

(a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.

(b) Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.
(c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.

(d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.