

Ethical Evolution:

NASW Code of Ethics Changes 2018



Language updates

Code changes use of “disability” to “ability throughout in attempt to increase inclusion and strength’s based language. For example, 1.05 social workers should, “obtain and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect of people with varying ability...”; also in 1.05(d), 2.01, 4.02, 6.04

Cultural Competence and Diversity 1.05 changed to “Cultural Awareness and Social Diversity” in response to concerns that competence assumes that a social worker can be “competent” in understanding another culture

Changes Unrelated to Technology

1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality

(a) “social workers should not solicit information from or about clients except for *compelling professional reasons*” replaces information that *is essential to providing services or conducting social work evaluation or research* to be more concise

(c) exception to confidentiality arises when “disclosure of confidential information is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client *or others*” replacing, “other identifiable persons”; some states have passed laws for school safety or terrorism that requires mandatory reporting even when you do not know the specific “target” and the change covers those scenarios; revision permits, but doesn’t require, disclosure under certain circumstances

Technological Additions

Preamble adds paragraph regarding technological use; see [2017 Practice Standards on Technology and Social Work](#)

Informed Consent 1.03

(e) encourages social workers to discuss policies about use of technology in the provision of professional services as part of the informed consent process

(f) social workers using technology in service provision should obtain client consent to use the technology at the outset and assess client capacity to provide informed consent and when utilizing technology for communication to verify client identity and location; increases safety, ability of social worker to understand environment context, and laws and regulations that apply based on client location

(g) Assess clients' ability to access and use technology especially for online and remote services; identify alternate methods of service if technology isn't appropriate

(i) Obtain client consent before electronic search on clients; ensure clients know about plans for gathering information unless need to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm

Competence 1.04

(d) Ability to use technology in a competent manner; understand the possible communication challenges and how to address challenges

(e) SW using technology must comply with the laws of both the jurisdiction where the social worker is located as well as where the client is located; this is an issue with videoconferencing or use of other distance technologies

Cultural Competence and Social Diversity 1.05

(d) SW be aware of, assess, and respond to cultural, environmental, economic, ability, linguistic and other social diversity issues that may affect delivery or use of services involving the use of technology

Conflict of Interest 1.06

- (e) Discourages SW from communicating with clients using technology for personal or non-work-related purposes.
- (f) SW should be aware that posting personal information on professional website or other media could cause boundary confusion, dual relationship or harm to clients. Exercise professional judgement.
- (g) SW should be aware that clients may discover personal information about them based on their personal affiliations and use of social media. Exercise professional judgement.
- (h) SW should avoid accepting requests from or engaging in personal relationships with clients on social networks or electronic media.

Privacy and Confidentiality 1.07

- (f) **SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT:** When counseling family, couples, groups agreement about confidential information may be exchanged in person or electronically among clients or with others outside of the formal counseling sessions.
- (n) SW advised to develop and disclose policies and procedures for notifying clients of any breach of confidential information in a timely manner.
- (o) SW advised to inform clients of unauthorized access to SW's electronic communication or storage system.
- (p) Advises SW to develop and inform clients about policies on the use of electronic technology to gather information on clients
- (q) Discourages SW from searching or gathering client information unless compelling reasons and if appropriate with informed consent
- (r) Avoid posting any identifying or confidential information about clients on professional websites or social media; even with consent, SW should help clients think through permission to post for media campaigns (consent should be fully informed)

Evaluation and Research 5.02

(f) Advises SW using technology to facilitate evaluation or research to obtain informed consent; assess client's ability to use technology and offer alternatives

Amended codes adding "technology" or "electronic" or updating language regarding technology (for example, from videotaping to video recording)

Informed Consent 1.03 (h)

Privacy and Confidentiality 1.07(f), 1.07(i), 1.07(m)

Sexual Relationship 1.09

Sexual Harassment 1.11

Derogatory Language 1.12

Interruption of Services 1.15

Sexual Relationships 2.06

Sexual Harassment 2.08

Unethical conduct of an employee 2.10

Supervision and Consultation 2.10

Supervision and Consultation 3.01

Education and Training 3.02

Client Records 3.04

Notes: