

ACTIVITY | Living by the Code: NASW and NABSW Codes of Ethics



GOAL | To understand how the Social Work Code of Ethics manifests in organization behavior.



RELEVANT FOR

- Executive
- Middle Manager
- Supervisor
- Caseworker



DESCRIPTION | Review the codes of ethics from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Social Work and National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW).

How does your organization attend to these ethics? What could be improved?

Review the worksheet with the codes of ethics.



Living by the Code: NASW and NABSW Codes of Ethics



In America today, no Black person, except the selfish or irrational, can claim neutrality in the quest for Black liberation nor fail to consider the implications of the events taking place in our society. Given the necessity for committing ourselves to the struggle for freedom, we as Black Americans practicing in the field of social welfare, set forth this statement of ideals and guiding principles.

If a sense of community awareness is a precondition to humanitarian acts, then we as Black social workers must use our knowledge of the Black community, our commitments to its self-determination, and our helping skills for the benefit of Black people as we marshal our expertise to improve the quality of life of Black people. Our activities will be guided by our Black consciousness, our determination to protect the security of the Black community, and to serve as advocates to relieve suffering of Black people by any means necessary.

Therefore, as Black social workers we commit ourselves, collectively, to the interests of our Black brethren and as individuals subscribe to the following statements:

I regard as my primary obligation the welfare of the Black individual, Black family, and Black community and will engage in action for improving social conditions.

- I give precedence to this mission over my personal interest.
- I adopt the concept of a Black extended family and embrace all Black people as my brothers and sisters, making no distinction between their destiny and my own.
- I hold myself responsible for the quality and extent of service I perform and the quality and extent of service performed by the organization or organization in which I am employed, as it relates to the Black community.
- I accept the responsibility to protect the Black community against unethical and hypocritical practice by any individual or organizations engaged in social welfare activities.
- I stand ready to supplement my paid or professional advocacy with voluntary service in the Black public interest.
- I will consciously use my skills, and my whole being as an instrument for social change, with particular attention directed to the establishment of Black social institutions.

Reference: <https://www.nabsw.org/page/CodeofEthics>



NASW Code of Ethics

On August 4, 2017, the NASW Delegate Assembly approved the most substantive revision to the [NASW Code of Ethics](#) since 1996.

The Code expresses the core values that drive the social work profession:

- Service;
- Social justice;
- Dignity and worth of the person;
- Importance of human relationships;
- Integrity; and
- Competence.

These values then translate into ethical principles that inform the conduct of the social work field as a whole.

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 to guide social work practice.
3. The Code helps 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 on 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.

The Purpose of the Code

Ethical decision making is a process. In situations when conflicting obligations arise, social workers may be faced with complex ethical dilemmas that have no simple answers. 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.

With growth in the use of communication technology in various aspects of social work practice, social workers need to be aware of the unique challenges that may arise in relation to the maintenance of confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries, professional competence, record keeping, and other ethical considerations. In general, all ethical





standards in this Code of Ethics are applicable to interactions, relationships, or communications, whether they occur in person or with the use of technology. For the purposes of this Code, “technology-assisted social work services” include any social work services that involve the use of computers, mobile or landline telephones, tablets, video technology, or other electronic or digital technologies; this includes the use of various electronic or digital platforms, such as the Internet, online social media, chat rooms, text messaging, e-mail, and emerging digital applications. Technology-assisted social work services encompass all aspects of social work practice, including psychotherapy; individual, family, or group counseling; community organization; administration; advocacy; mediation; education; supervision; research; evaluation; and other social work services. Social workers should keep apprised of emerging technological developments that may be used in social work practice and how various ethical standards apply to them.

Code Section Headings (please see the website for detail)

1. Social Workers’ Ethical Responsibilities to Clients

- 1.01 Commitment to Clients
- 1.02 Self-Determination
- 1.03 Informed Consent
- 1.04 Competence
- 1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity
- 1.06 Conflicts of Interest
- 1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality
- 1.08 Access to Records
- 1.09 Sexual Relationships
- 1.11 Sexual Harassment
- 1.12 Derogatory Language
- 1.13 Payment for Services
- 1.14 Clients Who Lack Decision-Making Capacity
- 1.15 Interruption of Services
- 1.16 Referral for Services
- 1.17 Termination of Services

2. Social Workers’ Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues

- 2.01 Respect
- 2.02 Confidentiality
- 2.03 Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- 2.04 Disputes Involving Colleagues
- 2.05 Consultation
- 2.06 Sexual Relationships



- 2.07 Sexual Harassment
- 2.08 Impairment of Colleagues
- 2.09 Incompetence of Colleagues
- 2.10 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues

3. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings

- 3.01 Supervision and Consultation
- 3.02 Education and Training
- 3.03 Performance Evaluation
- 3.04 Client Records
- 3.05 Billing
- 3.06 Client Transfer
- 3.07 Administration
- 3.08 Continuing Education and Staff Development
- 3.09 Commitments to Employers
- 3.10 Labor-Management Disputes

4. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals

- 4.01 Competence
- 4.02 Discrimination
- 4.03 Private Conduct
- 4.04 Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception
- 4.05 Impairment
- 4.06 Misrepresentation
- 4.07 Solicitations
- 4.08 Acknowledging Credit

5. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession

- 5.01 Integrity of the Profession
- 5.02 Evaluation and Research

6. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

- 6.01 Social Welfare
- 6.02 Public Participation
- 6.03 Public Emergencies
- 6.04 Social and Political Action

Reference: Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>