

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (NASW) CODE OF ETHICS

Under the NASW Code of Ethics, students studying in an MSW degree program are social work professionals and are subject to the NASW Code of Ethics. This code identifies a social worker's ethical commitments to clients as well as the social worker's responsibilities in practice settings, to the social work profession and to society. All MSW students must be knowledgeable of this Code and behave in a manner consistent with its principles. A complete copy of the NASW Code of Ethics is available at: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

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.

## Ethical Principles

The table below outlines the NASW values and ethical principles 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	Ethical Principle	Description
Service	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).
Social Justice	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.
Dignity and Worth of the Person	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.
Importance of Human Relationships	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 well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities.

Integrity	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.
Competence	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.