



Department of Social Work Standards of Professional and Ethical Behavior

The Department of Social Work at the Metropolitan State University of Denver is mandated by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to foster and evaluate professional behavioral development for all students in the social work program. The Department of Social Work also bears a responsibility to the community at large to produce fully trained professional social workers who consciously exhibit the competences, values, and skills of the profession of social work. The values of the profession are codified in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education has nine core educational competencies that social workers must master (NASW, 2017). Given this context, the Social Work Department has identified behaviors for the social work student to exhibit in the classroom, the online classroom, the field placement, in the Social Work office, through email/phone conversations, and any other interaction in a professional/academic setting. This document does not include the complete NASW Code of Ethics or the CSWE Educational Policies, however it highlights particular ethics and competencies to serve as a framework of professional and ethical behaviors to abide by while a social work student at MSU Denver. Other aspects of the NASW Code of Ethics or the CSWE Educational Policies are evaluated academically throughout the program's curriculum.

Social Work Values

Diversity

Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand 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 also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power (CSWE, EPAS 2, 2015).

Social Work students:

- 1. Demonstrate sensitivity to and respect for human diversity, with ability to relate to people who are different from oneself and a basic capacity for nonjudgmental behavior toward individuals whose values, beliefs, life experiences, and culture may be different from the student's own.*
- 2. Strive to become more open to people, ideas, and creeds that you are not familiar with and embrace diversity.*
- 3. Maintain speech free of racism, sexism, heterosexism, or stereotyping.*
- 4. Are aware of and open to understanding one's own potential for microaggressions and implicit bias*
- 5. Exhibit a willingness to serve diverse groups of persons. Demonstrate an understanding of how values and culture interact.*
- 6. Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*
- 7. Develop self-awareness of their own salient identities and how these identities influence their own experiences of power, privilege, and oppression.*

Social Justice

Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected (CSWE, EPAS 3, 2015).

Social Work students:

1. *Strive to deepen commitment to social justice for all marginalized and vulnerable populations.*
2. *Strive to deepen understanding of how institutional and personal oppression impede the experience of social justice for individuals and groups.*
3. *Strive to learn about methods of empowering populations and enhancing social justice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.*
4. *Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*

Respect

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 (NASW, Ethical Principles, 2017).

Social Work students:

1. *Treat all student peers, instructors, field agency professionals, clients, and staff with dignity and respect at all times.*
2. *Demonstrate a willingness and ability to listen to others.*
3. *Give feedback to student peers in a constructive and non-judgmental manner.*
4. *Approach conflict with student peers, your instructors and professionals in academia and in the field in a cooperative and solution-seeking manner.*
5. *Use positive and nonjudgmental language with student peers, instructors, field agency professionals, clients, staff and otherwise.*
6. *Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*

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 (NASW, Ethical Principles, 2017).

Social Work students:

1. *Comport themselves in a professional and respectful manner while in class, online, field placement, workshops or other learning environments by exhibiting behaviors such as: being respectful, mature and attentive. Avoid sleeping in class, using cell phones, passing notes, and the non-academic use of computers.*

2. *Avoid academic dishonesty.*

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Plagiarism: the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with footnotes, citations or bibliographical reference; unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; or unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators.*
- *Use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;*
- *Dependence upon the aid of unauthorized sources in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;*
- *Acquisition or possession without permission of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff;*
- *In any way giving assistance to others who are participating in any of the preceding types of behavior; or*
- *Falsifying attendance records or other official documents.*

3. *Avoid violation of the MSU Denver Student Code of Conduct*

Professional Competencies

In addition to the academic competencies outlined in each course syllabi, the social work student is expected to be thoughtful and professional when interacting and communicating in a professional or academic setting including face-to-face and online communications. This expectation extends to other members of the community whenever the student's behavior may influence the perception of others about the profession of social work or MSU Denver.

Professionalism

Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice. (CSWE, EPAS 1, 2015).

Social Work students:

1. *Respond to constructive feedback through acknowledgment and by appropriate modification of behavior.*
2. *Apply themselves in all academic and field-related pursuits with seriousness and conscientiousness, meeting all deadlines as given by instructors, field supervisors and administration.*
3. *Come to class and/or online discussion prepared and ready to participate and engage. (Examples include: coming to class or participating in discussion online having completed all required readings and assignments.)*
4. *Seek out appropriate support when having difficulties to ensure success in completing Social Work Program requirements.*
5. *Take responsibility for one's own education by utilizing tools such as advisors, faculty, and administration after having read the catalog, website, course materials and other program materials to educate oneself on minimum requirements, policies and procedures. Utilize systems of support as implemented by the*

university and department in the correct order (i.e., students with an issue in the classroom should first talk with their instructor, then assigned advisor, then program director, and escalate only when needed).

- 6. Strive to work toward greater awareness of personal issues that may impede your effectiveness with clients.*
- 7. Have ability sufficient to perform essential classroom and field-related activities. Provide documentation of reasonable requested accommodations from the MSU ACCESS Center.*
- 8. Acknowledge areas where improvement is needed. Accept and benefit from constructive feedback.*
- 9. Display a significant measure of self-awareness such that others' problems are not viewed through the prism of one's own experience.*
- 10. Understand how their online activity and presence impacts their professional reputation, the reputation of MSU Denver, and the organizations with whom they are associated.*
- 11. Properly represent oneself as a student intern in field settings and engage in ongoing supervision to ensure development and maintenance of professional behaviors. Follow all field agency policies/protocols.*
- 12. Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*

Professional Skill: Accountability

Social Work students:

- 1. Attend class and field placement (face-to-face and online), arrive on time, and return from break in a timely manner (punctuality).*
- 2. Participate in group activities and assignments at a comparable level to student peers. Complete work in a timely fashion and according to directions provided.*
- 3. Come to class prepared, with readings and other homework completed.*
- 4. Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*
- 5. Adhere to the Social Work Department Attendance Policy.*

Professional Skill: Communication

Social Work students:

- 1. Strive to practice most effective verbal and written communication skills both face-to-face, through the use of technology, and/or online as these skills are used heavily in interactions with clients and peers and also with creating client records.*
- 2. Demonstrates interpersonal skills including the ability to establish rapport and work well with others (fellow students, faculty, staff, supervisors, etc.) These include compassion, altruism, integrity and demonstration of respect for and consideration of others.*
- 3. Practice positive, constructive, respectful and professional communications skills with student peers, clients, supervisors and instructors (i.e., body language, empathy, and listening).*
- 4. Have sufficient skills in spoken and written English to understand the content presented in the program.*
- 5. Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*

Professional Skill: Confidentiality

Social Work students:

- 1. Guard any personal information that you gain about a peer or an instructor in face-to-face, online, or other environments, as strictly confidential. Maintain confidentiality on any information shared in face-to-face or online class, dyads or smaller groups within that except for instances where others report intent to harm self and/or others; abuse and/or neglect; or other mandated reporting circumstances.*
- 2. Know Colorado Mandated Reporting Laws and follow appropriate protocols. Seek supervision or support from an appropriate supervisor, advisor or instructor if you are unclear of proper protocol.*

3. *Use judgment in self-disclosing information of a very personal nature in face-to-face and/or online classroom environments or student groups. (Class time should not be used as therapy or treatment. If students feel the need to talk about issues they are struggling with on a non-professional level, they may consult with their instructor to receive a referral for counseling.)*
4. *Never use names of clients or disclose other identifying information in or outside the classroom, online, or in student groups.*
5. *Understand the benefits and risks of technology use in protecting clients and/or confidential information.*
6. *Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*

Professional Ethics

Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.

Social workers have make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context; use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations; demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, oral, written, and electronic communication; use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior. (CSWE, EPAS 1, 2015).

Social Work students:

1. *Will not use alcohol or drugs in ways that impair his/her/their ability to perform the work of the profession, or that results in compromised client care. It is the responsibility of every social work student to strive to protect the public from an impaired colleague and to assist that colleague whose capability is impaired because of alcohol or drug use.*
2. *Shall seek consultation and supervision whenever their ability to care for the client or provide adequate services to the field placement agency is inadequate because of lack of knowledge, experience, or ability.*
3. *Shall understand how his/her/their values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and past experiences affect his/her/their thinking, behavior and relationships. The student must be willing to examine and change his/her/their behavior when it interferes with his/her/their working with clients and other professionals and must be able to work effectively with others in subordinate positions as well as those in authority.*
4. *Avoid violation of the MSU Student Code of Conduct.*

Actions contrary to the Standards of Professional and Ethical Behavior will result in corrective action in a variety of ways. Examples may include: through classroom assignment feedback, advising sessions, written documentation of the event and/or engaging in the student problem resolution process.

The Department of Social Work reserves the right to terminate a student's participation in the program on the basis of professional non-suitability if the Department determines that a student's behavior has constituted a **significant** violation or **pattern of violations** of any of the Department of Social Work Standards of Professional and Ethical Behavior listed in this document. In such cases, a Performance Review will be initiated. See the department's website at www.msudenver.edu/socialwork for Performance Review procedures.

All students enrolled in social work courses are automatically held to the standards outlined in this document