

**CODE OF ETHICS  
OF THE  
SIERRA LEONE ASSOCIATION  
OF  
SOCIAL WORKERS  
(SLASW)**



**2023**

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **Section 1 - PREAMBLE**

This is the Code of Ethics of the Sierra Leone Association of Social Workers (hereinafter referred to as 'SLASW'). The reference of this document can be done by way of Chapters, Sections and Paragraphs.

1. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being 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 well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.
2. 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 responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individual needs and social problems.
3. 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.

## **SECTION 2 - CORE VALUES OF SOCIAL WORK**

1. This Core Values of SLASW Code of Ethics are a constellation that reflect 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.
2. The Core Values include:
  - i. Service
  - ii. Social Justice
  - iii. Dignity And Worth Of The Person
  - iv. Importance Of Human Relationships
  - v. Integrity
  - vi. Competence

## CHAPTER II

### SECTION 3 - PURPOSE OF THE SLASW CODE OF ETHICS

1. 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 SLASW code of Ethics set forth these value, principles and standards to guide social workers and social work students regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work or the populations they serve.
2. The SLASW Code of Ethics serves six purposes :
  - i. The code identifies core values on which social work mission is based.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. The code is designed to help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
  - iv. The code provides ethical standards to which the general public can hold the social work profession accountable.
  - v. The code socializes practitioners new to the field to social work mission, values, ethical principles and ethical standards.
  - vi. The code articulates standards that the social work profession itself can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct. SLASW has formal procedures to adjudicate ethics complaint filed against its members. In subscribing to this code, social workers are required to cooperate in its implementation, participate in SLASW adjudication, proceedings and abide by any SLASW disciplinary ruling or sanctions based on it.
3. 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 values that prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. Specific application 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 family to the social and professional.
4. Further, SLASW code of ethics does not specify which values, principles and standards are most important and ought to outweigh others in instances when they conflict.
5. 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 judgement of the individual social worker and should also consider how the issues should

be judged in a peer review process where the ethical standards of the profession would be applied.

6. 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 judgement is warranted. Social Workers' decisions and actions should be consistent with the spirit as well as the letter of this code.
7. 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 worker should consider the SLASW code of ethics as their primary source.
8. 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 belief 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, ethics committee, a regulatory body, knowledgeable colleagues, supervisors, or legal counsel.
9. 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 values, principles, and standards expressed on this code. If reasonable resolution of the conflict does not appear possible, social workers should seek proper consultation before making a decision.
10. The SLASW code of ethics is to be abided to by SLASW and by individuals, agencies, organisations, 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 as or use it as a frame of reference. Violations of standards in the 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 review or proceedings to allow the profession to counsel and discipline its own members.
11. A code of ethics cannot guarantee ethical behaviours. Moreover, a code of ethics cannot resolve all ethical issues or disputes or capture the richness and complexity involved in striving to make responsive 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 behaviour should result from their personal commitment to engage in ethical practice. The SLASW code of ethics reflects the commitment of all Social Workers to uphold the profession's values and to act ethically.

12. Principles and standards must be applied by individuals of good character who discern moral questions and in good faith seek to make reliable ethical judgements.

## CHAPTER III

### SECTION 4 - ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL WORK

1. The following broad ethical principles are based on social work core values of **SERVICE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON, IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, INTEGRITY AND COMPETENCE**. These principles as set forth deals to which all social workers should aspire.

#### i. 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]

#### ii. 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 oppressed 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.

#### iii. 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 social responsibility, self determination. Social Workers seek to enhance clients capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. 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 interest in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles and ethical standards of the profession

**iv. 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 well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

**v. 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 organization with which they are affiliated

**vi. 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 desire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **SECTION 5 - ETHICAL STANDARDS OF SOCIAL WORK**

1. 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 judgement to be exercised by those responsible for reviewing alleged violations of ethical standards.
2. The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all social workers. These standards concern:

#### **(1) SOCIAL WORKERS 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**

#### **(6) SOCIAL WORKERS ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BROADER SOCIETY**

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

### **1.1 Commitment to Clients**

Social Workers primary responsibility is to promote the well-being 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 to 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].

### **1.2 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 which, in the social workers' professional judgement, clients actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable and imminent risk to themselves or others.

### **1.3 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 settings, 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 where 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 client's 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 services.

[e] Social Workers who provide services via electronic media [such as computers, 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 audio taping or video taping clients or permitting observation of services to clients by a third party.

## **1.4 Competence**

[a] Social Workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervisee 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 recognised standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgement 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.

## **1.5 Cultural Competence And Social Diversity**

[a] Social Workers should understand culture and its functions in human behaviour and society, and 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 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, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, mental or physical disability, etc...

## **1.6 Conflicts Of Interests**

[a] Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interests that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgement. 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 worker 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.

## **1.7 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(s). 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 limitation 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 counselling services to families, couples, or groups, social workers should seek agreement among the parties involved concerning each individuals right to confidentiality and obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information shared by others. Social Workers should inform participants in family, couples, or group counselling that social workers cannot guarantee that all participants will honour such agreements.

[g] Social Workers should inform clients involved in family, couples, marital, or group counselling of the social workers, employers, and agencies, policy concerning the social workers disclosure of confidential information among the parties involved in the counselling.

[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 semi-public areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, restaurants, etc...

[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 clients, 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, electronics 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 licensior.

[o] Social Workers should take reasonable precautions to protect client confidentiality in the event of the social workers' 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 clients 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.

## **1.8 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.

## **1.9 Sexual Relationship**

[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 individual 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- assumes 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 extra-ordinary circumstances, it is social worker, 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 care 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 favours, 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 clients' initiative and with the clients 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 professional relationship.

[c] Social workers should not solicit a private fee or other remuneration for providing service 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 client 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 effort 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 clients, if the clients does not pose an imminent danger to self or others, and if the clinical and other consequences of the current non payment 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**

### **2.1 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 criticisms may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individual's attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, colour, 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 cooperation serves the well-being of the clients.

### **2.2 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.

### **2.3 Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

[a] Social Workers who are members of an interdisciplinary team should participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being 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 decisions raises ethical concerns shall 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 well-being.

### **2.4 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.

## **2.5 Consultation**

[a] Social workers should seek the advice and counsel of colleagues, whenever such consultation is in the best interest of clients.

[b] Social Workers should keep themselves informed about colleagues' areas of expertise and competence. 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 purpose of the consultation.

## **2.6 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.

## **2.7 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 relationship with a colleague have a duty to transfer professional responsibilities, when necessary, to avoid a conflict of interest.

## **2.9 Impairment Of Colleagues**

[a] Social Workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleagues' 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 colleagues' impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleagues has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, SLASW, licensing and regulatory bodies and other professional organization.

## **2.10 Incompetence Of Colleagues**

[a] Social Workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleagues' incompetence should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.

[b] Social Workers who believe that a social worker colleague is incompetent and has not taken adequate steps to address the incompetence should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, SLASW, licensing and regulatory bodies and other professional organisations.

## **2.11 Unethical Conduct Of Colleague**

[a] Social Workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose and correct unethical conduct of colleagues.

[b] Social Workers should be knowledgeable about established policies and procedures for handling concerns about colleagues unethical behaviour. Social Workers should be familiar with national and local procedures for handling ethics complaint. These include policies and procedures created by SLASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, employers, agencies, and other professional organisations.

[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, and SLASW 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**

#### **3.1 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.

#### **3.2 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 instructions 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 relationship 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

#### **3.3 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.

### **3.4 Client Records**

[a] Social Workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflect 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.

### **3.5 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.

### **3.6 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 client's 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 colleagues, social workers should discuss with the clients whether consultation with the previous service provider is in the clients best interest.

### **3.7 Administration**

[a] Social Work administrators should advocate within and outside their areas for adequate resources to meet clients need.

[b] Social Workers should advocate for resource allocation procedures that are open and fair, when not all clients need can be met, an allocation procedure should be developed that is non-discriminatory 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 SLASW code of ethics. Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to eliminate any conditions in their organization that violate, interfere with or discourage compliance with the code.

### **3.8 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 emergency development related to social work practice and ethics.

### **3.9 Commitment To Employers**

[a] Social Workers generally should adhere to commitments made to employees and employing organizations.

[b] Social Workers should work to improve employing agencies' policies and procedures and the efficiency 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 SLASW Code of Ethics and of the implications of those obligations for social work practice.

[d] Social Workers should not allow an employing organizations 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 SLASW Code of Ethics.

[e] Social Workers should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organizations work assignments and in its employment policies and practices

[f] Social Workers should accept employment or arrange student field placement 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 Labour-Management Disputes**

[a] Social Workers may engage in organized action, including the formation of and participation in labour unions, to improve services to clients and working conditions.

[b] The actions of social workers who are involved in labour management disputes, job actions or labour strikes should be guided by the profession's values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Reasonable differences of opinion exists among social workers concerning their primary obligation as professionals during an actual or threatened labour 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**

### **4.1 Competence**

[a] Social Workers should accept responsibilities or employments 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 practise 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.

### **4.2 Discrimination**

Social Workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religious or mental or physical disability.

### **4.3 Private Conduct**

Social Workers should not permit their private conduct to interfere with their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

### **4.4 Dishonesty, Fraud, And Deception**

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

### **4.5 Impairment**

[a] Social Workers should not allow their personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgement and performance or to jeopardize the best interest 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 judgement and

performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in work load, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

#### **4.6 Misrepresentation**

[a] Social Workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and action engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the social work profession, a professional social work organization, or the social worker employing agency.

[b] Social Workers who speak on behalf of professional social work organizations should accurately represent the official and authorized position of the organization.

[c] Social Workers should ensure that their representations to clients, agencies and the public of professional qualifications, credentials, education, competence, affiliation, 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.

#### **4.7 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 clients prior statement as a testimonial endorsement] from current clients or from other people who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence .

#### **4.8 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**

### **5.1 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.

### **5.2 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 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 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 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 the information.

**[l]** Social Workers engage 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 limit 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 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 issues 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**

### **6.1 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.

### **6.2 Public Participation**

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

### **6.3 Public Emergencies**

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

### **6.4 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 Republic of Sierra Leone 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, colour, sex, sexual orientation, age, mental status, political belief, religion or mental or physical disability