

# **Code of Ethics of the Korea Association of Social Workers**

## **Preamble**

Social workers, based on the principles of humanity and equality, respect the dignity and the worth of people and dedicate their lives to ensuring people's inherent right to freedom and survival. In particular, for the socio-economically vulnerable population, social workers should advocate the values of social justice, equality, freedom and democracy. Social workers work with people in need to help them enhance their social status and skills. They should also be helping to improve social institutions.

Social workers should help ensure the self-determination of individuals. They should assist them in not being treated unfairly under any circumstances. In order to accomplish these goals social workers should develop professional knowledge and skills. They should also strive to maintain their competence and integrity as professionals who respect social values. Therefore, social workers declare ethical standards. These standards should provide them with the framework to judge and evaluate and guide their behaviors concerning clients, colleagues, organizations, communities and society as a whole. They must be committed to complying with these standards.

## **Ethical Standards**

### **I. Social Workers' Basic Ethical Standards**

#### **1. Attitude of Professionals**

- 1) Social workers should maintain the dignity and qualification of professionals. They must take responsibility for the work assignments entrusted to them.
- 2) Social workers should never be discriminatory of clients for their religion, race, gender, nationality, marital condition, sexual orientation, economic status, political faith, mental or physical disability, and other individual preferences, features, or status.
- 3) Social workers, as professionals, should conduct their work assignments with diligence and fairness. They should never under any circumstances compromise their integrity when working with clients.

- 4) Social workers should dedicate themselves to practicing social justice and improving the well-being of clients. They should encourage society and the nation to create an enabling environment.
- 5) Social workers should not be subject to unjustified interventions or pressures from inside or outside organizations when fulfilling their work assignments and responsibilities.
- 6) Social workers should never for their own interest be untrue to the values and authority of the social work profession.
- 7) Social workers should actively participate in the activities of professional organizations including the Korea Association of Social Workers. They should strive to ensure social justice and promote the rights of all social workers.

## **2. Efforts to Develop Professional Expertise**

- 1) Social workers should always do their best in the development of knowledge and skills. They should utilize and disseminate each in order to provide the best services to clients.
- 2) Social workers must obtain voluntary and informed consent from clients when conducting research.
- 3) The information obtained in the process of research must be kept confidential. The clients must be protected from physical and mental harm.
- 4) Social workers must strive to develop professional competency, proficiency and currency in order to deliver the most effective services.
- 5) Social workers should actively participate in the training offered by the Korea Association of Social Workers or other agencies that share similar social work values.

## **3. Attitude towards Financial Return**

- 1) Social workers should provide services regardless of the clients' ability to pay and should never discriminate clients for this reason.
- 2) Social workers, if necessary, should set fair and reasonable fees for the services provided.
- 3) Social workers should never take financial return for their work if it is not justified.

## **II. Social Workers' Ethical Standards to Clients**

### **1. Relationship with Clients**

- 1) Social workers should always advocate the clients' rights and interests as their first priority.

- 2) Social workers should always respect the dignity of the people they provide services to. They should exert professional skills and competency to the fullest.
- 3) Social workers should help clients exercise their self-determination to the greatest extent possible, and represent their interests to the fullest extent.
- 4) Social workers should respect and protect the privacy of clients. They should always keep the information obtained in the process of practice confidential.
- 5) Social workers must recognize and respect the right to know by providing accurate and sufficient information about the scope and content of services clients would receive.
- 6) Social workers, in handling the information taken in the form of documents, pictures, computer files, etc, must inform clients of the purpose and use of the information as well as limitation of confidentiality in detail. They must also obtain their consent before disclosure.
- 7) Social workers should never exploit the relationship with clients for the sake of personal interests.
- 8) Social workers should never have sexual relationship with a client, whether such contact was consensual or forced.
- 9) Social workers should recognize clients' strengths and work with them in creating an environment for promoting social well-being.

## **2. Relationship with Colleagues' Clients**

- 1) Social workers should not create a professional relationship with clients of colleagues or their organizations without legitimate and appropriate consultation.
- 2) If required to provide services to a colleague's client, a social worker should provide the same attention to them as they do to their own clients.

## **III. Social Workers' Ethical Standards with Colleagues**

### **1. Colleague**

- 1) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and trust. Their words and deeds should never damage the status and dignity of other professionals.
- 2) Social workers should collaborate with colleagues to promote the interests and rights of the social work profession.

- 3) Social workers should facilitate the ethical and professional behavior of colleagues. They should also take measures according to all the related regulations and ethical standards in instances of a colleagues' unethical and unprofessional conduct.
- 4) Social workers should take appropriate measures to protect the interest of clients if lack of professional judgment and practice creates problems.
- 5) Social workers should take measures according to all the related regulations and ethical standards if other members of the profession behave unethically.
- 6) Social workers should recognize and understand the values and substance of the duties of colleagues in the social work profession as well as other professions. They should strive to build a mutually democratic working relationship.

## **2. Supervisor**

- 1) Supervisors should not exploit their status in order to pursue their personal interests.
- 2) Supervisors should fulfill their responsibilities with fairness according to professional standards. They should also share their evaluations with those social workers, trainees and field practice students they rate.
- 3) Social workers should respect the guidance of supervisors. Supervisors should advise social workers concerning a professional conduct.
- 4) Supervisors should never sexually or personally humiliate social workers, trainees and field practice students.

## **IV. Social Workers' Ethical Standards with Society**

- 1) Social workers should respect human rights and equality of every person. They should also lead in advocating and representing socially underprivileged people.
- 2) Social workers should actively participate in the formulation, advancement, legislation and implementation of social policy aimed at developing necessary social services.
- 3) Social workers should demand and advocate formulation, advancement, legislation and implementation of social policy aimed at enhancing social environment and social justice.
- 4) Social workers should understand the issues of community in which they work, and actively advocate the social actions process.

## **V. Social Workers' Organizational Ethical Standards**

- 1) Social workers, for the interests of clients, strive to achieve the goals of organizations by ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of services.
- 2) Social workers should respond to unjust policies in organizations by applying professional values and knowledge. They should report these policies immediately to the Committee on Social Work Ethics.
- 3) Social workers should support the employing organization by actively participating in its activities.

## **VI. Formation and Operation of the Committee on Social Work Ethics**

- 1) The Korea Association of Social Workers should form a Committee on Social Work Ethics in order to enhance the ethical practice of social work.
- 2) The Committee on Social Work Ethics should receive reports on all violation of the Code of Ethics and accordingly respond to them through a formal process.
- 3) Social workers should respect the ethical recommendation and decisions made by the Korea Association of Social Workers.

*\* The English version of the Code of Ethics of the Korea Association of Social Workers was initially translated by Soo-Jung Kim, Assistant Director of KASW. Dr. Yangcha 'Soyoung' Crabb, President of the National Association of Social Workers Nevada Chapter and Dr. Hong-Jae Park, Lecturer of the University of Auckland reviewed and modified the initial translation. (March 2012)*