

Professional Code for the Social Welfare Worker

Ethics Guidance

A signpost with a grey pole. At the top of the pole is a blue rectangular sign with the text 'Ethics Guidance' in white, italicized font. Below the sign, a blue arrow points to the right.

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This publication includes the Professional Code of Ethics for the social welfare worker. I am humbled to have the honor of presenting to you this second edition of the code on behalf of the NVMW. The first circular of the professional code and internal disciplinary code came out in 2010, when the existing professional code was updated and the internal disciplinary code was instituted. This occurred under the charge of Phorza, the former professional organization for people working in the social welfare sector.

None of the substance has changed in this second circular; however, there have been several important changes made that are important to note in this regard:

- ➔ At the request of government authorities and employers, the NVMW and what was formerly Phorza devised the Addendum to the professional code for Child and Youth Care workers in 2010 in order to supplement Professional Codes for social welfare workers and social workers respectively. This also led to updates to the disciplinary policy;
- ➔ The Phorza professional association disbanded in December of 2010; and the NVMW, whose ambition it is to expand its reach while preserving identities¹, adopted the professional code and disciplinary procedures into its policies in 2012 and is coming out with a new edition.

The professional code sets out the details of the ethics of the profession. Professional ethics covers matters pertaining to the professional code, the professional directory and disciplinary policies. In other words, it covers the tenets of a professional occupational group. The professional code also lays out the ethical guidelines that may be used to assess professionals on their conduct. It is becoming increasingly more common for individual service providers to have to address issues of conduct. The professional code can clarify how you might and will be held accountable. The professional code is a baseline standard and a form of protection!

In the years to come, NVMW hopes to branch out into a professional

association that offers protections and professional development, also for social welfare workers. The code is an important underlying part of the profession!

Afra Groen
NVMW Board Member

¹ NVMW Year Plan 2013

Purpose and function of the professional code

The professional code for social welfare workers sets out what social welfare workers advocate for, what values they feel are important in practicing their profession, what they are proud of and ways in which they may be held accountable.

Important pillars are: integrity, commitment/sincerity, a strong sense of relationships and relations, respect, confidentiality, assertiveness/self-determination. These values help shape several principles that give clarity as to how to act. The added value of this professional code rests in the fact that:

- ➡ It provides support for one's conduct as a professional;
- ➡ The professional code provides guidance, serves as a resource and allows space to make your own decisions;
- ➡ It provides a common set of guidelines that you and your colleagues can use to debate ideas and provide constructive criticism to each other;
- ➡ Affected clients and organizations can gain an idea of what they can expect from you as a social welfare worker and what they can hold you accountable for;
- ➡ It serves as a basis for disciplinary committees to assess how you operate and conduct yourself whenever complaints are received. The Supervisory Board can then use the professional code as a basis for reaching decisions with regard to the substance of the complaint.

Which occupations does this professional code cover?

The professional code applies to all professionals with educational training in Social Work for Residential Institutions, Community Development, and Child and Youth Welfare Work. It also applies to other professionals with post-secondary higher education in social work who do not have their own professional code, such as those with post-secondary degrees in Childcare, Applied Psychology, Creative Therapy, and Cultural and Social Development, who are grouped under the umbrella term social welfare workers. These include people who work as group leaders / socio-therapists, activity counselors, group leaders in afterschool childcare and supervisors who oversee social welfare workers.

Child and Youth Care Workers

Professionals with post-secondary degrees in Social Welfare Education, who operate in the child and youth care field, have been subject to the Professional Code for Child and Youth Care Workers² since 2012. Child and Youth Care Workers are typically professionals with educational training in one of the fields mentioned above – more specifically, those working in the field of child and youth care. It covers professionals regulated by the Dutch Youth Care Act and active in Juvenile Corrections and on Child Care and Protection Boards. The code for child and youth care workers is based on the code for social workers and the code for social welfare workers.

2. In the Netherlands, the term Child and Youth Care Worker means professionals with the following educational background: Post-secondary HSAO degree, including the HBO-MWD, HBO-SPH, HBO CMW, HBO Childcare, HBO-Applied Psychology (TP) and HBO Creative Therapy (CT). It covers professionals who are subject to the Dutch Youth Care Act and those active in Juvenile Corrections and on Child Care and Protection Boards.

The Professional Code and Sources

First of all, the rules of conduct in the professional code are borrowed from applicable legislation, depending on the type of work and the institution where the social welfare worker is active, or legislation from which standards of conduct may be derived. Among those are legal frameworks that are tied into the Dutch Constitution, anti-discrimination laws (i.e. the Equal Treatment Act; Wgb), privacy laws (i.e. the Personal Data Protection Act; Wpb), healthcare policy (i.e. the Social Support Act; Wmo), worker and workplace safety laws (i.e. the Occupational Safety and Health Act; Arbo), laws governing detention centers and correctional facilities (BII), and regulatory laws on medical services and treatment (WCBO). As a second source, we drew from literature that describes and standardizes the conduct expected of social welfare workers and also consulted experts. As a third source, we used input from members and colleagues employed as social welfare workers. The Professional Code for social welfare workers is separate from statutory and regulatory law, directives and organizational frameworks. Obviously these different frameworks may cause tensions.

The professional code cannot relieve or eradicate these tensions; professionals are expected to be able to work with these tensions.

Relationship Between the Professional Code and Disciplinary Policy

Compliance with the professional code is enforced by the Supervisory Board and the Board of Appeals, which both operate under the auspices of the NVMW. Anyone who is dissatisfied with the services or fears that the professional is not upholding the tenets of the professional code, may file a written complaint. The Supervisory Board handles the complaints received, evaluates on admissibility and reaches a substantiated ruling. The Board of Appeals evaluates the request of the complainant or the accused party, or assesses the correctness of the ruling from the Supervisory Board, then summons the parties to a hearing. The Board of Appeals then proceeds to rule on the appeal.

Both advisory boards are comprised of key officials such as an administrative secretary, chairperson, legal scholar and ethics scholar. It also includes other

social welfare workers who represent the core of disciplinary policies:

"Professionals are evaluated by their peers".

The professional code is the primary document used to evaluate questions and complaints. Disciplinary hearings allow professionals to be their own judges of quality in terms of their professional practices. Only those social welfare workers who are members of the NVMW professional association and/or are registered as a social welfare professional in the BAMw directory may be held accountable for their conduct through disciplinary hearings. The procedure for disciplinary hearings is rooted in a disciplinary policy³. This policy is available in digital format on www.platformagogen.nl.

³ Note: the disciplinary policy currently in force is the most recent policy of the NVMW, which can be found at www.nvmw.nl and www.platformagogen.nl. This policy is different from the one that the Phorza association published in its first edition of the Phorza Code for Social Welfare Workers (in 2010). The 2010 policy is no longer valid, since the Phorza association disbanded.

Pillars and core values of the social welfare profession

Core values are traits that belong to the soul (i.e. the heart) of a person. They shape one's perspectives, and they are considered specific strengths of persons. Core values are expressions of the Self, from which inspiration originates.

Core values cannot be learned but can be developed, however. The clearer our understanding is of our core values, the more conscious we are of how they impact our work. Social welfare workers represent the following core values in their work:

- ➔ *Social involvement:* As a social welfare worker, you perform your job with a community engagement mindset. Some people describe it as simply "working with people", while others might say it's about "wanting to contribute to a better society". You feel that everyone is entitled to a good

quality of life, and that they should be able to draw from their own perspectives to create vision for their lives, even if they are disabled, suffering from health issues, or have limited resources and are living in disadvantaged communities.

- ➔ *Empathy:* As a professional, you can empathize with clients and are capable of recognizing and valuing their qualities and talents. You treat them with respect and can adapt between different cultures, lifestyles and generations. You demonstrate cultural sensitivity. You know how to earn people's trust and sympathy and keep it in problematic situations.
- ➔ *Assertiveness:* You are sensitized to verbal and non-verbal cues in colloquial language. You have a good feel for relationships and where you fit in them. You are good at anticipating where the client's priorities lie and where you need to draw boundaries. You also have a good feel for relationships with those in leadership roles and your colleagues. You are cognizant of your own standards and values and know how to maintain boundaries.
- ➔ *Representativeness:* As a professional, you have a positive and professional attitude towards clients, colleagues and professionals from other organizations. You represent your work unit to others and know to present yourself as a professional with your own personal identity and moral ethics. You advocate for your field and are critical towards peers and organizations when it comes to upholding professional standards and quality.
- ➔ *Integrity:* As a professional, you embrace generally applicable ethical norms and adhere to the professional code. This enables clients to feel safe working with you and allows them to know that personal information they give you is in trusted hands. You are reliable in terms of living up to your agreements and you are careful about handling information from clients, the organization and third parties. When coordinating with people in other disciplines, you are able to stay true to the professional code.

The professional code is a guidance document, not a patent solution.

In the professional code, several rules of conduct have been formulated based on the core values described above. They serve as a directive. Your moral conscience is most directly challenged in practice when faced with dilemmas in your professional practice, meaning situations where you are forced to choose between multiple, potentially undesirable options. For example, this may be the case if you have to counsel on whether to remove a child from home or decide to leave the child in the care of his or her parents. In a dilemma, you have to decide between options that are unfavorable, no matter which one you choose. Both choices have their own set of drawbacks.

How can the professional code help with dilemmas?

The Code is not a recipe book that you can just pull out to look up the answer. The professional code merely states what values take priority in a situation, but it is very general and does not provide a comprehensive solution for everything. It is solely up to you as the professional to decide what course of action to take. You are the expert. You can always consult which sections of the professional code are potentially applicable to a specific situation.

It is recommended to deliberate in peer groups with colleagues or bring your dilemma to the table to get feedback in a multidisciplinary setting or at a team meeting. In many institutions, they have what are called inter-institutional consultations or an ethics committee.

As for dilemmas in your job, there are various aspects that come into play, including methodical, theoretical, and ethical aspects. They are interconnected. The professional code also states how you can approach the dilemma from an ethical perspective⁴. In addition, the questions below serve as important guidelines:

1. What exactly is the situation; what ethical aspects pose a dilemma and for whom?
2. What are your options, as a practitioner of the profession, in terms of courses of action to take in the given situation?

3. What values/principles play a role for you in this situation?
4. What are the pros and cons of these options as they apply to those involved?
5. How do you rank values and principles and rank the pros and cons? What carries the most weight?
6. Suppose I was in the client's situation. How would I want to be treated if that were the case (the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you).
7. Would I treat other clients the same way? (Principle of Equality)

⁴ More information about what the NVMW offers with respect to professional ethics, ethical dilemmas, and on the topic of "Privacy and confidentiality" can be found in a series of offerings in the online store and agenda at: www.nvmw.nl.

Reading Guide

The professional code is described in the next several pages. The introduction to the professional code consists of five parts. First, it gives an overview of basic assumptions with regard to the practice of the profession. It is then followed by four sections that cover the relationships the social welfare worker maintains.

In these relationships in particular, the skills and qualities involving ethics and moral character rise to the fore:

1. Basic assumptions regarding the practice of the profession.
2. Social welfare workers in relation to clients.
3. Social welfare workers in relation to colleagues and other
4. service providers.
5. Social welfare workers in relation to employers, leadership and institutions.
6. Social welfare workers in relation to society.

The sections of the professional code tell you what you should expect of yourself as a social welfare worker. In each article, this is formulated in phrases that start with:

"As a social welfare worker, I.....". This is followed by a more detailed description starting with the phrase: "**More specifically, that means**". This explanation contains several subsections marked by bullets. This text explains what may be expected in the section. The summaries are limited, which means you there are more opportunities to apply the professional code than just the situations mentioned.

5 In the code, the masculine pronoun is used throughout. (Of course, this is merely a matter of convenience and applies to women as well).

1. BASE ASSUMPTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION

The core values, as described in the introduction, are detailed below in concrete principles of conduct. More specifically: social involvement, expertise, cultural sensitivity, equal treatment and fairness, respect for client autonomy and representativeness are explained in more detail here.

1.1. As a social welfare worker, I promote that the client comes to be appreciated through interaction with his environment.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will adopt a "client centered" approach in my dealings with clients.
- ➡ I will remain vigilant about not allowing my expertise to be used for interests that are in conflict with the goals and objectives of my profession.
- ➡ I will only render services and deal with cases that fall within the boundaries of my expertise.

1.2. As a social welfare worker, I perform my job based on current knowledge and recent insights in the practice of the profession.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will regularly participate in professional development workshops, where possible, in accordance with terms and conditions of registration in the BAMw directory of professionals.
- ➡ I will keep up to date of professional publications.
- ➡ I will participate as needed in super/inter-institutional gatherings, for I myself am the most important tool when it comes to practicing the profession.

1.3. As a social welfare worker, I will study the cultural background and corresponding norms and values that influence the behavior of my client.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I acknowledge that the growing cultural divide demands greater cultural sensitivity on my part, as far as necessary to adequately perform my job.

1.4. As a social welfare worker, I demonstrate a willingness to help every client

on an equal basis.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, sex, gender, religion, handicap, chronic illness, world view or political affiliation.

➡ I will respect that this is how all clients, within the confines of the law, shape their own lives.

1.5. As a social welfare worker, I help stimulate a client's ability to cope independently and use that as my point of departure.

More specifically, that means:

➡ I will not take over what the client himself can handle in terms of living, working and leisure.

➡ I also will not interfere with the contributions of the client's caregiver, unless explicitly asked by the client to do so.

1.6. As a social welfare worker, I make sure that I conduct myself both professionally and privately in a way that is suitable to the practice of the profession and that builds trust in the profession.

1.7. As a social welfare worker, I take personal responsibility for my own professional conduct.

More specifically, that means:

➡ I will be prepared to provide justification for my actions.

➡ I will take personal responsibility and not pass blame for my actions onto other colleagues.

2. SOCIAL WELFARE WORKERS IN RELATION TO THE CLIENT

Self-determination is an important value in people's lives, especially in the care sector where people become reliant on help from professionals for their problems. The social welfare worker shall never abuse that dependency to diminish the personal responsibility of clients, for instance when working with mentally challenged people or elders with dementia. Providing information, talking things over and requesting permission are important skills in showing respect for the client's ability to take personal responsibility.

2.1. As a social welfare worker, I show respect for a client's identity and own ability to take personal responsibility.

More specifically, that means:

➡ When I provide care to the client, I follow principles that make a good care worker and hold myself accountable for the duties and responsibilities required of me by this professional code and by professional standards applicable to the social welfare worker.

2.2. As a social welfare worker, I provide my services to the client in the context of a professional relationship.

More specifically, that means:

➡ I will use plain language to explain to the client, in advance, what the goals and risks are that come with the services I intend to offer, and I will inform him of alternative options.

➡ I will explain the cost of the services to the client and make him aware of potential ways to have the costs reimbursed.

➡ I will inform the client of his rights: the right to protection of personal privacy, the right to view and access a copy of his records, and the right to have complaints addressed.

➡ I will be absolutely certain the client has understood the information provided to him and will allow sufficient room for asking questions and refusing the services offered.

2.3. As a social welfare worker, I talk things over with the client when devising a treatment plan or a service plan or activity plan, and I request their permission to follow through.

More specifically, that means:

➡ I will not begin implementing the plan without permission from the client, unless I am working within a mandatory framework (see 2.10).

➡ I will consult with the client during the time when the plan is being carried out.

2.4. As a social welfare worker, I consult with the client's representative if the client is incapable or not fully capable of articulating what he wants for himself.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will first try to consult with the client himself.
- ➡ I will reach out to the legal representative if that consultation is unsatisfactory.
- ➡ I will get immediate family or next of kin involved in the discussions if there is no legal representative at all.

2.5. As a social welfare worker, I make efforts to build and maintain a good work relationship with the client.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will show respect for the sexual identity of the client and refrain from making sexual advances or sexually suggestive remarks.
- ➡ I will maintain solely a work relationship with the client and avoid mixing this with friendship or a love relationship, and I certainly will not become sexually involved with the client.
- ➡ I will end my work relationship with the client if any of these relationships ever threaten to develop, and I will make sure that a colleague takes up the services in my place.
- ➡ I will not accept money or gifts from a client that are anything more than a symbolic gesture of thanks.

2.6. As a social welfare worker, I refrain from abusing my power with respect to the client

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will not abuse the state of dependency that the client is in.
- ➡ I will remain vigilant in maintaining a balanced and respectful relationship with the client in situations that involve coercion, urgency or care that

involves "interfering".

2.7. As a social welfare worker, I make it clear to the client when I am unable to fulfill his wishes.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will be cognizant of the boundaries of my field of expertise.
- ➡ I will consult with the client as to how his needs may be met through some other means.
- ➡ I will help put the client in touch with another service provider, if necessary.

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2. SOCIAL WELFARE WORKERS IN RELATION TO THE CLIENT

2.8. As a social welfare worker, I will learn and make efforts to prevent outbursts of aggression of clients and to address such situations with the client.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will make it clear to clients who see fit to show aggression that these types of expression, whether verbal or gestured, are unacceptable.
- ➡ I will point out potentially adverse consequences to the client, as it regards the continuation of care being provided.

2.9. As a social welfare worker, I will work to implement policies in my institution that are designed for preventing and reacting to the state of aggression that clients openly express.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will make a conscious effort to develop an institutional policy for dealing with aggression.
- ➡ As a social welfare worker, I will report acts of aggression from clients to the supervisor and will urge that the institution respond to the client's actions accordingly; I will also urge to get police or the justice system involved in the most severe of cases.

2.10. As a social welfare worker, I will employ the use of coercive and restrictive measures within my power under the law, such as seclusion, separation, isolation, punishment, manual restraint or physical restraint, only as a last resort, and use them only as a means of preventing the client from being endangered or causing harm to himself or others, as far as allowable according to guidance applicable within the institution.

Confidentiality

Respect for privacy, intimacy and sexuality is an important value for the social welfare worker to have. Privacy is the personal freedom of the client, i.e. the opportunity to find solitude and be let alone. Privacy refers to the intimacy of your own body or the intimacy of your own space. Privacy may also deal with the verbal, written or digital exchange of information between the clients and the workers themselves.

2.11. As a social welfare worker, I will handle information about the client with care.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will not provide information about the client to others, unless I have procured consent from the client in that regard.

- ➡ I will not divulge any information disclosed to me or learned in private, in which case I understand that such matters are protected under privileges of confidentiality.
- ➡ I will notify the client in advance if I need to share information about the client with other professionals providing the same services to the client, insofar as necessary for the services rendered to be successful.
- ➡ I will not presume to be absolved of any duty of confidentiality, solely due to having obtained consent from the client. Confidentiality serves not only the public interest but also the interest of the profession.
- ➡ I have no obligation to remain silent in exceptional cases if I find there is a conflict between my duty of confidentiality and my duty to prevent severe harm from being caused to the client or to others.
- ➡ I will furnish personal information to a client's legal representative(s) without informed consent, when a client has yet to reach the age of 16 or needs to be deemed unable to give informed consent. Information will be withheld from legal representative(s) if, in my assessment as a social welfare worker, the provision thereof would conflict with compelling interests of the client.

2.12. As a social welfare worker, I will respect the privacy of the client.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will not enter unannounced into any room or space where the client is situated.
- ➡ I will be sure to conduct personal conversations with the client in a space outside of others' range of hearing.
- ➡ I will respect the client's personal properties.

2.13. As a social welfare worker, I will document information from the client in his (digital) records in a responsible manner.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will document all the information in the client's records that is important to providing the services.
- ➡ I will describe the information without projecting any personal bias into the description and will make sure it is professional and factual in nature.
- ➡ I will only document diagnoses if they are formed by an authorized specialist and will mention the name of the person and date of the diagnosis.
- ➡ I will document information only if it has been discussed thoroughly with the client. If that is (still) not possible and documentation is desired, then it will be expressly mentioned that this has yet to be discussed with the client.

2. SOCIAL WELFARE WORKERS IN RELATION TO THE CLIENT

- ➡ I will make sure that information is not accessible to unauthorized parties.
- ➡ I will point out the option to the client or his representative to view and access records on the client and receive a copy of the information contained on file.
- ➡ I will update factual personal information about the client, if the client or his representative so requests.

Social welfare work in the child and youth care sector

As a social welfare worker I am faced with dilemmas in the child and youth care sector, dilemmas that force me to weigh different values against each other. For example: advocating for the independence of a minor versus the concern for his or her safety. There are always multiple responsibilities to be addressed, including those of the parents and those of minors. Risks are sometimes difficult to estimate. On the one hand, I want to work based on the demand for services and the client(s)' needs; on the other hand, I am obliged to take action based on legal requirements or place clients under supervision and intervene in situations. It is often difficult to find the right balance between how much I need to get involved versus keeping my distance in order to set clear, professional boundaries.

2.14. As a social welfare worker in the child and youth care sector, I respect the position and the primary responsibility of parents to raise the child and respect the growing independence of the minor.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ Both the parent and the minor are clients.
- ➡ I will continue to respect the parent's role as a mother or father and will operate within the law as much as possible to find ways to help shape the parenting role, if the parental rights are ever restricted in any way by the courts.

2.15. As a social welfare worker, I consult in the area of parenting support, either voluntarily or when compelled by courts as it relates to both the parents and the minor to whom professional help can be offered.

More specifically, this means:

- ➡ I will continue to respect the parents' role as mother and father if courts decide to limit their parental rights by way of placing children under

- supervision or if children are taken away or placed in someone else's care.
- ➡ I will encourage parents and minors to actively cooperate when I engage in efforts to better support them and improve the situation, so that professional help can be terminated..

- ➡ Within the standards and values of my profession, I will respect differences in standards and values and ways of interacting with the parents, as long as their approach is not opposed to the interests of the minor.

2.16. As a social welfare worker in the child and youth care sector, I will take the age of the minor into account when performing my duties.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ If a client is under age 12, I will turn to the legal representatives of the client in order for the client to exercise his rights.
- ➡ If a client is age 16 or older, I will turn to the client directly in order for him to exercise his client rights.
- ➡ If a client is between 12 and 16 years old, I will approach both the client and the legal representatives together in order for the client to exercise his rights.
- ➡ When the client is under the age of 12, I will request permission from his legal representative or from my client over age 12 before I provide personal information to another party. I will explain why and to whom the information is being given.
- ➡ If a client is age 16 or older, I will turn to the client directly before I provide information to another party. I will explain why and to whom the information is being given.
- ➡ If a client is between 12 and 16 years old, I will approach both the client and the legal representatives together before I provide personal information to another party. I will explain why and to whom the information is being given.

2.17. As a social welfare worker, I will discuss any suspicions of the client's involvement in child abuse, child pornography or domestic violence with the client and other potential parties involved.

More specifically, this means:

- ➡ I will try to obtain clarity about my suspicions in consultation with my client.
- ➡ If my suspicions are not eased, I will report them to the Advice and Reporting Center for Child Abuse and Neglect (AMK) or to the Advice and Support Center for Domestic Violence (ASHG), even if I do not obtain permission from my client or his legal representatives to report this.
- ➡ I will consult with an expert colleague or a supervisor on whether to make such a report, preferably based on instructions applicable in the institution for making such reports.

2. SOCIAL WELFARE WORKERS IN RELATION TO THE CLIENT

Social welfare work in the activities sector.

Also in the activities sector, I may be faced with dilemmas as a social welfare worker, such as finding a balance between the interests of the individual versus that of the group. I must divide my time and energy wisely. Another dilemma is weighing between letting someone function independently versus overprotecting them. Tension occurs in the field of activities and work between productivity, on the one hand, and social engagement and comfort, on the other hand. Work and activities are ways to be socially engaged optimally, even if this is not always desired by society, such as when people with mental disabilities are working in a store or restaurant.

2.18. As a social welfare worker, I will make sure that the activities offered are adjusted to suit of client(s)' needs.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will develop an activities plan together with the client.
- ➡ I am knowledgeable enough to justify how this will contribute positively to

the guidance plan.

- ➡ I will find a balance between the agreed plan and the ever-changing client needs.
- ➡ I will find a good balance between doing the work myself and involving others.
- ➡ When it is difficult to communicate with the client, I will continue to seek ways to get clarification on the needs of the client.
- ➡ I will refrain from activities that only serve the personal interest of the professional.

2.19. As a social welfare worker, I will work in the interest of my clients' safety.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will take the necessary actions to avoid any harmful consequences or potential hazards posed by equipment or tools.
- ➡ I will adhere to laws prescribed in the Dutch Occupational Safety and Health Act.
- ➡ I will seek a balance between encouraging versus directing behavior and gauging the safety risks involved.

2.20. As a social welfare worker, I will advocate that the client be as socially engaged as possible.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will encourage the client to be as socially engaged as possible through paid and unpaid work.

Why collaborate? Collaboration is necessary in order to provide optimum services to clients. Providing quality starts with collaboration. That is the key ethical reason behind mutual consultations and exchanging information and results. Collegiality is the concept of implicit solidarity between peers in the profession. As a social welfare worker, you have a good sense of mutual relationships. In addition to that, you represent your own work unit to colleagues and other service providers. You advocate for your own field and are critical towards professional peers when it comes to maintaining professional standards and quality.

3.1 As a social welfare worker, I will collaborate with colleagues to provide optimum services to the client.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will share my expertise, experience, and vision with other professional peers involved.
- ➡ I will make myself available to having open discussions and engaging in shared decision-making with colleagues.

3.2 As a social welfare worker, I will contribute to multi-disciplinary consultations with the goal of providing good services.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will show respect for the specific contributions made by other disciplines.
- ➡ I will try to resolve differences of opinion in a constructive and respectful manner.
- ➡ I will include confidential information about the client only as far as necessary to provide good services.
- ➡ I can count on the fact that the multi-disciplinary team knows they are bound to principles of confidentiality.

3.3 As a social welfare worker, I am prepared to collaborate with interns and volunteers.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will consult with them so that the work is delegated to them that best suits them.

- ➡ I will make sure that the quality of the services provided continues to meet the standards of the institution.
- ➡ I will be sure to provide a safe work/learning environment.
- ➡ I will give counseling on how to develop a good professional attitude and will teach them to use the professional code as a guidance document.
- ➡ I will remain ultimately responsible for their work.

3.4 As a social welfare worker, I am prepared to present my own ideas for critical observation and discussion by professional peers.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will have the courage to place myself in vulnerable positions.
- ➡ I will be assertive in setting boundaries for my colleagues.
- ➡ I will not express critique on colleagues to the clients, but rather will discuss my concerns directly with colleagues.
- ➡ I will shield the client from any unethical or incompetent services that colleagues provide and will address them on these issues.
- ➡ I will contact my supervisor if an unsatisfactory solution is reached.

3.5 As a social welfare worker, I am capable of addressing professionals from other disciplines and of speaking to their responsibilities in a constructive manner, and I am open to receiving feedback from others as well.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will share the responsibility for the performance of the services with other professionals and will precisely state what I am accountable for.
- ➡ I will immediately discuss barriers in collaborative efforts that could be disadvantageous to the client.

3.6 If I suspect, as a social welfare worker, that the interests of a client and/or the trust in the profession could be severely impaired by a colleague in the same institution, then I will discuss it with the colleague and/or other specialists in the field. If that does not lead to a satisfactory solution, then I will report it to a member of the leadership or to the board of directors of the institution.

Most of the interaction between the social welfare worker and the clients takes place face to face. Often, less attention is paid to the fact that this interaction is embedded within a larger organizational structure. Nonetheless, the environment and the institution or organization play a major role in all the networks. The social welfare worker advocates for a values-based organization, i.e. an organization that is conscious of the values and standards that make it possible to provide good services. The values and standards come to the fore in the policy vision, the staff policy, friction between commerciality and providing good services, ethics policy and the institutional code, space for inter-collegial consultation / inter-institutional collaboration, and dealing with complaints.

4.1 As a social welfare worker, I will follow the institution's policy in my work.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will accept the organization as the framework for my practice of the profession.
- ➡ I will properly inform myself whether the efforts of experts are in agreement with the goals and objectives of my profession.

4.2 As a social welfare worker, I will see to it that the enforcement of the policy agrees with the standards of quality from my professional code.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will notify the leadership of any friction between the policy instituted and the impact it may have on the clients.
- ➡ I will make it known to the leadership that enforcement of the policy cannot compel me to violate my professional code.

4.3 As a social welfare worker, I will provide data and information to the leadership for the policy to be made and am prepared to submit justification about my professional conduct.

4.4 As a social welfare worker in a supervisory role in the institution, I will regularly evaluate my work with my colleagues.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will place substantial value on mutual consultations to assess the quality of the services provided.

4.5 As a social welfare worker, I am jointly responsible for guaranteeing that the quality of the institution's services are adequate.

More specifically, that means:

- ➔ I will provide critique to colleagues and the leadership when quality is inadequate.
- ➔ I will always remain prepared to guarantee the provision of services in times of union actions, work disruptions or strikes.



Social welfare workers advocate for a society in which people have the right to a good quality of life, even if they are disabled, ill, or living in a disadvantaged situation. They want to be socially engaged in this type of work as an professional group, as an institution/organization and as individual professionals. They are conscious of the fact that society is strongly geared towards commercial success and quick fixes, despite the fact that society does not always cater to those who are unable to keep up the pace, such as people who are mentally, physically or socially challenged. Social welfare workers are the most obvious professional group to intervene in society, due to their interest in preserving the quality of life and their participation in the community in terms of living, work and leisure.

5.1 As a social welfare worker, I support the activities of the professional group to create conditions for the profession to be practiced properly.

More specifically, that means:

- ➡ I will assist in promotional campaigns to improve the image of the profession.
- ➡ I will support the professional association to improve specific aspects of the job through research, publication and promotional campaigns.
- ➡ I will support the creation of fair, socio-economic labor conditions for the occupational group.
- ➡ I will make way for the growth and development of the occupation.

5.2 As a social welfare worker, I support community activities that are focused on the emancipation of mentally, physically, and socially challenged people.

More specifically, this means:

- ➡ I will assist in studies that target these goals.
- ➡ I will assist with providing education and counseling in this area using my professional expertise.

About the Dutch Association of Social Workers/NVMW

The NVMW is *the* platform and *the* network for over 4000 professionals working in the field. As a representative professional association that is visible in the community, the NVMW has been looking after the joint interests of professionals since 1946. Moreover, the NVMW guarantees the quality of the profession and makes it possible for knowledge to be exchanged. The NVMW represents all sectors of the social work profession. Members adhere to the professional code and are subject to being assessed on that basis.

Professional Code

If you become a member of the NVMW, you subscribe to the Professional Code for Social Welfare Workers, and you are subject to disciplinary procedures that hold you accountable for your professional conduct. That makes your work for clients, employers and collaboration partners transparent and allows it to be regulated.

In addition to the Professional Code for the Social Welfare Worker, membership to the NVMW offers much more:

- ➡ Advice/helpdesk for questions about the work(sector) and support from experienced staff;
- ➡ Post notices and job openings on the website for free.
- ➡ Access to the right key persons, links and information sources;
- ➡ Network with over 4000 workers;
- ➡ Access to private LinkedIn groups online for each work sector.
- ➡ Access to the private section of the website (i.e. the member portal), which includes a library, web records, frequently asked questions, links, online brochures and more.
- ➡ Free subscription to Social Work magazine;
- ➡ Access to online articles from Social Work magazine via Social Work Online;
- ➡ Interesting discounts of up to 50% on academic seminars, conventions and publications;
- ➡ Receive the extended version of the NVMW newsletter, full of activities and current news.

Note: former members of Phorza are able to join at a large discount. Go to <http://www.nvmw.nl/professionals/contributie-inzien.html> to view the fees for membership.

Job Groups

Members are active in job groups that include topics like job descriptions and skills development particular to specific work sectors. Members may also participate in regional networks that organize seminars and forums, in partnership with colleges and universities of applied sciences. The NVMW works closely with branch associations, colleges and universities of applied sciences, educational institutes, knowledge institutes, lecturers, professors, employers and other special interests and professional associations.

Become a member

Benefit from our knowledge, experience, publications, training sessions and products, and visit

<http://www.nvmw.nl/lid-worden.html> to become a member.

Contact:

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About Platform Agogen

Platform Agogen is made possible, in part, by the NVMW. The goal is to provide a national platform to professionals in social work, including those who are involved in providing special needs programs related to social work. The goal is also to make it easier for these professionals to connect with one another. This is more important than ever now, especially in an age where professionals are dealing with all sorts of developments in terms of meetings in the social domain.

Share questions, solutions, information and ambitions with each other, and encourage discussion. This platform offers the opportunity to contribute to core aspects that help to develop your profession. There is also the opportunity for representing the interests of the profession.

The opinions of professionals via Platform Agogen may be used to form policies that can be discussed in The Hague. Platform Agogen serves to facilitate the exchange of ideas, keep people informed, encourage participation, and represent the interests of the profession. More information is available at www.platformagogen.nl.

What will your contribution be?

Become a participant and/or member

Even though it was founded by the NVMW, Platform Agogen is geared towards professionals whose jobs deal with clients who continue to lose their independence (elders) and/or those who lose sight of context for their lives. This may also involve clients who are unable to be fully independent (e.g. people who are mentally challenged). For professionals working or involved in the Child and Youth Care sector, please head over to Platform Jeugd (www.platformjeugd.com).

The NVMW, as a professional association, offers the capacity to discipline members and provides conference rooms and facilities for activities within the Platform. Go to the Platform Agogen group on LinkedIn to become a direct

participant at no charge. Otherwise, follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/platformagogen>.

Of course, you would be supporting Platform Agogen even more by becoming a member of the NVMW. Benefit from our knowledge, experience, publications, training sessions and products of our professional association, and surf to www.platformagogen.nl to become a member.

- ➡ ***"The professional code to us as social welfare workers is like the Ten Commandments."***
- ➡ ***"The code is like the 'skeleton of the body'. You don't see it, but it's definitely there."***
- ➡ ***"If you first read this, you may wonder what the point is, until you discover just how beneficial it is for you. That makes it a fantastic document!"***
- ➡ ***"The code enables you to take yourself seriously."***
- ➡ ***"The code is the foundation upon which your profession is built."***



dutch association of social workers