ETHICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Avoiding Missteps with Technology

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Objectives

- To become familiar with changes to the NASW Code of Ethics
- Develop sound ethical practices when utilizing technology
- Utilize up to date standards for ethical social work practice
- To protect clients from the harm of technology as it relates to social work practice
Technology in Service Delivery

- E-Mail (Private, Company)
- Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Reddit, Flickr)
- Blogs (Personal, Professional)
- Message Boards
- Texting
- Instant Messaging
Technology in Service Delivery

- Video Chat (Skype)
- Telehealth
- Online Therapy Services
  - talkspace
  - betterhelp
  - Online-Therapy.com
  - Regain
  - TeenCounseling.com
  - Others
- Other Technology????
Changing Service Delivery

From this

To this

From this

To This

From This

To This

From This

To This
Critical Issues with Technology

- Technologies are powerful but fragile
- Crucial information can be lost, intercepted or stolen
- Not all Web sites providing information are reliable
- Service providers can easily misrepresent themselves and their credentials online
- Confidentiality in an electronic medium can quickly evaporate
- Jurisdiction, liability and malpractice issues blur when state lines and national boundaries are crossed electronically
- Numerous digital divides can ruin access and success
- Clients and social workers alike may have unrealistic expectations for what a technology can actually provide
Ethical Considerations in Using Technology in Social Work

- The ease at professional and personal boundaries can become blurred through the use of technology
- Ethical principals involved in social work and social media
  - Confidentiality
  - Multiple / Dual Relationships
  - Testimonials
  - Informed Consent
  - Minimalizing Intrusions on Privacy
  - Initializing Professional Relationships
  - Documentation and Maintaining Records
NASW Code of Ethics
Changes to the NASW Code of Ethics

- On August 4, 2017, the NASW Delegate Assembly approved the most substantive revision to the NASW Code of Ethics since 1996.
  - Code of Ethics
  - Code of Ethics with highlighted changes
- Many Social Workers feel that the Code of Ethics is too “vague”
  - Remember that the Code covers multiple levels of practice and allows some room for adjustment based on the context of the situation (on some areas)
- NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice were developed as a guide
Sections Revised – Quick View

- The Purpose of the Code
- 1.03 Informed Consent
- 1.04 Competence
- 1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity
- 1.06 Conflicts of Interest
- 1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality
- 1.08 Access to Records
- 1.09 Sexual Relationships
- 1.11 Sexual Harassment
- 1.15 Interruption of Services
- 1.16 Referral for Services
- 2.01 Respect
- 2.06 Sexual Relationships
- 2.07 Sexual Harassment
- 2.10 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues
- 3.01 Supervision and Consultation
- 3.02 Education and Training
- 3.04 Client Records
- 5.02 Evaluation and Research
- 6.04 Social and Political Action
Purpose of the code

With growth in the use of communication technology in various aspects of social work practice, social workers need to be aware of the unique challenges that may arise in relation to the maintenance of confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries, professional competence, record keeping, and other ethical considerations.

In general, all ethical standards in this *Code of Ethics* are applicable to interactions, relationships, or communications whether they occur in person or with the use of technology.

For the purposes of this *Code*, **technology-assisted social work services include any social work services that involve the use of computers, mobile or landline telephones, tablets, video technology, or other electronic or digital technologies; this includes the use of various electronic or digital platforms, such as the Internet, online social media, chat rooms, text messaging, e-mail, and emerging digital applications.**

**Technology-assisted social work services encompass all aspects of social work practice, including psychotherapy; individual, family, or group counseling; community organization; administration; advocacy; mediation; education; supervision; research; evaluation; and other social work services.** Social workers should keep apprised of emerging technological developments that may be used in social work practice and how various ethical standards apply to them.
Laws and Guidelines

- Guidelines
  - National
  - Association of Marital and Family Therapy Guidelines
  - American Psychological Association Telepsychology Guidelines
    - [https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology](https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology)
  - NASW
    - [https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Legal/HIPAA-Help-For-Social-Workers/Telemental-Health](https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Legal/HIPAA-Help-For-Social-Workers/Telemental-Health)
  - NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice

- Federal Laws
Laws and Guidelines

- Guidelines
  - State
    - WV Board of Social Work
      - https://www.wvsocialworkboard.org/
    - WV Board of Examiners of Psychologists
    - WV Board of Examiners in Counseling
      - http://wvbec.org/distancecounseling.html
  - State Law
    - http://www.wvlegislature.gov/WVCODE/ChapterEntire.cfm?chap=30&art=1&section=26#1
Site has several categories with questions and responses
- Informed Consent
- HIPAA
- Licensing
- Records
- Teletherapy
- Misc

https://naswassurance.org/frequently-asked-questions/teletherapy-faqs/
NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice

- NASW – National Association of Social Workers
- ASWB – Association of Social Work Boards
- CSWE – Council on Social Work Education
- CSWA – Clinical Social Work Association

NASW partnered with ASWB, CSWE, and CSWA to develop a uniform set of technology standards for professional social workers to use as a guide in their practice. Reports was released after comment period in 2016.

- Full report can be viewed at: https://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards_FINAL_POSTING.pdf
NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice

- Standards are divided into four main sections and address social workers’ use of electronic technology to:
  
  1. Provide information to the public
  2. Design and deliver services
  3. Gather, manage, store, and access information about clients
  4. Educate and supervise social workers
Section 1: Provision of Information to the Public

Standard 1.01: Ethics and Values
Standard 1.02: Representation of Self and Accuracy of Information
Standard 1.01: Ethics and Values

When social workers use technology to provide information to the public, they shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the information is accurate, respectful, and consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

■ Interpretation

When communicating with the public using Web sites, blogs, social media, or other forms of electronic communication, social workers should make every effort to ensure that the information reflects the values, ethics, and mission of the profession. Social workers should consult relevant standards in the NASW Code of Ethics for guidance (especially related to competence; conflicts of interest; privacy and confidentiality; respect; dishonesty, fraud, and deception; misrepresentation; solicitations; private conduct; and acknowledging credit).
“Social workers should stick to their professional standards and realize people are always trackable,” cautions Joe Caruso, CEO of New York-based Global Digital Forensics, an international consulting firm. “People who blog anonymously have a false feeling of security, as do those on Facebook, Twitter, and message boards.” Subpoenaed accounts, he says, “can be tracked back to the poster.” Nor is it hard to imagine a day when a gifted cryptogeek manages to crack the code of a major blog-hosting site and render the entire blogosphere transparent. (Robb, 2011)
Standard 1.02: Representation of Self and Accuracy of Information

When social workers use technology to provide information to the public, they shall take reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information they disseminate.

- Interpretation

Social workers should post information from trustworthy sources, having ensured the accuracy and appropriateness of the material. They should advertise only those electronic services they are licensed or certified and trained to provide in their areas of competence. Social workers should periodically review information posted online by themselves or other parties to ensure that their professional credentials and other information are accurately portrayed. Social workers should make reasonable effort to correct inaccuracies.
Section 2: Designing and Delivering Services

Standard 2.01: Ethical Use of Technology to Deliver Social Work Services
Standard 2.02: Services Requiring Licensure or Other Forms of Accreditation
Standard 2.03: Laws That Govern Provision of Social Work Services
Standard 2.04: Informed Consent: Discussing the Benefits and Risks of Providing Electronic Social Work Services
Standard 2.05: Assessing Clients’ Relationships with Technology
Standard 2.06: Competence: Knowledge and Skills Required When Using Technology to Provide Services
Standard 2.07: Confidentiality and the Use of Technology
Standard 2.08: Electronic Payments and Claims
Standard 2.09: Maintaining Professional Boundaries
Standard 2.10: Social Media Policy
Standard 2.01: Ethical Use of Technology to Deliver Social Work Services

When providing services to individuals, families, or groups using technology, social workers shall follow the NASW Code of Ethics just as they would when providing services to clients in person.

- Interpretation

  When using technology to provide services, practitioner competence and the well-being of the client remain primary. Social workers who use technology to provide services should evaluate their ability to:

  Assess the relative benefits and risks of providing social work services using technology

  Examples: in-person services may be necessary when: clients pose a significant risk of self-harm or injurious behavior, are cognitively impaired, require sustained support by a social worker with whom they have an ongoing professional relationship, or are in crisis. (How do you locate the client if they are on a mobile device?)
Standard 2.01: Ethical Use of Technology to Deliver Social Work Services

Reasonably ensure that electronic social work services can be kept confidential.

Example: The information provided by the client should only be accessible by those who require access and that the host of the server used for electronic communication agrees to abide by the privacy policies of the social worker.

Reasonably ensure that they maintain clear professional boundaries.

Example: Social workers should be mindful of boundary confusion that may result if they disclose personal information about themselves or others in an online setting to which clients have access.
Standard 2.01: Ethical Use of Technology to Deliver Social Work Services

Confirm the identity of the client to whom services are provided electronically at the onset of each contact with the client.

Examples include confirming a client’s online consent with a telephone call; providing the client with a password, passcode, or image that is specifically for the client’s use when providing consent electronically.

How are you sure you are communicating with your client via text, email? Problematic situations: DV, Non custodial parent issues
Standard 2.02: Services Requiring Licensure or Other Forms of Accreditation

Social workers who provide electronic social work services shall comply with the laws and regulations that govern electronic social work services within both the jurisdiction in which the social worker is located and in which the client is located.

- Interpretation

  Most jurisdictions have adopted the position that electronic social work practice takes place in both the jurisdiction where the client is receiving such services (irrespective of the location of the practitioner) and in the jurisdiction where the social worker is licensed and located at the time of providing such electronic services (irrespective of the location of the client).

  As the provider, you need to be aware of the laws
Standard 2.02: Services Requiring Licensure or Other Forms of Accreditation

**Example 1:** The social worker and client are initially located in one jurisdiction and the client moves to another jurisdiction to attend college. It is the social worker’s responsibility to contact the other jurisdiction’s regulatory board to determine what requirements are necessary to provide services legally in that jurisdiction. The other jurisdiction may allow for temporary practice for a duly licensed social worker who they determine meets “substantial equivalency.”

**Example 2:** The social worker is traveling for an extended time outside of the jurisdiction where he/she is licensed. A client asks the social worker to provide electronic services during the social worker’s absence. It is the social worker’s responsibility to contact the local jurisdiction’s regulatory board to determine what is required for the social worker to provide services legally in that jurisdiction.
Standard 2.02: Services Requiring Licensure or Other Forms of Accreditation

WV Code  CHAPTER 30. PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS.
ARTICLE 30. SOCIAL WORKERS.

§30-30-1. Unlawful acts.

(a) It is unlawful for any person to practice or offer to practice social work in this state without a license or permit issued under this article, or advertise or use any title or description tending to convey the impression that the person is a social worker, unless the person has been licensed or permitted under this article, and the license or permit has not expired, been suspended or revoked.

(b) No business entity, except through a licensee, may render any service or engage in any activity which if rendered or engaged in by an individual, would constitute the practices regulated under this article.

http://www.wvlegislature.gov/WVCODE/code.cfm?chap=30&art=30#01
When providing social work services using technology, social workers shall inform the client of relevant benefits and risks.

- **Interpretation**

  *Possible benefits of providing social work services through electronic means include:*
  
  - Enhancing access to social work services that are unavailable in person because of geographical distance, clients’ disabilities, or illnesses
  - Real-time monitoring of clients’ status, when appropriate
  - Being able to respond to clients rapidly
  - Enhancing access to services because of clients’ scheduling challenges
  - Providing more cost-effective delivery of social work services
  - Ease of communication
  - Reducing the frequency of clients’ travel to obtain social work services
Standard 2.04: Informed Consent: Discussing the Benefits and Risks of Providing Electronic Social Work Services

When providing social work services using technology, social workers shall inform the client of relevant benefits and risks.

- **Interpretation**

  *Possible risks of providing social work services through electronic means include:*
  - Potential for technology failure and interruption of services
  - Potential for confidentiality breaches
  - Prevention of unauthorized use or unethical purposes
  - Higher cost of technology
Breaches in Health Care 2020

- Health Share of Oregon
  - Oregon’s largest Medicaid coordinated care organization notified 654,000 patients due to the device theft from its vendor GridWorks. The notification did not clarify whether the laptop was encrypted. But the stolen device contained patient names, contact details, dates of birth, and Medicaid ID numbers.

- Magellan Health
  - More than eight Magellan Health affiliates and some of its clients have reported breach incidents to HHS, after a sophisticated ransomware attack hit the health plan’s servers in April. Nearly 365,000 patients and employees have been impacted.
  - Hackers gained access by leveraging a social engineering phishing scheme that impersonated a Magellan Health client, five days before the ransomware was deployed. During that time, hackers first exfiltrated sensitive data from the impacted server.
  - The potentially stolen data included employee credentials, passwords, and W-2 forms, as well as patient data like health insurance account information and treatment information.
Benefit Recovery Specialists

- A hacker obtained the credentials of a Benefit Recovery Specialists’ employee to gain access to the insurer's systems and deploy malware, breaching the data of 274,837 patients from several providers and payers that use BRSI for billing and collections services.
- The compromised data included personal information from both current and former members of certain providers or health plans that leverage BRSI and could included dates of birth, provider names, diagnosis codes, policy identification numbers, dates of service and or procedure codes.

Standard 2.09: Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Social workers who provide electronic social work services shall maintain clear professional boundaries in their relationships with clients.

- **Interpretation**

  Social workers who use technology to provide services should take reasonable steps to prevent client access to social workers’ personal social networking sites and should not post personal information on professional Web sites, blogs, or other forms of social media, to avoid boundary confusion and inappropriate dual relationships.

  Although social workers have a right to freedom of speech, they should be aware of how their personal communications could affect their professional relationships. When do you stop representing the profession????? You Don’t

  Example: You present yourself as supportive to a client battling a substance abuse issues and post a negative meme about addictions on your social media
Standard 2.10: Social Media Policy

Social workers who use social media shall develop a social media policy that they share with clients.

■ Interpretation

Social media policies inform clients regarding their social worker’s professional use of social networking sites, e-mail, text messaging, electronic search engines, smartphone applications, blogs, business review sites, and other forms of electronic communication. A carefully constructed social media policy that social workers share with clients can enhance protection of private information and maintain clear boundaries.

The social media policy should be reviewed with clients during the initial interview in the social worker–client relationship and revisited and updated as needed.
Social media policy statement

I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc.). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic (professional) relationship.

I keep Professional Social Media Site(s) for my practice to allow people to share my blog posts and other information I think is interesting or may be useful. You are welcome to “like” my professional page. No one except me is able to see who likes my page. Please remember if you post on my page that everything else on the page is available for anyone to read. Your privacy and confidentiality are my upmost concern. I also do not accept any friend requests on any private social media sites I may use.

Social media policy statement

- Keely Kolmes, Psy.D. – Social Media Policy – 4/26/10
- University of Buffalo School of Social Work- Social Workers Guide to Social Media
  - https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/social-media-guide.html
Section 2: Designing and Delivering Services

Standard 2.11: Use of Personal Technology for Work Purposes
Standard 2.12: Unplanned Interruptions of Electronic Social Work Services
Standard 2.13: Responsibility in Emergency Circumstances
Standard 2.14: Electronic and Online Testimonials
Standard 2.15: Organizing and Advocacy
Standard 2.16: Fundraising
Standard 2.17: Primary Commitment to Clients
Standard 2.18: Confidentiality
Standard 2.11: Use of Personal Technology for Work Purposes

Social workers shall consider the implications of their use of personal mobile phones and other electronic communication devices for work purposes.

- Interpretation

If a social worker’s employment setting expects the social worker to use mobile phones or other technology to communicate with clients, ideally the employer or organization should provide the devices and technology and have clear policies regarding clients’ electronic access to the social worker. As a matter of fairness, employers should cover the costs of the devices and technology that are required for social workers to fulfill their work obligations.

Providing clients with the personal mobile phone number of the social worker might limit the social worker’s ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with clients and compromise client confidentiality. In situations where social workers use personal mobile phones or other electronic communication devices for work purposes, they should take reasonable steps to protect confidentiality and maintain appropriate boundaries.
Standard 2.14: Electronic and Online Testimonials

Social workers shall refrain from soliciting electronic or online testimonials from clients or former clients who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

- Interpretation
  Electronic and online testimonials about social work services (including text, audio, or video) create the potential for boundary confusion and conflicts of interest. Social workers should not solicit testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client’s prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current or former clients who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

  What about when clients offer? Is that different?
  Talking with clients about doing reviews on sites like Healthgrades, Company Facebook
Standard 2.18: Confidentiality

Social workers who use technology to facilitate supervision, consultation, or other confidential meetings shall use appropriate safeguards to protect confidentiality.

■ Interpretation

Social workers who conduct supervision or consultation, and those who facilitate other confidential meetings through the use of technology, should take appropriate precautions to protect the confidentiality of those communications. Precautions to protect confidentiality depend on the type of technology being used, and may include using passwords, firewalls, encryption, and antivirus software using electronic service providers that rely on standards of security for data that are transmitted and stored ensuring a private setting when using their electronic devices

Also looking at technology that is HIPAA compliant
Section 2: Designing and Delivering Services

Standard 2.19: Appropriate Boundaries
Standard 2.20: Addressing Unique Needs
Standard 2.21: Access to Technology
Standard 2.22: Programmatic Needs Assessments and Evaluations
Standard 2.23: Current Knowledge and Competence
Standard 2.24: Control of Messages
Standard 2.25: Administration
Standard 2.26: Conducting Online Research
Standard 2.27: Social Media Policies
Section 3: Gathering, Managing, and Storing Information

Standard 3.01: Informed Consent
Standard 3.02: Separation of Personal and Professional Communications
Standard 3.03: Handling Confidential Information
Standard 3.04: Access to Records within an Organization
Standard 3.05: Breach of Confidentiality
Standard 3.06: Credibility of Information Gathered Electronically
Standard 3.07: Sharing Information with Other Parties
Standard 3.08: Client Access to Own Records
Standard 3.01: Informed Consent

As part of the informed consent process, social workers shall explain to clients whether and how they intend to use electronic devices or communication technologies to gather, manage, and store client information.

■ Interpretation

When social workers plan to use technology to gather, manage, and store client information, they should ensure that clients know how the information is being gathered, how it will be used, who will have access to it, how it will be stored, and how it will be retained. They should also explain the potential benefits and risks of using the particular electronic methods for gathering, managing, and storing information.
Standard 3.01: Informed Consent

Risks

- Someone intentionally hacks the system and gains access to the data.
- Computers, smartphones, flash drives, external hard drives, or other devices used to gather and store the data are stolen or misplaced. Information stored electronically may be subpoenaed for use during legal proceedings, just as with paper records.
  - Ensuring security when “trading in” devices (i.e. smartphones)
- Government or law enforcement organizations may try to gain access to information stored electronically.
- Electronic information may be unintentionally sent to the wrong person, especially when sending e-mail or text messages.
Standard 3.07: Sharing Information with Other Parties

Social workers who share confidential client information with other parties electronically shall take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of the information.

- Interpretation

Social workers may at times share sensitive information electronically with professional colleagues within their workplace or with other organizations. Before sharing information outside the organization, social workers should ensure that they have informed consent from the client. When sharing information electronically, social workers should ensure that they are sending information to the accurate e-mail address, Web site, or other electronic location.
Standard 3.07: Sharing Information with Other Parties

Methods to manage risks when sharing client records electronically may include:

- Ensuring that the social worker has the correct e-mail address, fax machine or telephone number, or other electronic destination
- Using secure servers and encrypted information
- Limiting the information sent to what is required (for example, if it is not necessary to include information that identifies the client or information that is particularly sensitive, then this information should be redacted)
- Ensuring that the recipient of the information will respect the social worker’s request to maintain confidentiality and not share the information with others without the explicit consent of the client
Email Policy Statement

Please keep in mind that email communications are not to be necessarily considered secure. Please be cautious with the information you reveal through these methods as I cannot assure confidentiality in those cases. Remember that email may not be read in a timely manner. If this is an emergency, please go to the nearest emergency room or call 911. If you have received this email in error, please immediately notify the sender by email at the address shown. This email transmission may contain confidential information. This information is intended only for the use of the individual(s) or entity to whom it is intended even if addressed incorrectly. Please delete it from your files if you are not the intended recipient. Thank you for your compliance.

Standard 3.08: Client Access to Own Records

Social workers shall ensure that client access to electronic records is provided in a manner that takes client confidentiality, privacy, and the client’s best interests into account.

- Interpretation

Social workers recognize that clients generally have a right to access their own records. When records are created or available in electronic form, access may be facilitated electronically. Despite the convenience, when records can be accessed electronically there may be risks to client confidentiality and the client’s best interests.
Standard 3.08: Client Access to Own Records

Risks:

- Electronic information systems could be hacked or electronic communication devices may be lost or stolen.
- If the client experiences abuse or exploitation from a partner or other family member, it may be particularly important to ensure that the family member in question does not have access to the client’s records.
- If a client is suicidal or otherwise vulnerable, having immediate access to certain information electronically may not be in the client’s best interests.
- In some practice settings, it may not be appropriate for clients to have access to raw data without having the opportunity to consult with a social worker or other professional to help interpret the information and to provide supportive counseling as needed. (Testing, therapy notes, Psychiatric Evaluations)
Section 3: Gathering, Managing, and Storing Information

Standard 3.09: Using Search Engines to Locate Information about Clients
Standard 3.10: Using Search Engines to Locate Information about Professional Colleagues
Standard 3.11: Treating Colleagues with Respect
Standard 3.12: Open Access Information
Standard 3.13: Accessing Client Records Remotely
Standard 3.14: Managing Phased Out and Outdated Electronic Devices
Standard 3.09: Using Search Engines to Locate Information about Clients

Except for compelling professional reasons, social workers shall not gather information about clients from online sources without the client’s consent; if they do so, they shall take reasonable steps to verify the accuracy of the found information.

- Interpretation

Social workers gather information from a variety of sources to perform their assessments, including from family, schools, other professionals, and clients themselves. Client information discovered on the Internet using search engines is different from information that clients share directly with the social worker. **Before social workers gather information from the Internet or other electronic sources, they should obtain the client’s informed consent.** Intentionally gathering information about a client through electronic means without consent should only be done if there is an emergency situation or specific reason that the information cannot or should not be obtained from the client directly or from third parties designated by the client.
Exception:

- Emergency situations, for instance, when the client poses a serious, imminent risk to self or others, and the only way to identify where the client is would be to search for information online. Even in such cases, social workers should consider whether it is appropriate for them to search for client information online, or whether it would be more appropriate for police, emergency response teams, or other protective services professionals to do so. Social workers who search online for information about clients for compelling professional reasons should include proper documentation in the client’s record.
Standard 3.13: Accessing Client Records Remotely

Social workers shall develop and follow appropriate policies regarding whether and how they can access electronic client records remotely.

- Interpretation

Social workers may have or desire remote access to electronic client records when they are away from their organization or usual place of practice. They should be aware that accessing records from remote locations may pose risks to client privacy and confidentiality. The use of unencrypted e-mail servers by a social worker to communicate with clients increases the risk of privacy violations and should be avoided. Confidentiality risks may increase if a social worker accesses work-related e-mail, text messages, voice mail, or other electronic messages from a nonwork computer, smartphone, or other personal electronic device.
Section 4: Social Work Education and Supervision

Standard 4.01: Use of Technology in Social Work Education
Standard 4.02: Training Social Workers about the Use of Technology in Practice
Standard 4.03: Continuing Education
Standard 4.04: Social Media Policies
Standard 4.05: Evaluation
Standard 4.06: Technological Disruptions
Section 4: Social Work Education and Supervision

Standard 4.07: Distance Education
Standard 4.08: Support
Standard 4.09: Maintenance of Academic Standards
Standard 4.10: Educator–Student Boundaries
Standard 4.11: Field Instruction
Standard 4.12: Social Work Supervision
Ethical Decision Making
1. **DETERMINE** whether there is an ethical issue or/and dilemma. Is there a conflict of values, or rights, or professional responsibilities? (For example, there may be an issue of self-determination of an adolescent versus the well-being of the family.)

2. **IDENTIFY** the key values and principles involved. What meanings and limitations are typically attached to these competing values? (For example, rarely is confidential information held in absolute secrecy; however, typically decisions about access by third parties to sensitive content should be contracted with clients.)

3. **RANK** the values or ethical principles which - in your professional judgment - are most relevant to the issue or dilemma. What reasons can you provide for prioritizing one competing value/principle over another? (For example, your client's right to choose a beneficial course of action could bring hardship or harm to others who would be affected.)

4. **DEVELOP** an action plan that is consistent with the ethical priorities that have been determined as central to the dilemma. Have you conferred with clients and colleagues, as appropriate, about the potential risks and consequences of alternative courses of action? Can you support or justify your action plan with the values/principles on which the plan is based? (For example, have you conferred with all the necessary persons regarding the ethical dimensions of planning for a battered wife's quest to secure secret shelter and the implications for her teen-aged children?)

5. **IMPLEMENT** your plan, utilizing the most appropriate practice skills and competencies. How will you make use of core social work skills such as sensitive communication, skillful negotiation, and cultural competence? (For example, skillful colleague or supervisory communication and negotiation may enable an impaired colleague to see her/his impact on clients and to take appropriate action.)

6. **REFLECT** on the outcome of this ethical decision making process. How would you evaluate the consequences of this process for those involved: Client(s), professional(s), and agency(ies)? (Increasingly, professionals have begun to seek support, further professional training, and consultation through the development of Ethics Review Committees or Ethics Consultation processes.)

Ethical Principles Screen (EPS)
Protection of Life

Equality and Inequality

Autonomy and Freedom

Least Harm

Quality of Life

Privacy and Confidentiality

Truthfulness and Full Disclosure
**Ethical Principle 1.** The protection of human life applies to all persons, that is, both to the life of a client and to the lives of others. This principle takes precedence over every other obligation.

**Ethical Principle 2.** The Principle of Equality and Inequality suggests that equal persons have the right to be treated equally and non-equal persons have the right to be treated differently if the inequality is relevant to the issue in question. Child abuse is one area where this principle applies: children are not equal to adults.

**Ethical Principle 3.** A social worker should make practice decisions that foster a person's autonomy, independence, and freedom. A person does not have the right to decide to harm himself or herself or anyone else on the grounds that the right to make such a decision is her or his autonomous right.

**Ethical Principle 4.** A social worker should always choose the option that will cause the least harm, the least permanent harm, and/or the most easily reversible harm.

**Ethical Principle 5.** A social worker should choose the option that promotes a better quality of life for all people, for the individual as well as for the community.

**Ethical Principle 6.** A social worker should make practice decisions that strengthen every person's right to privacy. Keeping confidential information inviolate is a direct derivative of this obligation.

**Ethical Principle 7.** A social worker should make practice decisions that permit her to speak the truth and to fully disclose all relevant information to the client and to others.
Questions and Discussions
Sources

■ NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice

■ NASW Assurance Services
  https://naswassurance.org/frequently-asked-questions/teletherapy-faqs/

■ West Virginia Code, West Virginia Legislature's Office of Reference & Information, 2021
  http://www.wvlegislature.gov/WVCODE/code.cfm

■ Zur, O. (2015). To Accept or Not to Accept? How to respond when clients send "Friend Request" to their psychotherapists or counselors on social networking sites. Retrieved from https://www.zurinstitute.com/socialnetworking.html

Sources

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THANK YOU