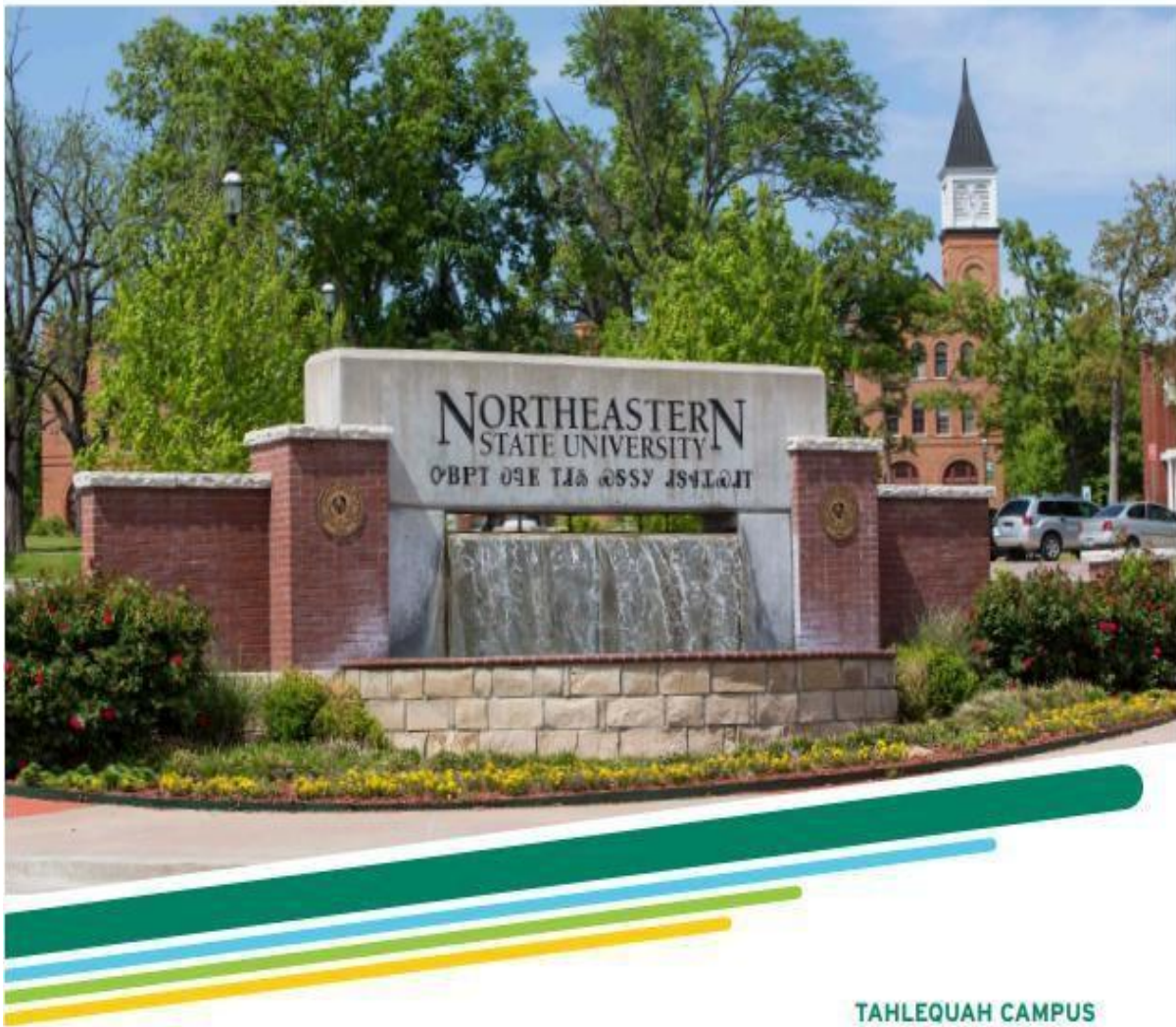


Northeastern State University  
**School of Social Work**

**2025-2026 MSW Student Handbook**



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## **UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT**

Building on our Cherokee Nation heritage, Northeastern State University is committed to student success and a sustainable future for our diverse communities.

### **VISION**

NSU will support our students' success by adapting to a constantly changing, globally competitive environment, by educating today's learners to be tomorrow's leaders, and by being responsive to the needs of our stakeholders and the region's workforce.

### **CORE VALUES**

#### **Our People**

We are committed to the growth and success of our students, employees and community partners.

#### **Our Place**

We honor all who came before us and advance a culture grounded in respect, opportunity and belonging.

#### **Our Purpose**

We develop a collaborative environment that cultivates a life-long pursuit of learning, excellence, creativity and opportunity

### **HISTORY**

Northeastern State University was founded as the Cherokee National Female Seminary in 1846. This historic link to the Cherokee Nation and Indian Territory makes Northeastern the oldest institution of higher learning in Oklahoma. The original Seminary was built in Park Hill south of Tahlequah and destroyed by fire on Easter Sunday 1887. On May 7, 1889, the Cherokee National Female Seminary was dedicated north of Tahlequah, where it would continue to provide learning opportunities for young women for 20 years. Seminary Hall is now the historic centerpiece of Northeastern State, and each year on May 7, Descendants of Seminarians gather to observe Seminary's Homecoming in honor of our first students. Our history as a state institution began on March 6, 1909, when the Oklahoma legislature purchased the Female Seminary and created Northeastern State Normal School, where the first classes were held on September 14, 1909. The educational program of the school consisted of four years of high school and two years of college level study. A decade later, the Normal School evolved to Northeastern State Teachers College in 1919 and established a four year curriculum leading to the bachelor's degree. The Oklahoma legislature authorized changing the name of NSTC to Northeastern State College in 1939. The university officially became Northeastern State University in 1985.

### **The MSW Student Handbook**

Our goal is to prepare you for advanced generalist practice in a wide range of social work jobs. We are committed to providing you with a stimulating and challenging graduate experience. The Masters of Social Work graduate degree prepares students to become competent and effective professionals at the generalist and advanced generalist levels. Additionally, the curriculum allows students to focus their studies on two areas.

## **Indigenous and Rural Communities**

The curriculum integrates the knowledge, skills, and values of the Council On Social Work Education Competencies and behavioral health along with the National Association of Social Work Code of Values and Ethics. These key foundations prepare our graduates to practice social work in a wide range of social work agencies and allied health settings with diverse client systems and people. The NSU MSW degree has a unique focus on addressing social work practice with Native American populations.

The Student Handbook provides vital information including policies and procedures for the MSW program. Please take the time to read the handbook thoroughly. It is accessible on the MSW web page. Policies and procedures that appear here have developed through a collaborative process involving administrators, faculty, students, and staff. The process includes community forums occurring at least twice a year, consultations between MSW Student Association leaders and program leadership, and interaction of student representatives at faculty meetings. Policies and procedures often need to be clarified, changed, or new policies need to be created. Students will be a part of the process. Please remember that you are responsible to read and operationalize the contents of this Student Handbook. Any concerns or questions should be communicated with your Social Work faculty. The MSW Student Handbook has been created to provide students with information regarding our programs, policies and practices. Students should use this in conjunction with the Course Catalog to orient themselves to our programs, curriculum and resources. It is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a contract.

## **Accreditation and Certification**

The NSU School of Social Work MSW program is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education's Board of Accreditation.



## **Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action**

Every aspect of the School of Social Work's policies and practices are conducted without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, veteran status, national origin, age, or other cultural characteristics. Diversity among the student body is highly valued.

The NSU College of Liberal Arts, and the School of Social Work are committed to providing an educational and work environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. A faculty group is available as Faculty Consultants on Harassment and Discrimination to any person in the school in response to problems of unethical or inappropriate treatment of individuals in the school or its field settings.

## Vision Statement

All individuals, families, & communities utilize their power to achieve justice, equity, & well-being.

## Mission Statement

The Northeastern State University's School of Social Work Program's mission is to prepare academically competent and effective professionals; particularly first-generation college students who desire to enter generalist social work practice. The faculty designed the curriculum to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, and values of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies and behavioral indicators that align with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, addressing values, social justice, dignity and worth of persons, the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. These key foundations prepare our graduates to practice social work in a wide range of agencies and allied settings with diverse client systems and people. Our academic program has a unique focus in its integration of addressing social work practice with Native American populations.

**The Mission Statement of the Master of Social Work program at Northeastern State University** is to serve the educational, cultural, and workforce needs of the local and professional communities. The Master of Social Work program at Northeastern State University offers excellence in teaching, a challenging curriculum, research and scholarly activities, service-learning opportunities, training in social justice and dignity, the importance of human relationships and extensively prepares graduate students to provide quality social work services in the local, state, national and global arenas, specifically in regards to working with Indigenous and rural communities.

## Guiding Principles and Values

The NASW Code of Ethics sets forth core values that are foundational to the social work profession and to our program at NSU.

**Relationship Building:** We engage in relationship building that fosters creativity, collaboration, and mutual learning. Relationship building is essential across practice, scholarship, education and service. We take a strengths approach as we serve our local, state, national, and global communities.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** We embrace the inherent worth of all people. By taking the position of cultural humility and applying the lens of intersectionality, we seek to develop and promote modes of anti-oppressive social work and dismantle structures of exclusion.

**Practice with Integrity:** We demonstrate our integrity and trustworthiness as scholars, educators, practitioners, and community members by promoting social work values, ethical practice, and the process of critical reflection.

**Multisystem Competency:** We recognize that social, economic, and environmental injustices are the root causes of inequities and multiple strategies are necessary to address these. Our work integrates micro/macro social work and builds collaboration across systems and disciplines to create multi-level change.

**Critical Perspective:** We engage in deliberate and continuing examination of social conditions and solutions. We use critical inquiry to analyze and challenge existing structures and systems in order to advance the field and promote social, economic, and environmental justice.

**Empirically Informed Social Work:** We rigorously advance empirical research that affects the social work knowledge base. By translating and applying evidence, we continually transform practice and policy across multiple systems.

### **NSU Master of Social Work Goals**

The MSW Program goals are also our expectations and vision for the program. The goals are as follows:

- 1) Grow graduate social work leaders trained in the social concerns as they relate to behavior and health issues across the lifespan;
- 2) Increase the capacity of social work leadership to advocate for Native American and the multi-ethnic populations of the region;
- 3) Increase the capacity of social work leadership to address the needs of the rural communities; and
- 4) Strengthen the professional social work infrastructure of Northeastern Oklahoma.

### **MSW Program Objective & Goals**

The primary objective of the MSW Program at NSU is to prepare students for advanced social work practice. Students acquire a professional foundation of social work knowledge, values, and skills in a generalist social work model. The MSW Program at NSU is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE uses the Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to accredit and reaffirm baccalaureate and master-level social programs in the United States. The NSU MSW program has integrated the CSWE competencies within its curriculum.

## CSWE 2022 Social Work Competencies

### **Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior**

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant policies, laws, and regulations that may affect practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand that ethics are informed by principles of human rights and apply them toward realizing social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in their practice. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision making and apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize and manage personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. Social workers understand how their evolving worldview, personal experiences, and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers take measures to care for themselves professionally and personally, understanding that self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Social workers use rights-based, antiracist, and anti-oppressive lenses to understand and critique the profession's history, mission, roles, and responsibilities and recognize historical and current contexts of oppression in shaping institutions and social work. Social workers understand the role of other professionals when engaged in interprofessional practice. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure relevant and effective practice.

Social workers understand digital technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Social workers:

- a. make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics within the profession as appropriate to the context; The Nine Social Work Competencies 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards
- b. demonstrate professional behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- c. use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- d. use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

## **Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights. Social workers are knowledgeable about the global intersecting and ongoing injustices throughout history that result in oppression and racism, including social work's role and response. Social workers critically evaluate the distribution of power and privilege in society in order to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice by reducing inequities and ensuring dignity and respect for all. Social workers advocate for and engage in strategies to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social resources, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.

Social workers:

- a. advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels; and
- b. engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

## **Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice**

Social workers understand how racism and oppression shape human experiences and how these two constructs influence practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community levels and in policy and research. Social workers understand the pervasive impact of White supremacy and privilege and use their knowledge, awareness, and skills to engage in anti-racist practice. Social workers understand how diversity and intersectionality shape human experiences and identity development and affect equity and inclusion. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of factors including but not limited to age, caste, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that this intersectionality means that a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege and power. Social workers understand the societal and historical roots of social and racial injustices and the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. Social workers understand cultural humility and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, racial, technological, and cultural exclusions, may create privilege and power resulting in systemic oppression.

Social workers:

- a. demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels; and
- b. demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences.

#### **Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice**

Social workers use ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approaches in conducting research and building knowledge. Social workers use research to inform their practice decision-making and articulate how their practice experience informs research and evaluation decisions. Social workers critically evaluate and critique current, empirically sound research to inform decisions pertaining to practice, policy, and programs. Social workers understand the inherent bias in research and evaluate design, analysis, and interpretation using an anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspective. Social workers know how to access, critique, and synthesize the current literature to develop appropriate research questions and hypotheses. Social workers demonstrate knowledge and skills regarding qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis, and they interpret data derived from these methods. Social workers demonstrate knowledge about methods to assess reliability and validity in social work research. Social workers can articulate and share research findings in ways that are usable to a variety of clients and constituencies. Social workers understand the value of evidence derived from interprofessional and diverse research methods, approaches, and sources.

Social workers:

- a. apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs; and
- b. identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

#### **Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice**

Social workers identify social policy at the local, state, federal, and global level that affects wellbeing, human rights and justice, service delivery, and access to social services. Social workers recognize the historical, social, racial, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. Social workers understand and critique the history and current structures of social policies and services and the role of policy in service delivery through rights based, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lenses. Social workers influence policy formulation, analysis implementation, and evaluation within their practice settings with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers actively engage in and advocate for anti-racist and anti-oppressive policy practice to effect change in those settings.

Social workers:

- a. use social justice, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive lenses to assess how social welfare policies affect the delivery of and access to social services; and
- b. apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

## **Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, and privilege as well as their personal values and personal experiences may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers use the principles of interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Social workers:

- a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with clients and constituencies.

## **Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in culturally responsive assessment with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment involves a collaborative process of defining presenting challenges and identifying strengths with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and use interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, privilege, and their personal values and experiences may affect their assessment and decision-making.

Social workers:

- a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies; and
- b. demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

### **Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, person-in-environment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions and participate in interprofessional collaboration to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings.

Social workers:

- a. engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals; and
- b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies.

### **Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with and on behalf of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers evaluate processes and outcomes to increase practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers apply anti-racist and anti-oppressive perspectives in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers use qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.

Social workers:

- a. select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes; and
- b. critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

## **NSU MSW Program Options**

The MSW program includes five program options:

### **1. Advanced Standing Option:**

- The Advanced Standing full-time (1-year) program is for students with a bachelor's degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program.
- The Part-time Advanced Standing (2-year) is an extended option of our advanced standing full-time program.

### **2. Traditional Pathway Option:**

- The Traditional Pathway (2-year) full-time program (58 credit hours) is for students who earned an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited or internationally listed college or university.
- The Traditional Pathway part-time (3-Year) program (58 credit hours) is an extended option of our traditional pathway full time program.
- The Traditional Pathway part-time (4-Year) program (58 credit hours) is an extended option of our traditional pathway full time program.

It is the student's responsibility to become thoroughly acquainted with the degree requirements. Ultimately, the student is responsible for understanding and completing requirements for the degree. Students should log into Degree Works to monitor their progress on the degree requirements. Students should also meet with an academic advisor prior to enrollment each semester to make sure they are on track for graduation.

### **MSW Program Admission**

Admission to the MSW program requires that applicants first be admitted to Northeastern State University's Graduate College. Admission to the Graduate College does not guarantee admission to the MSW program. Applicants must submit a complete application through the university's electronic system, including all required materials.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Earned baccalaureate degree from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting organization
2. For Advanced Standing: Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) from a CSWE-accredited program (including those recognized through CSWE's International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service)
3. Minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) preferred
4. Conditional admission may be considered for applicants with a GPA between 2.85–2.99, or below 2.85 if the last 60 undergraduate credit hours reflect a GPA of 3.00 or higher

Submission of:

1. Completed MSW application
2. Official transcripts from all institutions attended
3. Three professional and/or academic references
4. Current resume or vitae with cover letter
5. Professional and Personal Statement (minimum 1,000 words)
6. Criminal background check (CastleBranch or equivalent)

## Application Materials

1. Up-to-date resume/vitae and cover letter (a letter of intent).
2. Three reference letters. During the online application process, you will enter the contact information for three references (professional (supervisor) or academic (faculty) in nature). Your references will receive an email with a secure link to fill out your recommendation online. Chosen references must complete the reference request by the application deadline in order for your application to be considered.
3. Write your professional and personal statement using the questions below and then upload your statement in one document instead of submitting a different document for each question. This statement should be a minimum of 1000 words.
  - What led you to choose to complete your Masters in Social Work?
  - How do you plan to apply your MSW education/degree in your professional life?
  - Why and how do you think you are suited to the social work program?
  - Is there any information you believe would be helpful to the screening process that was not represented in the application materials?
4. Background Check
  - Acknowledging that many human service agencies request a criminal background check for volunteers and employees, the NSU Social Work Program requires a current background check for all program applicants.
  - Students must have a current (no more than 3 months old) background check at the time of application. Obtain a background check through CastleBranch National background check (Valid within 30 days)
    - [https://www.castlebranch.com/online\\_submission/package\\_code.php](https://www.castlebranch.com/online_submission/package_code.php)
    - The code you will need to use is: HV36 and the cost is \$46.

\*\* Admission to the Master of Social Work program starts from November 1st to March 1st each year, and only completed applications will be reviewed.

## Application Review Process

Applicants must have earned a baccalaureate degree from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting association. Also, baccalaureate social work graduates entering the MSW program are not to repeat what has been achieved in the baccalaureate social work programs.

The MSW Admissions Committee reviews completed applications and recommends or denies admission for the program. The committee may schedule interviews with applicants as needed before admission decisions are made. The applicant will be contacted if a personal interview is required.

Applicants with a cumulative GPA of 2.80 – 2.99 may be given a Conditional Acceptance. Applicants with a GPA below 2.80 may be conditionally admitted if the last 60 hours of their undergraduate work was a 3.00 or higher. The conditional status is contingent upon the student earning a 3.25 for their first semester of graduate work. The decision choices of the MSW Admissions Committee are: Full Acceptance, Conditional Acceptance, or Denial.

Applicants are notified of admission decisions via the university's electronic application system (SLATE) and email communication. Notifications are sent within 24 hours after the final decision is recorded.

1. Applicants receiving Full Acceptance are provided with program information, next steps, and advisor contact details.
2. Applicants receiving Conditional Acceptance are provided with:
  - a. Explanation of the basis for conditional admission
  - b. Specific contingency requirements (e.g., achieving a 3.25 GPA in the first semester with at least 9 credit hours)
  - c. Conditions for progression to Full Acceptance
  - d. Consequences of not meeting the conditions

Applicants must acknowledge and agree to the conditions of admission.

3. Applicants who are Denied admission are notified of the decision and provided with contact information for further inquiry.

To be considered for admission to the advanced standing program, students must have completed a BSW degree from a CSWE-COA accredited program within seven years prior to the application date. Only applicants who have earned a bachelor's degree from a CSWE-COA accredited college or university will be considered for admission into the advanced standing MSW program. Admission to the MSW program is based on academic performance in all work from regionally accredited or internationally listed colleges and universities. Successful completion of the required 32 hours of coursework and 500 hours in an approved social service agency are required for graduation.

### **Advanced Standing Program Option**

To be considered for admission to the Advanced Standing MSW program, applicants must have completed a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), a program recognized through the International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service (ISWDRES), or an equivalent approved accrediting body.

Applicants must have earned a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 on a 4.0 scale.

Eligibility for Advanced Standing is limited to applicants who have earned a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a CSWE-accredited program no more than seven (7) years prior to the start of the MSW program.

### **Advanced Standing: Non-Repetition of Generalist Content**

Our MSW Program has a formal policy to ensure that students who have earned a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a CSWE-accredited program, a CASWE-accredited program, or an internationally recognized equivalent (ISWDRES-evaluated) do not repeat generalist content at the master's level that has already been achieved at the baccalaureate level.

Students admitted with Advanced Standing status are granted exemption from all foundation (generalist) coursework and generalist field education requirements. These students enter directly into the advanced (specialized) curriculum and complete only advanced-level coursework and advanced field education.

Eligibility for Advanced Standing is determined through verification of:

- Graduation from a CSWE-accredited (or equivalent) BSW program
- A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00
- Completion of the BSW degree within the past seven (7) years

Through this process, the program ensures that students have already demonstrated competency in generalist social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes, consistent with CSWE competencies at the baccalaureate level.

### **Retention**

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better to remain in good standing in the program. Students are expected to comply with the Code of Ethics established by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and to demonstrate professional behavior. Students who fall below a minimum GPA of 3.00 will be placed on academic probation. The grade report will show the student's probation. To be removed from probation, the student must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 by the end of the next semester or next nine hours of enrollment. Courses with a C- F grade must be retaken. After a one-course repeat, students who receive a grade of C, D, or F will be dismissed from the major.

### **Student Termination Policy**

The MSW program maintains policies to ensure that students demonstrate satisfactory academic and professional performance consistent with the standards of the social work profession. A student may be terminated (dismissed) from the program for reasons related to academic performance and/or professional performance.

Termination refers to discontinuation of a student's enrollment in the MSW program. In most cases, termination is considered permanent. In limited circumstances, a student may be required to withdraw with specified remedial conditions prior to reapplication.

#### **A. Termination Based on Academic Performance**

A student may be terminated from the MSW program for the following academic reasons:

1. Failure to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
2. Failure to meet academic expectations of the social work program.
3. Violations of the University Code of Student Conduct.
4. Persistent ineffective performance in the practicum setting (see Field Practicum Manual, Appendix A).

Additional grounds include:

- **Poor Academic Performance:** Failure to meet grade requirements or demonstrate the ability to correct deficiencies within a reasonable timeframe.
- **Academic Dishonesty:** Including plagiarism, cheating, or misrepresentation of academic work. Plagiarism is considered unethical and a violation of university policy.
- **Chronic Absenteeism:** A pattern of unexcused absences that interferes with academic success and professional responsibilities.

**Procedures:**

Students who fall below GPA requirements will be placed on academic probation and given one semester to return to good standing. Failure to do so will result in enforced scholastic withdrawal in accordance with university policy.

**B. Termination Based on Professional Performance**

A student may be terminated for failure to meet professional standards expected of social work students. Professional misconduct may be reported by faculty, field instructors, agency personnel, or any university community member.

Examples of professional misconduct include:

1. Unprofessional Behavior: Violations of the NASW Code of Ethics, including misrepresentation, exploitation of relationships, or failure to treat others with respect.
2. Assaultive or Threatening Behavior: Toward clients, peers, faculty, or staff.
3. Behavior Harmful to Clients: Including breaches of confidentiality, disrespectful conduct, or violations of client rights.
4. Persistent Ineffectiveness in Practice: Inability to demonstrate minimum competency in field or classroom despite feedback and remediation efforts.

**Procedures:**

- Complaints are submitted to the Department Chair.
- The Chair gathers information, including faculty input and a student response.
- A faculty review meeting is convened.
- A decision is made by faculty vote regarding termination or alternative action.
- The student is notified in writing of the decision.

Students may also be subject to university-level disciplinary processes through Student Affairs.

**Appeals Related to Termination**

The program ensures that all students are afforded due process, including the right to be informed of concerns, to respond, and to appeal decisions.

**A. Academic Performance Appeals**

Students may appeal academic decisions, including grades, using the university's grade appeal process:

- a. The student must first attempt resolution with the course instructor.
- b. If unresolved, submit the grievance to the MSW Program Director.
- c. If unresolved, the student may consult the Dean.
- d. If still unresolved, a formal written appeal must be submitted to the Graduate Dean within four months of the assigned grade.

Appeals are reviewed by the Graduate Grade Appeals Committee in accordance with university policy.

**B. Professional Performance Appeals**

Students who wish to appeal professional evaluations, misconduct findings, or termination decisions must follow the procedures outlined below to ensure due process:

1. Informal Resolution: The student should first discuss concerns directly with the faculty member or evaluator and request reconsideration, providing any relevant supporting information.
2. Program-Level Review: If the issue remains unresolved, the student may submit a formal grievance to the MSW Program Director, including documentation of the concern and any prior attempts at resolution.

3. Department-Level Review: If resolution is not achieved at the program level, the student may request a review by the Department Chair. The Department Chair will review the grievance and issue a decision, which is considered final at the program level.
4. University-Level Appeal: Students may further appeal decisions related to professional misconduct or termination by:
  - Submitting a written appeal within five (5) university business days of notification,
  - Filing the appeal with the Office of Student Affairs or the appropriate university body, and
  - Following established university procedures for review and final determination.

### **Policy for Transfer of Social Work Graduate Course Credit**

The MSW Program at Northeastern State University adopts the institution's transfer credit policies and procedures. Graduate-level social work course credit earned at a regionally accredited institution and within a CSWE-accredited or candidacy MSW program may be considered for transfer if the content is determined to be substantially equivalent to courses required in the NSU MSW curriculum.

To be eligible for transfer credit, the following criteria must be met:

- Courses must be completed at a regionally accredited institution within a CSWE-accredited or candidacy MSW program.
- A minimum grade of "B" must have been earned in each course.
- Courses must not have been used to satisfy degree requirements for another completed graduate degree.
- The content of the course must be substantially equivalent to the corresponding NSU MSW course. Documentation such as course descriptions and/or syllabi may be required to determine equivalency.
- A maximum of nine (9) semester credit hours may be transferred and applied toward the MSW degree.
- Courses completed more than five (5) years prior to enrollment in the MSW program will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the MSW Admissions Committee.

In accordance with CSWE standards, the program only accepts transfer credit for field education and practice courses from CSWE-accredited or candidacy social work programs.

**Procedures:** All requests for transfer credit are reviewed by the Chair of the School of Social Work. The Chair evaluates submitted transcripts and supporting documentation (e.g., syllabi, course descriptions) to determine course equivalency and compliance with program and accreditation standards.

Upon completion of the review, the Chair provides a recommendation for transfer credit approval. Approved credits are subsequently submitted to the Graduate College and the Registrar's Office for official processing and documentation in the student's academic record.

### **No Credit for Life or Work Experience**

The NSU School of Social Work does not award academic credit for life experience or previous work experience in lieu of required courses or field practicum. This policy ensures that all students meet the rigorous educational and professional standards expected in social work education.

No academic credit is granted for prior work or life experiences for any social work course, including practicum courses. All students in the MSW program are required to complete field education hours as part of the degree requirements. Students in the traditional MSW pathway must complete a total of 900 hours of field practicum. Students admitted with Advanced Standing are required to complete 500 hours of advanced field practicum, in addition to the practicum hours completed as part of their BSW degree.

### **MSW Graduation Requirements**

Upon acceptance into the MSW program, the following requirements must be met for graduation with an MSW from Northeastern State University:

- 1) Attend all orientation sessions.
- 2) Meet with their graduate advisor, review and sign their Statement of Understanding and Degree Plan.
- 3) Follow the courses according to their prescribed sequence. (see page 20 & 21)
- 4) Achieve a minimum overall GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale with no grade less than B in a course.
- 5) MSW students must achieve at least a minimum overall GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale and maintain a B or above grade in all social work courses. Courses with a C- F grade must be retaken. After a one-course repeat, students who receive a grade of C, D, or F will be dismissed from the major. Students whose GPA falls below 3.0 or who have a "C" in a required course will be placed on academic probation.

\*\*\*\*\*Check with NSU Grad College rules\*\*\*\*\*

- 6) Successful completion of the required 32 hours (Advanced Standing) or 58 hours (Traditional) coursework, 500 hours in an approved social service agency.
  - ✓ Before starting their concentration practicum of 500 hours, students in the Traditional Pathway Option must complete a total of 450 hours of foundation practicum experience.
- 7) Continuation in the MSW program is contingent upon compliance with ethical and professional standards of conduct in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Reasons for dismissal can include inadequate interpersonal skills, ethical violations such as plagiarism, and an inability to conform to the performance standards of the program.
- 8) Graduation requirements follow the guidelines of Northeastern State University.

### **Graduation**

Students must have the minimum 3.00 GPA to graduate. A minimum of 24 semester hours must be earned from Northeastern State University.

***Master of Social Work Course Sequencing Traditional 2 Year***

| Degree Plan for the Traditional Pathway Program (2 years) |                 |  |  |  |
|---|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Foundation Year   | Fall            | 13 hours                                       | SOWK 5003 - Human Behavior in the Social Environment I                             |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5313 - Practice II (Social Work Practice with Groups)                         |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5023 - Social Work Research   |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5204 - Social Work Practicum I & Seminar                                      |  |
|   | Spring          | 13- 16 hours                                   | SOWK 5103 - Human Behavior in the Social Environment II                            |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5013 - Practice I (Social Work Practice with Individuals)                     |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5453 - Social Policy  |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5404 – Social Work Practicum II & Seminar                                     |  |
| Concentration Year  | Summer          | 3- 6 hours                                     | SOWK 5233 - Clinical Practice with Indigenous Populations                          |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5463 - Social Work Practice in Health/Behavioral Health Settings* (Elective)  |  |
|   | Fall            | 12-15 hours                                    | SOWK 5273 - Advanced Clinical Practice   |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5323 - Practice-Oriented Research   |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5513 - Advanced Social Work Practice & Ethics                                 |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5713 - Advanced Social Work Practice with Groups                              |  |
|   |                 |  |  | * SOWK 5553 - Assessment of Mental Health Disorders (Elective) |
|   | Spring          | 11- 14 hours                                   | * SOWK 5753 - Advanced Social Work Practice with Children & Adolescents (Elective) |  |
|   |                 |  | *SOWK 5853 – Core Components of Trauma Informed Practices (Elective)               |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5604 - Advanced Practicum & Seminar I   |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5804 - Advanced Practicum & Seminar II  |  |
|   |                 |  | SOWK 5903 - Integrative Capstone Seminar   |  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>58 hours</b> | * Elective options (only 6 hours are required) |  |  |

***Master of Social Work Course Sequencing Advanced Standing 1 year***

| Degree Plan for the Full Time Advanced Standing Program (1 year) |             |  |
|--|-------------|--|
| Summer   | 6 hours     | SOWK 5233 - Clinical Practice with Indigenous Populations                          |
|  |             | SOWK 5463 - Social Work Practice in Health/Behavioral Health Settings* (Elective)  |
| Fall   | 12-15 hours | SOWK 5273 - Advanced Clinical Practice   |
|  |             | SOWK 5323 - Practice-Oriented Research   |
|  |             | SOWK 5513 - Advanced Social Work Practice & Ethics                                 |
|  |             | SOWK 5713 - Advanced Social Work Practice with Groups                              |
|  |             | * SOWK 5553 - Assessment of Mental Health Disorders (Elective)                     |
| Spring   | 11-14 hours | * SOWK 5753 - Advanced Social Work Practice with Children & Adolescents (Elective) |
|  |             | *SOWK 5853 – Core Components of Trauma Informed Practices (Elective)               |
|  |             | SOWK 5604 - Advanced Practicum & Seminar I   |
|  |             | SOWK 5804 - Advanced Practicum & Seminar II  |
|  |             | SOWK 5903 - Integrative Capstone Seminar   |
| Total  | 32 hours    | * Elective options   |

## Academic and Professional Advising Policies

### Academic Advising

Each student is assigned an academic advisor upon admission to the MSW program. Advisors are the MSW Chair or another designated MSW faculty member. Academic advising is provided by social work program faculty and supports students' progression through the curriculum and successful completion of degree requirements.

Students are advised on curriculum sequencing, degree requirements, and expectations for graduate study. All entering students are required to meet with their assigned advisor prior to the start of their first semester to review and sign a Statement of Understanding (APPENDIX-A) and a Degree Plan (APPENDIX - B). Advisors ensure that students understand program expectations, graduation requirements, the Student Conduct Code, and the NASW Code of Ethics.

Academic advising is available in both in-person and virtual formats to ensure accessibility and equitable support for all students, including those enrolled in on-campus and online program options. Ongoing advising is provided throughout the program to monitor student progress and support academic success.

It is the student's responsibility to become thoroughly acquainted with the degree requirements. Ultimately, the student is responsible for understanding and completing requirements for the degree.

This process can be aided through use of Degree Works which can be accessed through the My NSU website at <https://www.nsuok.edu/MyNSU/>

### Professional Advising

**Policies:** All full-time MSW faculty are considered professional advisors for any students that request professional advice from them based upon:

- Expertise of specific areas of interest by the student
- Common areas of research expertise/interest
- Common areas of interest in practice areas or populations

Professional advising supports students' professional development, including career planning, practice interests, licensure preparation, and integration of social work values and ethics. Students may seek professional advising based on faculty expertise, shared areas of research or practice interest, and career goals. Professional advising is provided through both formal and informal interactions. Informal advising occurs through student engagement with faculty in classes, assignments, and practice-related experiences, as well as through interactions with guest speakers and professionals invited into the classroom. Faculty and staff may communicate with one another, as appropriate, regarding student situations to support professional development and address academic concerns.

Professional advising is also integrated into the curriculum through the Integrative Capstone Seminar and practicum seminar courses. The Integrative Capstone Seminar includes preparation for post-graduation entry into the profession, including study guides and practice exams focused on the

LMSW licensure exam. Practicum seminars support students in integrating academic knowledge with field experiences and developing professional competencies. The MSW Field Director provides individualized professional advising related to field education, including placement selection and professional readiness for practice.

Professional advising is available in both in-person and virtual formats to ensure accessibility and equitable support for all students, including those enrolled in on-campus and online program options.

## **Evaluating Academic and Professional Performance Policy**

### **Evaluating Academic Performance Policy**

The MSW Program is committed to maintaining high academic standards and supporting student success. Policies related to evaluating academic performance are communicated to students through multiple points of dissemination, including program orientation, academic advising, course syllabi, and ongoing course instruction.

Student academic performance is evaluated through course assignments, examinations, participation, and other learning activities as outlined in individual course syllabi. Students are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 in accordance with program requirements.

When a student receives a grade below program standards or is at risk of not meeting academic expectations, the course instructor will notify the School of Social Work Chair. The Chair will communicate with the student to review academic performance, clarify expectations, and discuss options for returning to good academic standing. These options may include academic advising, development of an improvement plan, and identification of appropriate support resources. Ongoing feedback is provided through coursework, faculty advising, and program communication to promote student learning and academic success. Students are encouraged to engage proactively with faculty and advisors to address academic concerns and to ensure timely progress toward degree completion.

Failure to meet academic standards may result in additional actions in accordance with program and university policies.

### **Evaluating Professional Performance Policy**

The MSW Program is committed to preparing students for ethical and competent professional practice in accordance with the standards of the social work profession. Policies related to evaluating professional performance are communicated to students through program orientation, course syllabi, course instruction, and field education materials.

Professional performance is evaluated using a standardized professional performance checklist completed by course instructors. This evaluation includes assessment of behaviors such as attendance, punctuality, communication, accountability, and the ability to engage respectfully with diverse perspectives. These expectations are aligned with the values and ethical principles outlined in the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, including integrity, competence, respect for the dignity and worth of all persons, and the importance of human relationships.

Students are also informed of professional expectations through the Student Conduct Contract and practicum agreements, which must be reviewed and acknowledged in writing. These documents reinforce adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics in both classroom and field settings. Concerns related to professional performance are addressed through faculty consultation, documentation, and

communication with the student. When concerns are identified, students are informed and may be provided with a written plan for improvement that outlines specific expectations, timelines, and support resources.

Failure to demonstrate professional behavior consistent with program expectations and NASW Code of Ethics may result in further action, including dismissal from the program, in accordance with program and university policies.

## **Student Participation Policy: Implicit and Explicit Curriculum**

The MSW Program is committed to ensuring equitable and inclusive opportunities for all students to provide input and actively participate in both the implicit curriculum (learning environment and program experience) and the explicit curriculum (coursework and field education).

The program values diverse perspectives and fosters an inclusive environment in which all students regardless of background, identity, or program modality (in-person or online) are encouraged to share their voices and contribute to program development and improvement.

### **Student Participation in the Implicit Curriculum**

The implicit curriculum includes the program's culture, learning environment, governance, and overall student experience.

To support equitable and inclusive participation, the program provides the following opportunities:

- **Student Engagement Opportunities:** Students may participate in program discussions and decision-making through student organizations with faculty sponsors and initiatives such as “Lunch with the Chair” sessions.
- **Inclusive Access Across Modalities:** Opportunities are accessible to both in-person and online students through virtual platforms and inclusive communication methods.
- **Program Feedback and Assessment:** Students provide input through surveys and assessment tools, including the Student Learning Environment and Cultural Responsiveness Assessment.
- **Use of Student Feedback:** Student feedback is systematically reviewed by program leadership and faculty and used to improve the learning environment, promote inclusion, and strengthen program practices.

### **Student Participation in the Explicit Curriculum**

The explicit curriculum includes coursework, field education, and student learning outcomes.

The program ensures equitable and inclusive participation through the following:

- **Course Feedback:** Students complete end-of-semester course evaluations and may provide additional feedback on course content, instruction, and learning experiences. Faculty use this feedback to improve courses and instructional methods.
- **Active Learning Engagement:** Students are encouraged to participate in class discussions, assignments, and collaborative learning activities that reflect diverse perspectives.
- **Field Education Involvement:** Students actively participate in the development of individualized learning agreements in collaboration with Field Instructors and Faculty Field Liaisons. This ensures that student goals, interests, and professional development needs are reflected in their practicum experience.
- **Accessibility Across Modalities:** All opportunities for participation are available to both in-person and online students through inclusive teaching practices and virtual platforms.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Student feedback and performance data are reviewed as part of

program assessment processes to evaluate curriculum effectiveness and ensure alignment with CSWE competencies.

### **School of Social Work Advisory Board**

The School of Social Work Advisory Board serves as an important structure for program oversight, stakeholder engagement, and continuous quality improvement. The Advisory Board meets annually to thoughtfully review assessment data, exit survey results, and other program evaluation findings, and to provide guidance and recommendations related to program modifications, policy adjustments as needed, curriculum enhancement, and field education practices.

Board membership is intentionally diverse to include multiple perspectives within the social work community. Members include at least one BSW student and one MSW student, alumni currently in practice, current and emeriti social work faculty, field instructors, and community practitioners. Student representatives are valued, full participants in Advisory Board discussions, ensuring that student perspectives are meaningfully considered in decisions affecting both the implicit and explicit curriculum. Student engagement is further supported through additional opportunities for student feedback, including exit surveys, program improvement surveys, and the “Lunch with Chair” event held each semester, offering multiple opportunities for students to share their insights and contribute to program development.

The Advisory Board encourages inclusive and equitable student participation in program decision-making, incorporates feedback from external stakeholders to strengthen program quality, reviews assessment data to monitor competency attainment and student learning outcomes, and provides thoughtful recommendations to support ongoing program improvement and student success.

### **Enrollment**

Students are ultimately responsible for enrollment and for taking courses necessary to meet degree requirements. It is important to check your schedule for accuracy, including the practicum section. Corrections should be made as quickly as possible.

The MSW Field Director works personally and individually with each student applying for field practicum. The field director will enable a decision regarding an appropriate placement in an agency based on the student’s career interests and strengths for practice.

Informal advising is also available as students relate to professors through classes, assignments, and work experience and meet professionals as guest speakers in classes.

The faculty and staff may communicate with other faculty, staff and administrator’s information regarding student situations in connection with professional development and academic concerns.

### **NASW Membership**

MSW Students are required to join NASW as a student member. Membership for NASW is required for the duration of the Field Practicum. It is also a prerequisite to purchasing malpractice insurance for Field Practicum.

### **Malpractice Insurance**

Students are required to purchase student malpractice insurance for Field Practicum through NASW. Students are not allowed to accrue ANY practicum hours until and unless they have provided proof of insurance to the MSW Field Practicum Director.

## Tuition & Fees

### UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE

| <b>Undergraduate and Graduate - Oklahoma Residents</b>               | <b>Tuition</b> | <b>Fees<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Total per Credit Hour</b> |
|--|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Undergraduate Courses (0000, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 level)           | \$235.25       | \$32.75                 | \$268.00                     |
| Graduate Division Courses (5000 Level)                               | \$297.50       | \$32.75                 | \$330.25                     |
| Graduate Online Only (contact Graduate College for more information) | \$297.50       | \$32.75                 | \$330.25                     |
| Guaranteed Rate 2022-2023 (first-time, full-time freshmen)           | \$229.70       | \$29.65                 | \$259.40                     |
| Guaranteed Rate 2023-2024 (first-time, full-time freshmen)           | \$229.75       | \$29.65                 | \$259.40                     |
| Guaranteed Rate 2024-2025 (first-time, full-time freshmen)           | \$253.75       | \$29.65                 | \$283.40                     |
| Guaranteed Rate 2025-2026 (first-time, full-time freshmen)           | \$265.00       | \$32.75                 | \$297.75                     |
| <b>Undergraduate and Graduate-Non Oklahoma Residents</b>             | <b>Tuition</b> | <b>Fees<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Total</b>                 |
| Undergraduate Courses (1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 Level)                 | \$557.50       | \$32.75                 | \$590.25                     |
| Undergrad International Online/Non-Degree Seeking                    | \$236.25       | \$32.75                 | \$269.00                     |
| Graduate Division Courses (5000 Level)                               | \$649.50       | \$32.75                 | \$682.25                     |
| Graduate Online Only (contact Graduate College for more information) | \$298.50       | \$32.75                 | \$331.25                     |

## NASW Code of Ethics

### *NASW Code of Ethics Preamble*

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. "Clients" is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective:

- service
- social justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence.

This constellation of core values reflects what is unique to the social work profession. Core values, and the principles that flow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

### *Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics*

Professional ethics are at the core of social work. The profession has an obligation to articulate its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. The *NASW Code of Ethics* sets forth these values, principles, and standards to guide social workers' conduct. The *Code* is relevant to all social workers and social work students, regardless of their professional functions, the settings in which they work, or the populations they serve.

The *NASW Code of Ethics* serves six purposes:

1. The *Code* identifies core values on which social work's mission is based.
2. The *Code* summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used to guide social work practice.
3. The *Code* is designed to help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise.
4. The *Code* provides ethical standards to which the general public can hold the social work profession accountable.
5. The *Code* socializes practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards.
6. The *Code* articulates standards that the social work profession itself can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct. NASW has formal procedures to adjudicate ethics complaints filed against its members.\* In subscribing to this *Code*, social workers are required to cooperate in its implementation, participate in NASW adjudication proceedings, and abide by any NASW disciplinary rulings or sanctions based on it.

\*For information on NASW adjudication procedures, see *NASW Procedures for the Adjudication of Grievances*.

The *Code* offers a set of values, principles, and standards to guide decision making and conduct when ethical issues arise. It does not provide a set of rules that prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. Specific applications of the *Code* must take into account the context in which it is being considered and the possibility of conflicts among the *Code*'s values, principles, and standards. Ethical responsibilities flow from all human relationships, from the personal and familial to the social and professional.

Further, the *NASW Code of Ethics* does not specify which values, principles, and standards are most important and ought to outweigh others in instances when they conflict. Reasonable differences of opinion can and do exist among social workers with respect to the ways in which values, ethical principles, and ethical standards should be rank ordered when they conflict.

Ethical decision making in a given situation must apply the informed judgment of the individual social worker and should also consider how the issues would be judged in a peer review process where the ethical standards of the profession would be applied.

Ethical decision making is a process. In situations when conflicting obligations arise, social workers may be faced with complex ethical dilemmas that have no simple answers. Social workers should take into consideration all the values, principles, and standards in this *Code* that are relevant to any situation in which ethical judgment is warranted. Social workers' decisions and actions should be consistent with the spirit as well as the letter of this *Code*.

In addition to this *Code*, there are many other sources of information about ethical thinking that may be useful. Social workers should consider ethical theory and principles generally, social work theory and research, laws, regulations, agency policies, and other relevant codes of ethics, recognizing that among codes of ethics social workers should consider the *NASW Code of Ethics* as their primary source. Social workers also should be aware of the impact on ethical decision making of their clients' and their own personal values and cultural and religious beliefs and practices. They should be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly. For additional guidance social workers should consult the relevant literature on professional ethics and ethical decision making and seek appropriate consultation when faced with ethical dilemmas. This may involve consultation with an agency-based or social work organization's ethics committee, a regulatory body, knowledgeable colleagues, supervisors, or legal counsel.

Instances may arise when social workers' ethical obligations conflict with agency policies or relevant laws or regulations. When such conflicts occur, social workers must make a responsible effort to resolve the conflict in a manner that is consistent with the values, principles, and standards expressed in this *Code*. If a reasonable resolution of the conflict does not appear possible, social workers should seek proper consultation before making a decision.

The *NASW Code of Ethics* is to be used by NASW and by individuals, agencies, organizations, and bodies (such as licensing and regulatory boards, professional liability insurance providers, courts of law, agency boards of directors, government agencies, and other professional groups) that choose to adopt it or use it as a frame of reference. Violation of standards in this *Code* does not automatically imply legal liability or violation of the law. Such determination can only be made in the context of legal and judicial proceedings. Alleged violations of the *Code* would be subject to a peer review process. Such processes are generally separate from legal or administrative procedures and insulated from legal review or proceedings to allow the profession to counsel and discipline its own members.

A code of ethics cannot guarantee ethical behavior. Moreover, a code of ethics cannot resolve all ethical issues or disputes or capture the richness and complexity involved in striving to make responsible choices within a moral community. Rather, a code of ethics sets forth values, ethical principles, and ethical standards to which professionals aspire and by which their actions can be judged. Social workers' ethical behavior should result from their personal commitment to engage in ethical practice. The *NASW Code of Ethics* reflects the commitment of all social workers to uphold the profession's values and to act ethically. Principles and standards must be applied by individuals of good character who discern moral questions and, in good faith, seek to make reliable ethical judgments.

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.

### *NASW Ethical Principles*

The following broad ethical principles are based on social work's core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

**Value:** *Service*

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.*

Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return (pro bono service).

**Value:** *Social Justice*

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers challenge social injustice.*

Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

**Value:** *Dignity and Worth of the Person*

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.*

Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients' interests and the broader society's interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.

**Value:** *Importance of Human Relationships*

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.*

Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.

**Value:** *Integrity*

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.*

Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

**Value:** *Competence*

**Ethical Principle:** *Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.*

Social workers continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.

The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all social workers. These standards concern (1) social workers' ethical responsibilities to clients, (2) social workers' ethical responsibilities to colleagues, (3) social workers' ethical responsibilities in practice settings, (4) social workers' ethical responsibilities as professionals, (5) social workers' ethical responsibilities to the social work profession, and (6) social workers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society.

### *NASW Ethical Standards*

Some of the standards that follow are enforceable guidelines for professional conduct, and some are aspirational. The extent to which each standard is enforceable is a matter of professional judgment to be exercised by those responsible for reviewing alleged violations of ethical standards.

## 1. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Clients

### *1.01 Commitment to Clients*

Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients' interests are primary. However, social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised. (Examples include when a social worker is required by law to report that a client has abused a child or has threatened to harm self or others.)

### *1.02 Self-Determination*

Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Social workers may limit clients' right to self-determination when, in the social workers' professional judgment, clients' actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others.

### 1.03 Informed Consent

- (a) Social workers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services, limits to services because of the requirements of a third-party payer, relevant costs, reasonable alternatives, clients' right to refuse or withdraw consent, and the time frame covered by the consent. Social workers should provide clients with an opportunity to ask questions.
- (b) In instances when clients are not literate or have difficulty understanding the primary language used in the practice setting, social workers should take steps to ensure clients' comprehension. This may include providing clients with a detailed verbal explanation or arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator whenever possible.
- (c) In instances when clients lack the capacity to provide informed consent, social workers should protect clients' interests by seeking permission from an appropriate third party, informing clients consistent with the clients' level of understanding. In such instances social workers should seek to ensure that the third party acts in a manner consistent with clients' wishes and interests. Social workers should take reasonable steps to enhance such clients' ability to give informed consent.
- (d) In instances when clients are receiving services involuntarily, social workers should provide information about the nature and extent of services and about the extent of clients' right to refuse service.
- (e) Social workers should discuss with clients the social workers' policies concerning the use of technology in the provision of professional services.
- (f) Social workers who use technology to provide social work services should obtain informed consent from the individuals using these services during the initial screening or interview and prior to initiating services. Social workers should assess clients' capacity to provide informed consent and, when using technology to communicate, verify the identity and location of clients.
- (g) Social workers who use technology to provide social work services should assess the clients' suitability and capacity for electronic and remote services. Social workers should consider the clients' intellectual, emotional, and physical ability to use technology to receive services and the clients' ability to understand the potential benefits, risks, and limitations of such services. If clients do not wish to use services provided through technology, social workers should help them identify alternate methods of service.
- (h) Social workers should obtain clients' informed consent before making audio or video recordings of clients or permitting observation of service provision by a third party.
- (i) Social workers should obtain client consent before conducting an electronic search on the client. Exceptions may arise when the search is for purposes of protecting the client or other people from serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm, or for other compelling professional reasons.

#### *1.04 Competence*

- (a) Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.
- (b) Social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques.
- (c) When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps (including appropriate education, research, training, consultation, and supervision) to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from harm.
- (d) Social workers who use technology in the provision of social work services should ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide such services in a competent manner. This includes an understanding of the special communication challenges when using technology and the ability to implement strategies to address these challenges
- (e) Social workers who use technology in providing social work services should comply with the laws governing technology and social work practice in the jurisdiction in which they are regulated and located and, as applicable, in the jurisdiction in which the client is located.

### *1.05 Cultural Awareness and Social Diversity*

- (a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability.
- (d) Social workers who provide electronic social work services should be aware of cultural and socioeconomic differences among clients and how they may use electronic technology. Social workers should assess cultural, environmental, economic, mental or physical ability, linguistic, and other issues that may affect the delivery or use of these services.

### *1.06 Conflicts of Interest*

- (a) Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Social workers should inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients' interests primary and protects clients' interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client.
- (b) Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
- (c) Social workers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers should take steps to protect clients and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. (Dual or multiple relationships occur when social workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.)
- (d) When social workers provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), social workers should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered clients and the nature of social workers' professional obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services. Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (for example, when a social worker is asked to testify in a child custody dispute or divorce proceedings involving clients) should clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.

(e) Social workers should avoid communication with clients using technology (such as social networking sites, online chat, e-mail, text messages, telephone, and video) for personal or non-work-related purposes.

(f) Social workers should be aware that posting personal information on professional Web sites or other media might cause boundary confusion, inappropriate dual relationships, or harm to clients.

(g) Social workers should be aware that personal affiliations may increase the likelihood that clients may discover the social worker's presence on Web sites, social media, and other forms of technology. Social workers should be aware that involvement in electronic communication with groups based on race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, mental or physical ability, religion, immigration status, and other personal affiliations may affect their ability to work effectively with particular clients.

(h) Social workers should avoid accepting requests from or engaging in personal relationships with clients on social networking sites or other electronic media to prevent boundary confusion, inappropriate dual relationships, or harm to clients.

#### *1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality*

(a) Social workers should respect clients' right to privacy. Social workers should not solicit private information from or about clients except for compelling professional reasons. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.

(b) Social workers may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent from a client or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of a client.

(c) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that social workers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or others. In all instances, social workers should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose; only information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made should be revealed.

(d) Social workers should inform clients, to the extent possible, about the disclosure of confidential information and the potential consequences, when feasible before the disclosure is made. This applies whether social workers disclose confidential information on the basis of a legal requirement or client consent.

(e) Social workers should discuss with clients and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of clients' right to confidentiality. Social workers should review with clients circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the social worker-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.

(f) Social workers should discuss with clients and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of clients' right to confidentiality. Social workers should review with clients circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the social worker-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.

(g) When social workers provide counseling services to families, couples, or groups, social workers should seek agreement among the parties involved concerning each individual's right to confidentiality and obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information shared by others. This agreement should include consideration of whether confidential information may be exchanged in person or electronically, among clients or with others outside of formal counseling sessions. Social workers should inform participants in family, couples, or group counseling that social workers cannot guarantee that all participants will honor such agreements.

(h) Social workers should inform clients involved in family, couples, marital, or group counseling of the social worker's, employer's, and agency's policy concerning the social worker's disclosure of confidential information among the parties involved in the counseling.

(i) Social workers should not disclose confidential information to third-party payers unless clients have authorized such disclosure.

(j) Social workers should not discuss confidential information, electronically or in person, in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Social workers should not discuss confidential information in public or semi-public areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.

(k) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients during legal proceedings to the extent permitted by law. When a court of law or other legally authorized body orders social workers to disclose confidential or privileged information without a client's consent and such disclosure could cause harm to the client, social workers should request that the court withdraw the order or limit the order as narrowly as possible or maintain the records under seal, unavailable for public inspection.

(l) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients when responding to requests from members of the media.

(m) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients' written and electronic records and other sensitive information. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients' records are stored in a secure location and that clients' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.

(n) Social workers should take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of electronic communications, including information provided to clients or third parties. Social workers should use applicable safeguards (such as encryption, firewalls, and passwords) when using electronic communications such as e-mail, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, and text messages -

(o) Social workers should develop and disclose policies and procedures for notifying clients of any breach of confidential information in a timely manner.

(p) In the event of unauthorized access to client records or information, including any unauthorized access to the social worker's electronic communication or storage systems, social workers should inform clients of such disclosures, consistent with applicable laws and professional standards.

(q) Social workers should develop and inform clients about their policies, consistent with prevailing social work ethical standards, on the use of electronic technology, including Internet-based search engines, to gather information about clients.

(r) Social workers should avoid searching or gathering client information electronically unless there are compelling professional reasons, and when appropriate, with the client's informed consent.

(s) Social workers should avoid posting any identifying or confidential information about clients on professional websites or other forms of social media.

(t) Social workers should transfer or dispose of clients' records in a manner that protects clients' confidentiality and is consistent with applicable laws governing records and social work licensure.

(u) Social workers should take reasonable precautions to protect client confidentiality in the event of the social worker's termination of practice, incapacitation, or death.

(v) Social workers should not disclose identifying information when discussing clients for teaching or training purposes unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information.

(w) Social workers should not disclose identifying information when discussing clients with consultants unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information or there is a compelling need for such disclosure.

(x) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of deceased clients consistent with the preceding standards.

#### *1.08 Access to Records*

- (a) Social workers should provide clients with reasonable access to records concerning the clients. Social workers who are concerned that clients' access to their records could cause serious misunderstanding or harm to the client should provide assistance in interpreting the records and consultation with the client regarding the records. Social workers should limit clients' access to their records, or portions of their records, only in exceptional circumstances when there is compelling evidence that such access would cause serious harm to the client. Both clients request and the rationale for withholding some or all of the record should be documented in clients' files.

(b) Social workers should develop and inform clients about their policies, consistent with prevailing social work ethical standards, on the use of technology to provide clients with access to their records.

(c) When providing clients with access to their records, social workers should take steps to protect the confidentiality of other individuals identified or discussed in such records.

### *1.09 Sexual Relationships*

A. Social workers should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities, inappropriate sexual communications through the use of technology or in person, or sexual contact with current clients, whether such contact is consensual or forced.

B. Social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with clients' relatives or other individuals with whom clients maintain a close personal relationship when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Sexual activity or sexual contact with clients' relatives or other individuals with whom clients maintain a personal relationship has the potential to be harmful to the client and may make it difficult for the social worker and client to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. Social workers--not their clients, their clients' relatives, or other individuals with whom the client maintains a personal relationship--assume the full burden for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

C. Social workers should not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with former clients because of the potential for harm to the client. If social workers engage in conduct contrary to this prohibition or claim that an exception to this prohibition is warranted because of extraordinary circumstances, it is social workers--not their clients--who assume the full burden of demonstrating that the former client has not been exploited, coerced, or manipulated, intentionally or unintentionally.

D. Social workers should not provide clinical services to individuals with whom they have had a prior sexual relationship. Providing clinical services to a former sexual partner has the potential to be harmful to the individual and is likely to make it difficult for the social worker and individual to maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

### *1.10 Physical Contact*

Social workers should not engage in physical contact with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result of the contact (such as cradling or caressing clients). Social workers who engage in appropriate physical contact with clients are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern such physical contact.

### *1.11 Sexual Harassment*

Social workers should not sexually harass clients. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances; sexual solicitation; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal, written, electronic, or physical contact of a sexual nature.

### *1.12 Derogatory Language*

Social workers should not use derogatory language in their written, verbal, or electronic communications to or about clients. Social workers should use accurate and respectful language in all communications to and about clients.

### *1.13 Payment for Services*

(a) When setting fees, social workers should ensure that the fees are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the services performed. Consideration should be given to clients' ability to pay.

(b) Social workers should avoid accepting goods or services from clients as payment for professional services. Bartering arrangements, particularly involving services, create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in social workers' relationships with clients. Social workers should explore and may participate in bartering only in very limited circumstances when it can be demonstrated that such arrangements are an accepted practice among professionals in the local community, considered to be essential for the provision of services, negotiated without coercion, and entered into at the client's initiative and with the client's informed consent. Social workers who accept goods or services from clients as payment for professional services assume the full burden of demonstrating that this arrangement will not be detrimental to the client or the professional relationship.

(c) Social workers should not solicit a private fee or other remuneration for providing services to clients who are entitled to such available services through the social workers' employer or agency.

### *1.14 Clients Who Lack Decision-Making Capacity*

When social workers act on behalf of clients who lack the capacity to make informed decisions, social workers should take reasonable steps to safeguard the interests and rights of those clients.

### *1.15 Interruption of Services*

Social workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, disruptions in electronic communication, relocation, illness, mental or physical ability, or death.

### *1.16 Referral for Services*

- (a) Social workers should refer clients to other professionals when the other professionals' specialized knowledge or expertise is needed to serve clients fully or when social workers believe that they are not being effective or making reasonable progress with clients and that other services are required.
- (b) Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should take appropriate steps to facilitate an orderly transfer of responsibility. Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should disclose, with clients' consent, all pertinent information to the new service providers.
- (c) Social workers are prohibited from giving or receiving payment for a referral when no professional service is provided by the referring social worker.

### *1.17 Termination of Services*

- (a) Social workers should terminate services to clients and professional relationships with them when such services and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the clients' needs or interests.
- (b) Social workers should take reasonable steps to avoid abandoning clients who are still in need of services. Social workers should withdraw services precipitously only under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects. Social workers should assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services when necessary.
- (c) Social workers in fee-for-service settings may terminate services to clients who are not paying an overdue balance if the financial contractual arrangements have been made clear to the client, if the client does not pose an imminent danger to self or others, and if the clinical and other consequences of the current nonpayment have been addressed and discussed with the client.
- (d) Social workers should not terminate services to pursue a social, financial, or sexual relationship with a client.
- (e) Social workers who anticipate the termination or interruption of services to clients should notify clients promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or continuation of services in relation to the clients' needs and preferences.
- (f) Social workers who are leaving an employment setting should inform clients of appropriate options for the continuation of services and of the benefits and risks of the options.

## 2. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues

### 2.01 Respect

- (a) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.
- (b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in verbal, written, and electronic communications with clients or with other professionals. Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability.
- (c) Social workers should cooperate with social work colleagues and with colleagues of other professions when such cooperation serves the well-being of clients.

### 2.02 Confidentiality

Social workers should respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions. Social workers should ensure that such colleagues understand social workers' obligation to respect confidentiality and any exceptions related to it.

### 2.03 Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- (a) Social workers who are members of an interdisciplinary team should participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the social work profession. Professional and ethical obligations of the interdisciplinary team as a whole and of its individual members should be clearly established.
- (b) Social workers for whom a team decision raises ethical concerns should attempt to resolve the disagreement through appropriate channels. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, social workers should pursue other avenues to address their concerns consistent with client well-being.

### 2.04 Disputes Involving Colleagues

- (a) Social workers should not take advantage of a dispute between a colleague and an employer to obtain a position or otherwise advance the social workers' own interests.
- (b) Social workers should not exploit clients in disputes with colleagues or engage clients in any inappropriate discussion of conflicts between social workers and their colleagues.

### 2.05 Consultation

- (a) Social workers should seek the advice and counsel of colleagues whenever such consultation is in the best interests of clients.

- (b) Social workers should keep themselves informed about colleagues' areas of expertise and competencies. Social workers should seek consultation only from colleagues who have demonstrated knowledge, expertise, and competence related to the subject of the consultation.
- (c) When consulting with colleagues about clients, social workers should disclose the least amount of information necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

#### *2.06 Sexual Relationships*

- (a) Social workers who function as supervisors or educators should not engage in sexual activities or contact (including verbal, written, electronic, or physical contact) with supervisees, students, trainees, or other colleagues over whom they exercise professional authority.
- (b) Social workers should avoid engaging in sexual relationships with colleagues when there is potential for a conflict of interest. Social workers who become involved in, or anticipate becoming involved in, a sexual relationship with a colleague have a duty to transfer professional responsibilities, when necessary, to avoid a conflict of interest.

#### *2.07 Sexual Harassment*

Social workers should not sexually harass supervisees, students, trainees, or colleagues. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances; sexual solicitation; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal, written, electronic, or physical contact of a sexual nature.

#### *2.08 Impairment of Colleagues*

- (a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.
- (b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague's impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

#### *2.09 Incompetence of Colleagues*

- (a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's incompetence should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.
- (b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague is incompetent and has not taken adequate steps to address the incompetence should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

## *2.10 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues*

(a) Social workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues, including unethical conduct using technology.

(b) Social workers should be knowledgeable about established policies and procedures for handling concerns about colleagues' unethical behavior. Social workers should be familiar with national, state, and local procedures for handling ethics complaints. These include policies and procedures created by NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, employers, agencies, and other professional organizations.

(c) Social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should seek resolution by discussing their concerns with the colleague when feasible and when such discussion is likely to be productive.

(d) When necessary, social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should take action through appropriate formal channels (such as contacting a state licensing board or regulatory body, the NASW National Ethics Committee, or other professional ethics committees).

(e) Social workers should defend and assist colleagues who are unjustly charged with unethical conduct.

## **3. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings**

### *3.01 Supervision and Consultation*

(a) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation (whether in-person or remotely) should have the necessary knowledge and skill to supervise or consult appropriately and should do so only within their areas of knowledge and competence.

(b) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

(c) Social workers should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with supervisees in which there is a risk of exploitation of or potential harm to the supervisee, including dual relationships that may arise while using social networking sites or other electronic media.

(d) Social workers who provide supervision should evaluate supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

### *3.02 Education and Training*

(a) Social workers who function as educators, field instructors for students, or trainers should provide instruction only within their areas of knowledge and competence and should provide instruction based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession.

(b) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should evaluate students' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

(c) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients are routinely informed when services are being provided by students.

(d) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with students in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the student, including dual relationships that may arise while using social networking sites or other electronic media. Social work educators and field instructors are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

### *3.03 Performance Evaluation*

Social workers who have responsibility for evaluating the performance of others should fulfill such responsibility in a fair and considerate manner and on the basis of clearly stated criteria.

### *3.04 Client Records*

(a) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in electronic and paper records is accurate and reflects the services provided.

(b) Social workers should include sufficient and timely documentation in records to facilitate the delivery of services and to ensure continuity of services provided to clients in the future.

(c) Social workers' documentation should protect clients' privacy to the extent that is possible and appropriate and should include only information that is directly relevant to the delivery of services.

(d) Social workers should store records following the termination of services to ensure reasonable future access. Records should be maintained for the number of years required by relevant laws, agency policies, and contracts.

### *3.05 Billing*

Social workers should establish and maintain billing practices that accurately reflect the nature and extent of services provided and that identify who provided the service in the practice setting.

### *3.06 Client Transfer*

(a) When an individual who is receiving services from another agency or colleague contacts a social worker for services, the social worker should carefully consider the client's needs before agreeing to provide services. To minimize possible confusion and conflict, social workers should discuss with potential clients the nature of the clients' current relationship with other service providers and the implications, including possible benefits or risks, of entering into a relationship with a new service provider.

(b) If a new client has been served by another agency or colleague, social workers should discuss with the client whether consultation with the previous service provider is in the client's best interest.

### *3.07 Administration*

(a) Social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet clients' needs.

(b) Social workers should advocate for resource allocation procedures that are open and fair. When not all clients' needs can be met, an allocation procedure should be developed that is nondiscriminatory and based on appropriate and consistently applied principles.

(c) Social workers who are administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that adequate agency or organizational resources are available to provide appropriate staff supervision.

(d) Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment for which they are responsible is consistent with and encourages compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to eliminate any conditions in their organizations that violate, interfere with, or discourage compliance with the Code.

### *3.08 Continuing Education and Staff Development*

Social work administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development for all staff for whom they are responsible. Continuing education and staff development should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to social work practice and ethics.

### *3.09 Commitments to Employers*

(a) Social workers generally should adhere to commitments made to employers and employing organizations.

(b) Social workers should work to improve employing agencies' policies and procedures and the efficiency and effectiveness of their services.

(c) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that employers are aware of social workers' ethical obligations as set forth in the NASW Code of Ethics and of the implications of those obligations for social work practice.

(d) Social workers should not allow an employing organization's policies, procedures, regulations, or administrative orders to interfere with their ethical practice of social work. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that their employing organizations' practices are consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

(e) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organization's work assignments and in its employment policies and practices.

(f) Social workers should accept employment or arrange student field placements only in organizations that exercise fair personnel practices.

(g) Social workers should be diligent stewards of the resources of their employing organizations, wisely conserving funds where appropriate and never misappropriating funds or using them for unintended purposes.

### *3.10 Labor-Management Disputes*

(a) Social workers may engage in organized action, including the formation of and participation in labor unions, to improve services to clients and working conditions.

(b) The actions of social workers who are involved in labor-management disputes, job actions, or labor strikes should be guided by the profession's values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Reasonable differences of opinion exist among social workers concerning their primary obligation as professionals during an actual or threatened labor strike or job action. Social workers should carefully examine relevant issues and their possible impact on clients before deciding on a course of action.

## **4. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals**

### *4.01 Competence*

(a) Social workers should accept responsibility or employment only on the basis of existing competence or the intention to acquire the necessary competence.

(b) Social workers should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions. Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work. Social workers should routinely review the professional literature and participate in continuing education relevant to social work practice and social work ethics.

(c) Social workers should base practice on recognized knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics.

### *4.02 Discrimination*

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.

#### *4.03 Private Conduct*

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

#### *4.04 Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception*

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

#### *4.05 Impairment*

(a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

(b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

#### *4.06 Misrepresentation*

(a) Social workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and actions engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the social work profession, a professional social work organization, or the social worker's employing agency.

(b) Social workers who speak on behalf of professional social work organizations should accurately represent the official and authorized positions of the organizations.

(c) Social workers should ensure that their representations to clients, agencies, and the public of professional qualifications, credentials, education, competence, affiliations, services provided, or results to be achieved are accurate. Social workers should claim only those relevant professional credentials they actually possess and take steps to correct any inaccuracies or misrepresentations of their credentials by others.

#### *4.07 Solicitations*

(a) Social workers should not engage in uninvited solicitation of potential clients who, because of their circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence, manipulation, or coercion.

(b) Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client's prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current clients or from other people who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

#### *4.08 Acknowledging Credit*

- (a) Social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed.
- (b) Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others.

### 5. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession

#### *5.01 Integrity of the Profession*

- (a) Social workers should work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.
- (b) Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.
- (c) Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession. These activities may include teaching, research, consultation, service, legislative testimony, presentations in the community, and participation in their professional organizations.
- (d) Social workers should contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics. Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession's literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.
- (e) Social workers should act to prevent the unauthorized and unqualified practice of social work.

#### *5.02 Evaluation and Research*

- (a) Social workers should monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs, and practice interventions.
- (b) Social workers should promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge.
- (c) Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice.

- (d) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should carefully consider possible consequences and should follow guidelines developed for the protection of evaluation and research participants. Appropriate institutional review boards should be consulted.
- (e) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should obtain voluntary and written informed consent from participants, when appropriate, without any implied or actual deprivation or penalty for refusal to participate; without undue inducement to participate; and with due regard for participants' well-being, privacy, and dignity. Informed consent should include information about the nature, extent, and duration of the participation requested and disclosure of the risks and benefits of participation in the research.
- (f) When using electronic technology to facilitate evaluation or research, social workers should ensure that participants provide informed consent for the use of such technology. Social workers should assess whether participants are able to use the technology and, when appropriate, offer reasonable alternatives to participate in the evaluation or research.
- (g) When evaluation or research participants are incapable of giving informed consent, social workers should provide an appropriate explanation to the participants, obtain the participants' assent to the extent they are able, and obtain written consent from an appropriate proxy.
- (h) Social workers should never design or conduct evaluation or research that does not use consent procedures, such as certain forms of naturalistic observation and archival research, unless rigorous and responsible review of the research has found it to be justified because of its prospective scientific, educational, or applied value and unless equally effective alternative procedures that do not involve waiver of consent are not feasible.
- (i) Social workers should inform participants of their right to withdraw from evaluation and research at any time without penalty.
- (j) Social workers should take appropriate steps to ensure that participants in evaluation and research have access to appropriate supportive services.
- (k) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should protect participants from unwarranted physical or mental distress, harm, danger, or deprivation.
- (l) Social workers engaged in the evaluation of services should discuss collected information only for professional purposes and only with people professionally concerned with this information.
- (m) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should ensure the anonymity or confidentiality of participants and of the data obtained from them. Social workers should inform participants of any limits of confidentiality, the measures that will be taken to ensure confidentiality, and when any records containing research data will be destroyed.

(n) Social workers who report evaluation and research results should protect participants' confidentiality by omitting identifying information unless proper consent has been obtained authorizing disclosure.

(o) Social workers should report evaluation and research findings accurately. They should not fabricate or falsify results and should take steps to correct any errors later found in published data using standard publication methods.

(p) Social workers engaged in evaluation or research should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest and dual relationships with participants, should inform participants when a real or potential conflict of interest arises, and should take steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes participants' interests primary.

(q) Social workers should educate themselves, their students, and their colleagues about responsible research practices.

## 6. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society

### *6.01 Social Welfare*

Social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels, and the development of people, their communities, and their environments. Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and should promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice.

### *6.02 Public Participation*

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

### *6.03 Public Emergencies*

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

### *6.04 Social and Political Action*

(a) Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.

(b) Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.

(c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.

(d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.

### **Ethical Standards**

The MSW program has a professional values commitment that requires the highest standards of conduct in human interactions. Thus, the MSW program strives to maintain an atmosphere that promotes understanding, inclusiveness, and mutual respect for people with diverse backgrounds. Because of our belief in the dignity of individuals and their right to be treated with respect regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, class, religious beliefs, gender identity, and physical ability, the MSW Program does not condone any behavior that reveals prejudice, discrimination, or bigotry.

### **Nondiscrimination**

Northeastern State University supports nondiscrimination. This policy can be found at <https://offices.nsuok.edu/studentaffairs/compliance/discriminationharassment.aspx>.

### **Statement on Non-Discrimination**

Northeastern State University (NSU) does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, genetic information, or status as a veteran, and to the extent allowed by Oklahoma law, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identity in its programs and activities. These protections extend to employment with and admission to NSU, as well as, participant in university sponsored programs. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Title IX Coordinator  
 Darrin Priest  
 Seminary Hall 103  
 601 N. Grand Avenue  
 Tahlequah, OK 74464  
[titleix@nsuok.edu](mailto:titleix@nsuok.edu)  
 (918) 444-2120  
 Fax: (918) 458-2340

NSU is committed to providing learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes all forms of sexual misconduct. Sex discrimination violates an individual's fundamental rights and personal dignity. NSU considers sex discrimination in all its forms to be a serious offense. This policy refers to all forms of sex discrimination committed against members of the NSU community, including but not limited to: sexual misconduct that includes harassment, consensual, exploitation and violence; unfair treatment based on sex; and, other misconduct offenses when gender-based.

## Academic Misconduct

### NSU SOCIAL WORK ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

The Northeastern State University (NSU) Master of Social Work Program offers an upper-division professional social work curriculum built upon a liberal arts foundation which leads to a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Its primary mission is to provide academic preparation and contribute to the professional and intellectual growth and development of individuals who desire to enter generalist social work practice....The program is designed to integrate and apply the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics and the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession into competent generalist social work practice with populations at risk. (Mission Statement of the NSU Social Work Program)

#### Rationale for Policy:

The goal of the Social Work Faculty is for each student to reach the highest level of scholastic excellence possible, but this goal can only be attained when it is based upon scholastic integrity and academic honesty. It is the assumption of the Social Work Program Faculty that the majority of NSU social work students do act honestly and ethically in their academic endeavors. However, the various forms of academic dishonesty undermine and weaken the foundation of the educational process. The highest level of honesty and integrity is required in the NSU Social Work Program and the following academic policy infuses the underlying values and assumptions of the Social Work Code of Ethics into the academic setting.

#### NSU Policies Concerning Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

The Northeastern State University Student Conduct Code defines plagiarism as follows:

The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. *(NSU Student Conduct Code, Article I, Section P)*

Further, the Northeastern State University Student Conduct Code defines academic dishonesty, or cheating, as follows:

The term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- Use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- Use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- The acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff;
- Engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion. *(NSU Student Conduct Code, Article I, Section O)*

## **NASW Code of Ethics Standards Concerning Plagiarism and Dishonesty:**

The Beyond the responsibility of social work students and faculty to adhere to University policies, we are bound in our profession, collectively, by the standards of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics as well. Specifically, our professional Code of Ethics has this to say about the issue:

Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception. *(NASW Code of Ethics, Ethical Standard 4.04)*

Social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed. Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others. *(NASW Code of Ethics, Ethical Standard 4.08)*

Along with these specific mandates to avoid association with dishonesty, fraud, or deception, our professional code calls us to participate in upholding the integrity of the profession (5.01), and to seek resolution when we believe that a colleague has acted unethically (2.11).

### **Grounds for Dismissal**

Behavior that is illegal, does not adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics (<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>), or reflects other forms of inappropriate professional behavior will be grounds for dismissal from the program. This could include but is not limited to sexual or racial harassment or harassment concerning sexual orientation, threatening behavior, plagiarism, theft, and sexual misconduct with clients. This is inclusive of all behavior related to the status of students in the MSW Program: interactions with clients, agency staff, faculty, and students.

If a student is in violation of the code of NSU's code of conduct, the Social Work Program's Code of Conduct, or their practicum agency's code of professional conduct, the Social Work Faculty may determine that it is inappropriate for the student to continue in the program. These instances include, but are not limited to, serious ethical violations or continued unsatisfactory progress that prohibits the student from meeting the School's standards for successful graduation. Under these circumstances, the program chair, in consultation with the other members of the faculty as well as the Field Instructor, may recommend to the MSW Chair that the student be dismissed from the MSW Program.

In the event that a student is dismissed, the student may appeal the decision following the Grievance procedures of the School.

## Student Fitness to Practice Policy

Social work is a demanding profession that requires physical, mental, and emotional fortitude from its practitioners. Students will work with vulnerable populations and must demonstrate a high fitness level for practice at the student-learner level, exhibiting high academic and professional standards. The Northeastern State University School of Social Work (the “School”) takes very seriously ensuring that every social work student can effectively engage as a learner – in the classroom and practicum. This means giving students feedback and clear direction when concerns are raised about performance or concern about a student’s well-being. Faculty members and field instructors are responsible for providing feedback to address concerns clearly and promptly.

Some examples of behaviors that warrant a concern may include:

- 1.18 Concerning behaviors, statements, or written work
- 1.19 Substance misuse/abuse
- 1.20 Excessive absences in the classroom or practicum
- 1.21 Disruptive behaviors in the classroom or living community
- 1.22 Threats of harm to self or others
- 1.23 Possession or suspected possession of weapons
- 1.24 Angry/hostile behaviors
- 1.25 Concerning posts on social media – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.
- 1.26 Odd or bizarre behaviors
- 1.27 See Student Contract for additional concerns

Additional circumstances that may warrant concern include:

- 1.28 Physical disabilities in performing academic and/or practicum duties

Student social workers are to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics (the “Code”), which states that social workers should not allow their problems, psychosocial distress, legal issues, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of the people for whom they have a professional responsibility (NASW Code of Ethics, § 4.05a). The Code encourages social workers, including social work students, who believe that these difficulties are interfering with their professional judgment and performance to "seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others" (NASW Code of Ethics, § 4.05b).

According to the NASW Code of Ethics § 2.09, social workers are responsible for addressing unprofessional behavior and assisting the social work student “in taking remedial action.” By this standard, the NSU School of Social Work faculty are responsible for acting as gatekeepers to the profession. As such, the School and its constituents are responsible for reviewing the facts presented by all parties involved. They will implement the following procedure to respond to students actively exhibiting mental health, academic, or physical difficulties.

## **Procedure**

A review process will be activated when a student does not meet academic requirements, exhibits behavior judged to be unprofessional or in violation of the NASW Code of Ethics, or threatens or attempts to self-harm, among other indicators. The University and the School reserve the right to investigate and address concerns related to the student's fitness for practice in social work. An improvement plan may be implemented to support the student's growth and success and to ensure the protection of self and future clients. There are two levels of review for the School to follow when reviewing a student's behavior and fitness for practice.

### **Level I**

The class instructor will discuss issues related to poor academic performance and unprofessional behavior with the student. They will document the concerns and the outcome of addressing the problem with the student. The document will be placed in the student's file and shared with the BSW or MSW program director.

### **Level II**

This level is activated when a student discloses or expresses behavior that reveals personal difficulties in working effectively with others, impairment in the practicum or classroom, or impairment within the community. This includes but is not limited to, concerns discussed in Level I. The following procedure will be employed for a Level II review.

- a) In writing, the faculty member(s) will document concerns to the appropriate program director and the department chair within the same semester the student exhibits performance issues. The concerns should be stated in specific behavioral terms to allow for better evaluation of improvement indicators.
- b) The instructor will report the concern to NSU Student Affairs.
- c) The program director will form a Student Improvement Committee ("Committee") comprised of program faculty members to review the report. Committee members will include the instructor(s) and program director.
- d) The program director will notify the student and the student's advisor that the Committee is scheduled to meet. The student's performance concern(s) will be reviewed during this meeting.
- e) The student may provide the committee with a written response concerning the problematic behavior. If the issue occurs in the practicum setting, the Field Problem Resolution will be implemented (see NSU Practicum Manual).
- f) The Committee will meet within two weeks of receiving the initial document to address the problematic performance and develop a plan to address the deficit performance issues.
- g) During this stage, an action plan may be developed. The plan will state specific behavioral tasks to allow for better evaluation of improvement indicators. Action plans could include, but are not limited to, counseling, volunteer hours, delayed enrollment for practicum, or the student's withdrawal from the program, either temporarily or permanently.
- h) The program director will submit a plan of action to the department chair.
- i) The program director will meet with the student to discuss the action plan. The student will then receive a copy of the Committee's final decision, which they will sign.
- j) The program director will file a copy of the student's review in the student's file.

## Students' Rights to Confidentiality

The curriculum prepares professional social workers to be effective in helping clients and in collaborating with others on clients' behalf. In the context of the School's curriculum as contrasted with personal therapy, personal growth and self-awareness are not ends in themselves; they are means toward the ends of effective practice skills. Contrary to a contract for personal therapy, the educational contract may not require students to reveal personal information either to fellow students or instructors. Therefore, any course which requires self-disclosure as a teaching/learning methodology must be optional for students to elect, make explicit at the outset any requirements for expectations of self-disclosure, and provide a rationale acceptable to Curriculum Committee that the nature of self-disclosure required can reasonably be expected to improve practice and that application of such experiences to practice will be made explicit for students. Self-disclosure, for the purpose of this document, is defined as disclosure of personal or family relationships or history.

The following specific guidelines must be followed with respect to students' rights to confidentiality.

1. A student's reactions to or feelings about clients and fellow workers are a legitimate concern of social work education. Students may be asked to examine these matters either in written assignments, practicum supervision, advisement, or liaison conferences.
2. Students may not be required involuntarily as a part of class or practicum to reveal information about their personal or family relationships or histories with the exception indicated in item 3 below. An assignment asking for personal or family information may, however, be utilized if an alternative assignment is available and given equal credit. For example, describe family relationships in literature instead of one's own family or describe a person's problem rather than one's own problem.
3. A practice course may be offered which requires students to describe personal or family matters either in class or other assignments. Such a course may be offered under the following conditions:
  1. Methodology and content of the kind described in (3) must be approved by Curriculum Committee as necessary for achieving course objectives.
  2. Written course materials defining expectations of students regarding sharing of personal information must be made available at the outset of the course. The nature of the self-disclosure to be required and the context in which the self-disclosure will occur (e.g., assertiveness training, sharing of sexual experiences) must be made explicit in the course materials. The course materials must also contain a rationale for the types of self-disclosure expected indicating the specific ways in which such disclosure is expected to enhance practice skills.
4. Any information about him/herself which the student does choose to divulge must be treated by faculty and by fellow students with the same respect for confidentiality as that accorded to clients. That is, no mention of such confidences may be made unless directly connected with the education or practice of that student.
5. A breach of policy regarding student's rights to confidentiality by either faculty or students shall be considered a violation of professional ethics and academic misconduct.

## Confidentiality of Clients' Information

1. In any instance in which a client is mentioned in a classroom or class assignment, whether in a brief vignette, oral or written case presentation, or any other manner, the following assurances of confidentiality must be observed:
  - a) The names of persons who are clients, clients' family members, agency personnel, and any other persons in their environments must be disguised so that they will not be recognizable.
  - b) If the configuration of personal or family characteristics is such that it could render person(s) identifiable (age, family size or composition, race, occupation, handicap, etc.), some aspects of the configuration must be altered. Aspects least detrimental to understanding of the situation should be altered, but when there is doubt, the principle of confidentiality must take precedence over completeness in every detail. The specific place of work or schooling of clients should not be mentioned unless it is essential to the case and the entity is so large and the person's other characteristics are sufficiently nonspecific that he/she cannot be identified.
2. Any discussion about clients in the classroom takes place in the context of professional learning and teaching. As such, it is protected by the social work profession's ethics regarding confidentiality. Such content should never be discussed outside the classroom except with professional colleagues and then only for learning purposes.
3. Any written materials or tapes regarding clients must be prepared, used, and stored so as to ensure clients' privacy. For tapes to be used in the classroom, clients' permission must be gained in writing before taping may take place. Procedures used must be in conformity with University rules and regulations as well as with those of the student's practicum agency. Responsibility to see to it that no one has access to such materials, except for legitimate professional purposes, rests with each student and faculty member.
4. A breach of the policy regarding confidentiality shall be considered a violation of professional ethics and academic misconduct.

## Grading

Graduate level courses in the Social Work Department are graded A for exceptional performance, B for work meeting graduate standards, C for below graduate standards and F for failure, unsatisfactory work with no credit granted toward the degree. **A grade of C or below is not a passing grade in graduate level courses.**

### Grade Point Average (GPA)

The grade point average is determined by dividing the number of grade points earned by the number of credit hours.

A = 4 points

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

F = 0

## **Graduate College Grade Appeal Process**

A student may petition a grade change by using the Grade Appeals Process if satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved after consultation with the instructor and/or academic college Dean. If satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved after consultation with the instructor and/or Dean, then the grade appeals process must be formally initiated with a written appeal to the Graduate Dean within four months following awarding of the original grade. The grade appeal process is available at the Graduate College office.

The Graduate Grade Appeals Committee is comprised of faculty members who hold a Regular Graduate faculty appointment and have expressed an interest in serving on the Graduate Grade Appeals Committee. This committee is an ad hoc committee of the Graduate College which is charged with conducting a review when a grade appeal is filed by a student for one of the following reasons:

1. Allegations that the instructor's policy in assigning final grades is not applied consistently to all students within a class and section;
2. Allegations that the method of assigning grades differs from the method described in the instructor's course syllabus or in the material made available by the instructor to the students; or
3. Allegations that the instructor's policy on assignment of grades was not made known to students.

### **Process for Student Complaints Regarding Instructors, Faculty, and Students**

A student may seek a resolution of a potential grievance through discussions with the alleged offender (hereafter known as respondent). Before following this procedure, however, students may choose to seek advice about how best to approach this individual. Students are encouraged to seek assistance from full-time personnel in the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs or appropriate representative from which the complaint originates.

Any member of the University community may submit a complaint. A complaint should be submitted in writing, utilizing the Report Concern [Link](#) available online. A complaint should be submitted as soon as possible after the event takes place.

A submitted report will be reviewed to determine merit, need for further investigation, appropriate referral, if necessary, and/or dismissal. General referrals will be guided by the following:

#### **Complaints Against:**

- Student(s) -report to- Student Affairs
- Faculty -report to- Academic Affairs
- Staff -report to - Department Head

A student may report the incident or incidents to the Vice President for Student Affairs and request assistance in attempting to reach an informal resolution of the matter. The Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee, may then contact the respondent's immediate or general supervisor, who should attempt to resolve the grievance and will maintain the student's confidentiality to the extent provided by law.

Submitted complaints will begin in the Informal Procedure process, unless the circumstances surrounding the reported incident(s) warrant immediately moving into Formal Procedure process. Procedure steps will be determined by the Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee, in conjunction with appropriate University personnel, as suitable.

## **Grievance Procedures**

### **Informal Procedure**

Students are encouraged to attempt to resolve complaint directly with individuals involved. If no resolution is forthcoming, or if direct confrontation is deemed inappropriate by both parties, then the student may report the incident or incidents to the respondent's immediate or general supervisor, department head or Vice President for Student Affairs.

Under these informal procedures, the student may, at any time, elect to withdraw the complaint which may or may not stop further administrative action. The student may also, at any time, decide to move into the Formal Grievance procedure.

Informal procedures are aimed at stopping the behavior rather than determining culpability or intent. Usually, official disciplinary action for employees or students cannot be invoked without a formal hearing. Complaints that are resolved informally are generally not investigated to the same degree as formal proceedings, although the complainant and, in some cases, the alleged respondent may be interviewed. Mediation may be utilized as a method for resolving the complaint informally. If a complainant decides to handle the situation her/himself, and the issue stops, there may not be an investigation. Unlike formal procedures, the reporting party is not required to write an account of what happened for the informal handling of the complaint to proceed. The outcome of informal procedures can range from no action, a simple apology, a promise not to do it again, a transfer of either or both parties, to a voluntary resignation.

Submitted complaints will begin in the Informal Procedure process, unless the circumstances surrounding the reported incident(s) warrant immediately moving into Formal Procedure process. The student(s) submitting a grievance may request to move into the Formal Grievance procedure at any time during an informal procedure.

Examples of circumstances that warrant immediately moving to the Formal Procedure process are allegations of discrimination, hazing, and acts of violence and abuse – sexual, physical, mental.

Assistance with these procedures may be provided by appropriate Student Affairs professional staff and/or appropriate University representatives.

It is advisable and to the student's advantage, to file the complaint as soon as possible to insure that a complete, accurate fact pattern is captured in a timely manner and in close proximity to the time in which the incident(s) occurred.

As part of the written complaint, the student should also articulate a desired outcome or remedy to be considered in the event that discrimination is found to have occurred.

The Coordinator for Student Rights and Responsibilities, or designee(s), will investigate to resolve the complaint using the “Conducting Student Investigations” guidelines.

Investigations are intended to gather information and report detailed facts in connection with a reported incident. The purpose of an investigation is three-fold:

1. To provide the requesting party (or parties) sufficient information to determine if the incident warrants University action;
2. To determine departmental jurisdiction;
3. To provide the hearing officers and/or boards that may be assigned the case with sufficient information to assess University charges.

In the event incident(s) is/are found to have occurred, the Coordinator of Student Rights and Responsibilities, or appropriate personnel, shall take disciplinary and/or additional action as deemed appropriate under University policies. Incidents involving student(s) will be addressed through the appropriate university policies and procedures. Incidents involving employee(s) will be addressed through HR policies and procedures.

If it is determined that a complaint filed under this rule was groundless (no factual basis to believe incident occurred) or in bad faith (claim was motivated by a malicious purpose), the student may be subject to student conduct disciplinary action.

## Formal Grievance Procedures

Submitted complaints will begin in the Informal Procedure process, unless the circumstances surrounding the reported incident(s) warrant immediately moving into Formal Procedure process. The student(s) submitting a grievance may request to move into the Formal Grievance procedure at any time during an informal procedure.

Examples of circumstances that warrant immediately moving to the Formal Procedure process are allegations of discrimination, hazing, and acts of violence and abuse – sexual, physical, mental.

Assistance with these procedures may be provided by appropriate Student Affairs professional staff and/or appropriate University representatives.

It is advisable and to the student's advantage, to file the complaint as soon as possible to insure that a complete, accurate fact pattern is captured in a timely manner and in close proximity to the time in which the incident(s) occurred.

As part of the written complaint, the student should also articulate a desired outcome or remedy to be considered in the event that discrimination is found to have occurred.

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