

## **SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD**

### **Notes of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Taskforce on Review of Code of Practice**

Date: 25 May 2017  
Time: 9:35 a.m.  
Venue: Room HJ417, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Present: Mr. WONG Ka-ming (Acting Convenor)  
Dr. CHENG Yuk-tin, Carl (co-opted member)  
Dr. LAM Chiu-wan (co-opted member)  
Dr. LEUNG Chuen-suen  
Mr. LUN Chi-wai  
Secretary: Mr. LEE Wing-po, Eric, Registrar and  
Ms. FAN Lai-yee, Veronica, Assistant Registrar

#### Confirmation of notes of last meetings

1. It was agreed to revise the word “regulator” to “regulatory” in paragraphs 1(a). Members endorsed the notes of last meeting without further amendment.

#### Compilation of the Codes of Practice from different countries

2. To facilitate the discussion, the Board office compiled the Codes of Practice from HK, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Taiwan and presented in five different parts i.e. “definition”, “preamble”, “values and beliefs”, “related to clients” and “related to colleagues”. Another three parts were still under preparation.

#### Work schedule

3. Before going into details, members determined the work schedule as follows:
  - (a) The Taskforce would first confirm the structure of Code of Practice.
  - (b) The Taskforce would start to prepare the first draft of revision.
  - (c) The work would be divided into different parts and each part would be handled by two members.
  - (d) In parallel, the Taskforce would seek for the Board’s blessings on the initial structure of Code of Practice and major areas of changes.
  - (e) The Taskforce would invite different stakeholders to give views on the initial draft.

*(Mr. Wong arrived)*

#### Structure

4. It was agreed at the previous meeting that the Code of Practice and its Guidelines would be combined to one document.
5. The revised document would consist of the following sections:

- (a) Section 1 Preamble
  - (i) Nature and mission of social work
  - (ii) International and historical definition of social work
- (b) Section 2 Purposes of Code of Practice  
(reference to the Code in the United States<sup>1</sup> and the Code in Australia<sup>2</sup>)
- (c) Section 3 Basic Values and Beliefs
- (d) Section 4 Ethical Practice and Decision Making
  - (i) Contextual, individual and professional diversity (reference to the Code of Practice in Canada<sup>3</sup>)
  - (ii) Aspirations as well as setting minimum standards
  - (iii) Ethical practice and/or decision making
  - (iv) Personal commitment to engage in ethical practice (reference to the Code of Practice in the United States<sup>4</sup>)
- (e) Section 5 Principles and Practices
  - (i) Related to Clients
  - (ii) Related to Colleagues
  - (iii) Related to Agency
  - (iv) Related to Profession
  - (v) Related to Society
- (f) Definition and Interpretation

#### Format of Presentation in Section 5

6. With reference to the Code of Practice in the United Kingdom, members agreed that it would consist of three parts i.e. values and beliefs, principles and standard & rules. The standard & rules would be corresponding to the related principles. A sample was attached at Appendix 1.

#### Definition and interpretation

7. This part would be discussed during or after the discussion on Section 5.
8. Definitions of sexual activities, sexual contact, dual relationship and professional conduct should be included.

#### Preamble

9. Members agreed to revise the existing Preamble as follows:
  - (a) Keep the first paragraph

- (b) Elaborate paragraph 2 including the mission and nature of social work and the international and historical definition of social work.
- (c) In paragraph 3, the code should be a guide to “professional conduct of social work” instead of a guide to “every day conduct”. Professional conduct would be clearly defined.

#### Nature and Mission of Social Work

- 10. Members noted the following:
  - (a) In Australia, it emphasized cultural awareness.
  - (b) In the United Kingdom, it emphasized that social work is an interrelated systems of values, theory and practice.
  - (c) In the United States, it emphasized that social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients.

#### International and Historical Definition of Social Work

- 11. Members reviewed the international definition of social work from the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) in 2014<sup>5</sup> and the definition adopted by the BASW in the United Kingdom<sup>6</sup>.
- 12. Members noted that the international definition emphasized social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities. There was no conclusion on which definition should be adopted.
- 13. When drafting the revision, the Taskforce should take note of the balance between social justice, social change and empowerment.
- 14. Members agreed to include the historical definition of social work in terms of both local and international contexts.

#### Purpose of Code of Practice

- 15. Members referred to the six purposes of the Code in the United States<sup>1</sup> and they agreed to adopt number 1-4 and 6.
- 16. Members adopted point 3 in the purposes of the Code in Australia<sup>2</sup> but the scope would be narrowed down to “the Code provides a focus for profession social work identities in terms of ethical values and standards”.

#### Next step

- 17. Members agreed that at the subsequent meetings, the Taskforce would complete the review of Preamble, the Basic Values and Belief and the part on Related to Colleagues.
- 18. The work arrangements were agreed as follows:

- (a) Dr. Lam would work on Section 1 Preamble.
- (b) Mr. Wong and Dr. Cheng on Section 3 Basic Values and Belief
- (c) Mr. Lun and Dr. Leung on Section 5 Related to Colleagues.

**Date of next meeting**

- 19. The next meeting would be held on 19 July 2017 at 9:15am at Room HJ417, Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- 20. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.

1 June 2017

## Reference

### **1. Code of Ethics – NASW, 11/1/2016, page 1-2**

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.

### **2. AASW Code of Ethics, 2010, page 10**

The purpose of the Code is to:

- identify the values and ethics which underpin ethical social work practice
- provide a guide and standard for ethical social work conduct and accountable service delivery
- provide a focus for professional social work identities
- provide social workers with a foundation for ethical reflection and decision making
- guide social workers when determining their reciprocal rights with employers, colleagues and the AASW
- provide clarification of social workers' actions in the context of industrial or legal disputes
- hold members accountable for their ethical practice and act as a basis for investigation and adjudication of formal complaints about unethical conduct.

### **3. CASW Code of Ethics, 2005, page 2**

#### Recognition of Individual and Professional Diversity

The CASW *Code of Ethics* does not provide a set of rules that prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. Further, the *Code of Ethics* does not specify which values and

principles are most important and which outweigh others in instances of conflict. Reasonable differences of opinion exist among social workers with respect to which values and principles should be given priority in a particular situation. Further, a social worker's personal values, culture, religious beliefs, practices and/or other important distinctions, such as age, ability, gender or sexual orientation can affect his/her ethical choices. Thus, social workers need to be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly.

#### ***4. Code of Ethics – NASW 11/1/2016 page 2 paragraph 5***

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.

#### ***5. International definition of social work in 2014 from the International Federation of Social Work (<http://ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work/>)***

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.

#### ***6. BASW The Code of Ethics for Social Work – Statement of Principles, page 6***

The international definition of social work (2000)

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex transactions between people and their environments. Its mission is to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice.

## Related to Clients

### Values and Beliefs

Social work relationship, as a major component of professional service, is a mutual endeavour between active participants providing and using social work expertise. Clients and social workers jointly address relevant social and/or personal problems of concern to clients. Social work relationship is founded on the belief that clients have the right and capacity to determine and achieve their goals and objectives. It is also grounded in and draws upon theories of the social sciences and social work.

### Principles

#### Responsibility

1. Social workers have a primary responsibility to the clients.

#### Cultural Awareness

2. Social workers should recognise the ethnic and cultural diversity of the communities being served.
3. Social workers should be acquainted with and sensitive to the cultures of clients and appreciate the differences among them in respect of their ethnicity, national origin, nationality, religion and custom.

#### Informed Decision and Self-determination

1. Social workers acknowledge a responsibility to inform clients of their rights and help them to obtain appropriate services. Clients should also be informed of, as far as possible, obligations and possible consequences associated with services provided to them.
2. Social workers should clearly inform clients, who are using services under compulsion, of their rights as well as the limits of their rights and assist them in attaining as much autonomy as possible.

### Standards & Rules

1. Social workers should not provide services to their clients that are out of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, and relevant professional knowledge and skills.
2. Social workers should not provide services to clients when they are aware of any personal factors and/or value conflict that may lead to inappropriate or inadequate service or that may cause harm to clients.