Code of Ethics
SUMMARY OF MAJOR PRINCIPLES

I. SOCIAL WORKERS’ VALUES, COMMITMENT, AND CONDUCT
A. Service. Social workers’ primary goal, above self-interest, is to help people and to address social problems.
B. Social Justice. Social workers should challenge social injustice and pursue social change, particularly for vulnerable and oppressed people, and promote participation in decision making.
C. Dignity and Worth of Person. Social workers should respect the inherent dignity and worth of all persons.
D. Importance of Human Relationships. Social workers should value relationships as a vehicle of change.
E. Integrity. Social Workers should act in a trustworthy manner consistent with the profession’s mission and values.
F. Competence. Social workers practice within and strive to increase their areas of knowledge and competence.

II. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO CLIENTS
A. Commitment to Clients. Social workers’ primary responsibility is to clients, although this may be superseded by legal obligations or obligations to the larger society under some circumstances.
B. Self-Determination. Social workers’ respect and promote the rights of clients to self-determination and assist them in attaining their goals, unless these could lead to serious harm to self and others.
C. Informed Consent. Social workers should only offer services to clients with the informed consent of those clients including making information accessible on client rights and on the potential outcomes of services.
D. Competence. Social workers should provide services only in those area in which they are competent.
E. Cultural Competence. Social workers should understand culture, have knowledge of their clients’ cultures, recognize the strengths within cultures, and be aware of diversity and oppression.
F. Conflicts of Interest. Social workers should avoid conflicts of interest, take action to inform clients of potential conflicts, maintain appropriate boundaries, and protect clients from negative consequences of dual relationships.
G. Privacy and Confidentiality. Social workers should respect their clients’ right to privacy, protecting client confidentiality and informing clients of the parameters of confidentiality.
H. Access to Records. Social workers should provide clients with reasonable access to their records.
I. Sexual Relationships. Social workers should not engage in sexual contact with current clients. Social workers should usually not engage in sexual contact with people in the clients’ personal lives. In most cases, social workers should not have sexual contact with former clients, nor take on clients with whom they had a sexual relationship.
J. Physical Contact. Social workers should only engage in physical contact with clients when such contact is not potentially harmful and when it is within clear, culturally appropriate boundaries.
K. Sexual Harassment. Social workers should not sexually harass clients.
L. Derogatory Language. Social workers should not use derogatory verbal or written language to or about clients.
M. Payment of Services. Social workers should set fees that are fair and reasonable, and that give consideration to clients’ ability to pay. They should not make bartering arrangements with clients.
N. Clients Who Lack Decision-Making Capacity. Social workers should strive to protect the interests and rights of clients who are unable to make informed consent decisions.
O. Interruption of Services. Social workers should try to maintain continuity of services.
P. Termination of Services. Social workers should terminate services to clients when such services are no longer necessary or beneficial. They should attempt to avoid abandoning clients who are still in need of services. They may terminate clients for failure to pay for services only after attempts to address the issue with client and when such termination does not pose a danger.

III. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES
A. Respect. Social workers should respect colleagues and their qualifications and views, avoiding unwarranted professional or personal criticism of colleagues. They should cooperate with colleagues when beneficial to clients.
B. Confidentiality. Social workers should respect the confidentiality of shared client information.
C. Interdisciplinary Collaboration. Social workers on interdisciplinary teams should draw on the perspectives, values and experience of the social work profession. Ethical concerns of social workers on teams should be resolved.
through appropriate channels and pursued as necessary to promote client well-being.

D. Disputes Involving Colleagues. Social workers should not use a dispute between colleague and an employer to promote their own interests. They should not inappropriately involve nor exploit clients in colleague disputes.

E. Consultation. Social workers should seek colleague consultation when it is in the best interest of clients, based on knowledge of those colleagues’ areas of expertise and disclosing only necessary information.

F. Referral of Services. Social workers should refer clients to other professionals when necessary or beneficial, taking steps to facilitate transfers and to disclose information only with the client’s consent. They should not receive payment from nor offer payment to the referring social worker.

G. Sexual Relationships. Social workers should not engage in sexual relationships with their trainees, supervisees, or students. They should avoid sexual relationships with colleagues when there is a potential conflict of interest.

H. Sexual Harassment. Social workers should not sexually harass supervisees, students, trainees, or colleagues.

I. Impairment of Colleagues. Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague’s impairment, due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, or substance abuse, that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible. If the colleague is not taking steps to address this, they should take action through channels established by agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other organizations.

J. Incompetence of Colleagues. Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague’s incompetence should consult with the colleague to take remedial action. If the colleague is not addressing the problem, social workers should take action as with colleague impairment.

K. Unethical Conduct of Colleagues. Social workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues, being aware of and using available channels to address such concerns. They should defend colleagues who are unjustly charged with unethical conduct.

IV. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRACTICE SETTINGS

A. Supervision and Consultation. Social workers should provide supervision or consultation only in their areas of competence. They should set clear, culturally-appropriate boundaries and not engage in dual relationships with supervisees where there is potential harm.

B. Education and Training. Social workers should provide instruction only in areas of competence. They should be fair in evaluating students’ performance, avoid dual relationships if there is the potential for harm, and make sure clients are informed of services provided by students.

C. Performance Evaluation. Social workers should be fair in evaluating others’ performance.

D. Client Records. Social workers should try to make records accurate, timely, confidential, and available for the time required by state statutes.

E. Client Transfer. Social workers should assess the potential client benefits of accepting a referral.

F. Administration. Social work administrators should advocate for adequate client resources, fair allocation, and work conditions congruent with the NASW Code of Ethics, also promoting continuing education and staff development.

G. Commitments to Employers. Social workers should generally adhere to agency commitments, but they should try to enhance ethical practice and ethical employment practices in their agencies.

H. Labor-Management Disputes. Social workers may engage in organized labor efforts, adhering to the guidelines of Ethical practice and employment.

V. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS PROFESSIONALS

A. Competence. Social workers should work within their areas of competence and of the parameters of accepted practice. They should work toward maintaining and enhancing their competence.

B. Discrimination. Social workers should not practice nor condone discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or disability.

C. Private Conduct. Social workers should not permit their private lives to interfere professionally.

D. Dishonesty. Social workers should not participate in nor condone dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

E. Impairment. Social workers should take steps not to allow problems to interfere with client care.

F. Misrepresentation. Social workers’ stated credentials and representation should be accurate.

G. Solicitations. Social workers should not use undue influence to obtain clients or work.

H. Acknowledging Credit. Social workers should take credit only for their own work.

VI. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PROFESSION

A. Integrity of the Profession. Social workers should work to set and maintain high standards of practice. They
should work towards promoting the development of the profession.

B. Evaluation and Research. Social workers should monitor and evaluate practice, programs, and policies. They should contribute to research that promotes effective practice and policies.

VII. SOCIAL WORKERS’ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BROADER SOCIETY

A. Social Welfare. Social workers should promote the welfare of society and social justice.

B. Public Participation. Social workers should facilitate informed participation in shaping policy.

C. Public Emergencies. Social workers should provide professional assistance in emergencies.

D. Social and Political Action. Social workers should engage in political action to ensure economic and social justice, to expand choice, to promote the well-being of vulnerable groups, and to fight discrimination.

02/98-DMC

I have read the above National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics. I will abide, ascribe, and review this Code of Ethics as part of my on-going professional development.

________________________________________
Applicant’s Signature

________________________________________
Applicant’s Name, Printed

________________________________________
Applicant’s e-mail address

________________________________________
Applicant’s Banner ID #

Rev 06/27/10