



Master of Social Work
Student Handbook
Policies and Procedures

800 W University Pkwy
Orem, UT, 84058
<https://www.uvu.edu/besc/msw/>

Introduction

Welcome to the Master of Social Work program at Utah Valley University! You have made the important decision to pursue a career in social work. Social work is a profession with roots that extend into nearly all walks of life. It is a very noble profession that is geared toward helping those who are often the most neglected of society. Social work seeks to ennoble the disenfranchised through educating individuals who are professional, ethical, and highly skilled. This is a challenging program, but you were selected to be part of the MSW program because you have demonstrated a commitment to helping vulnerable populations, promoting social justice, and a respect for individual worth. You will have many opportunities to engage in applied learning, be steeped in scholarship, and become a talented professional. MSW graduates from Utah Valley University are prepared for careers in mental health settings, hospitals, women's shelters, child welfare, addictions, and other interesting agencies that serve people in need. We are pleased to have you as a part of the social work family at UVU and wish you well in the next two years.

The UVU MSW program received initial accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 2017. UVU MSW is accredited as an Advanced Generalist program. The UVU MSW program seeks to accomplish its mission and achieve its goals through coursework and field experiences that facilitate the development of professional competencies. Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of social work knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is for students and graduates to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. These standards are set by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Educational Standards, 2022).

Program Mission Statement and Goals

Mission Statement

The faculty in UVU's Master of Social Work (MSW) program empower students to embrace challenges and realize their potential to create effective, positive, and sustainable change. UVU's MSW program prepares students to utilize the planned change model (engagement, assessment, goal setting/contracting, intervention, evaluation, and transition/ending) to improve the well-being of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in a variety of settings. With a prominence of mental health, substance-use-disorder and addiction-related coursework, students will engage in strengths-based, research-informed social work practice emphasizing the intersection of people within their environments. The MSW develops an understanding of the ways laws, policies, and culture impact individual and familial access to equitable opportunity and services.

Successful graduates, including academic coursework and supervised practice, will be eligible for employment in diverse settings (mental health therapy, medical social work, school social work, child welfare, etc.) and licensure as a Certified Social Worker (CSW) in the state of Utah. The CSW license is a precursor to obtaining the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) license in Utah.

Program Goals

1. Apply principles of trauma-conscious practice to engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities as a component of the interactive process of social work practice.
2. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities within the context of social work practice using research-informed assessment tools.
3. Partner with clients to plan and implement interventions to increase well-being with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
4. Evaluate client services, including processes and outcomes, to increase effectiveness.
5. Use critical thinking and ethical decision-making models to practice social work ethically and professionally.
6. Ensure dignity and respect for clients by reducing inequities and promoting social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.
7. Practice anti-oppressive social work informed by intersectionality and the diversity of human experience and identity development.
8. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed social work practice.
9. Evaluate the impact of laws and social and organizational policy on access to social services, equitable opportunities, and overall well-being

Program Eligibility

The MSW is a competitive admission program. Deadlines for applications and additional information regarding the requirements may be found on the MSW website. Requirements for admission to the MSW Program include the following:

1. A bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited university or college with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. If an applicant's cumulative GPA is below a 3.0, the program may calculate and accept GPA based on the last 60 semester hours (90 quarter hours) of undergraduate work. A **Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree earned within the past 10 years** is required to apply for **Advanced Standing**.
2. Completion of prerequisite courses with a B- or higher. This requirement must be satisfied prior to matriculation if offered admission.
 1. Introduction to Social Work - must be completed or in progress at time of submitting an application.
 2. Statistics- any college level
 3. Research Methods- must be related to one of the behavioral sciences
3. Submission of official university transcripts.
4. Submission of resume.
5. Submission of application essays.
6. Submission of three professional references.

Meeting the minimum requirements does not guarantee admittance. Applications will be reviewed by a committee of full-time social work faculty, and if necessary (due to disagreements or a conflict of interest), arrangements have been made for another outside professional educator to review the applications as well. Applicants will be notified by email or postal mail if necessary. Admission will be granted contingent upon completing all admissions criteria prior to beginning the MSW program. Students accepted into the MSW program must be able to take classes on a full-time basis on campus (classes are not taught online).

All students who meet the minimum application requirements are welcome to apply. No student will be denied admission based upon race, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, culture, creed, class, ethnicity, or national origin.

Criminal conviction or pending criminal charges will not necessarily disqualify a student from admission to the MSW. However, past or future criminal activity or conduct may limit or inhibit a student from completing a social work internship which is required to complete the degree or render the student ineligible to receive state certification or licensure to practice social work. For more information, contact the Utah Division of Professional Licensing (DOPL) at: <http://www.dopl.utah.gov/>

MSW Degree Requirements

Students admitted to the MSW program, after having their eligibility for the program confirmed, and after having completed their general education requirements prior to beginning the program, must complete the following requirements to earn the Master of Social Work degree.

Please note academic credit will not be awarded for previous work or life experience of any kind.

Descriptions for the courses below can be found in the “Course Catalog” found here: [Master of Social Work, M.S.W. | Utah Valley University Academic Catalog \(uvu.edu\)](#)

Total Credit Hours		57
Discipline Core Requirements: MSW (Two-Year)		51 Credits
Social Work Core		
Complete the following:		
SW 6000	Social Work Practice I--Generalist Practice with Individuals	3
SW 6020	Social Work Practice II--Generalist Practice with Families and Groups	3
SW 6250	Macro Systems and Social Impact	3
SW 6030	Social Work Practice III--Advanced Practice with Individuals	3
SW 6040	Social Work Practice IV--Advanced Practice with Families and Groups	3
SW 6050	Social Work Practice V--Advanced Practice with Organizations and Communities *	3
SW 6200	Human Behavior and the Social Environment	3
SW 6630	Mental Health Assessment in Social Work Practice	3
SW 6300	Social Welfare Policy and Analysis	3
SW 6320	Social Work Practice with Diverse Populations	3
SW 6400	Social Work Research Methods	3
SW 6500	Social Work Practice with Substance Related and Addictive Disorders	3
SW 6950	Advanced Applied Research--MSW Capstone	3
Field Practicum Requirement		
Complete the following:		
SW 6810	Integrative Seminar I	1
SW 6820	Integrative Seminar II	1
SW 6830	Integrative Seminar III	1

SW 6840	Integrative Seminar IV	1
SW 6910	Foundation Field Practicum I	2
SW 6920	Foundation Field Practicum II	2
SW 6930	Advanced Field Practicum I	2
SW 6940	Advanced Field Practicum II	2
Elective Requirements		6
Complete 6 credits from the following		
SW 6530	Psychopharmacology (3)	
SW 6610	Spirituality in Social Work (3)	
SW 6620	Family Therapy (3)	
SW 6640	Crisis Intervention (3)	
SW 6650	Couples Therapy (3)	
SW 6660	Family Violence Across the Lifespan (3)	
SW 6670	Post Traumatic Growth--Practice and Clinical Considerations (3)	
SW 679R	Special Topics in Social Work Practice (undefined)	
SW 6945	Supplemental Field Practicum (1-4)	

Graduation Requirements

1. Completion of a minimum of 57 semester credits required in the Master of Social Work degree.
2. A minimum of two-thirds of graduate degree credit hours must be completed at Utah Valley University.
3. Overall cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher in Master of Social Work courses.
4. A grade of "C" or higher required for all courses used to satisfy graduation requirement.
5. Graduate coursework shall be completed within a six-year period.
6. Graduate credits accepted from another regionally accredited institution or equivalent shall have been completed within four years of the graduate student's matriculation into the graduate program and cannot be older than six years at the time of graduation with a master's degree or graduate certificate from the University.

MSW Advanced Standing Degree Requirements

program confirmed, and after having completed their general education requirements prior to beginning the program, must complete the following requirements to earn the Master of Social Work Advanced Standing degree.

Please note academic credit will not be awarded for previous work or life experience of any kind.

Descriptions for the courses below can be found in Wolverine Track or in the “Course Catalog” found here: [Master of Social Work Advanced Standing, M.S.W. | Utah Valley University Academic Catalog \(uvu.edu\)](https://uvu.edu/academic-catalog/)

Total Credit Hours		38
Discipline Core Requirements (Advanced Standing MSW)		26 Credits
Social Work Core		
Advanced Standing Bridge Requirement		
SW 6490	MSW Advanced Standing Bridge Course	4
SW 6491	MSW Advanced Standing Skills Course	4
SW 6630	Mental Health Assessment in Social Work Practice	3
Complete the following:		
SW 6030	Social Work Practice III--Advanced Practice with Individuals	3
SW 6040	Social Work Practice IV--Advanced Practice with Families and Groups	3
SW 6050	Social Work Practice V--Advanced Practice with Organizations and Communities	3
SW 6500	Social Work Practice with Substance Related and Addictive Disorders	3
SW 6950	Advanced Applied Research--MSW Capstone	3
Field Practicum Requirement		6

Complete the following:		
SW 6830	Integrative Seminar III	1
SW 6840	Integrative Seminar IV	1
SW 6930	Advanced Field Practicum I	2
SW 6940	Advanced Field Practicum II	2
Elective requirements		6
SW 6530	Psychopharmacology (3)	
SW 6610	Spirituality in Social Work (3)	
SW 6620	Family Therapy (3)	
SW 6640	Crisis Intervention (3)	
SW 6650	Couples Therapy (3)	
SW 6660	Family Violence Across the Lifespan (3)	
SW 6670	Post Traumatic Growth--Practice and Clinical Considerations (3)	
SW 679R	Special Topics in Social Work Practice (undefined)	
SW 6945	Supplemental Field Practicum (1-4)	

Graduation Requirements

1. Completion of a minimum of 38 semester credits required in the Master of Social Work degree.
2. A minimum of two-thirds of graduate degree credit hours must be completed at Utah Valley University.
3. Overall cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher in Master of Social Work courses.
4. A grade of "C" or higher required for all courses used to satisfy graduation requirement.
5. Graduate coursework shall be completed within a six-year period.
6. Graduate credits accepted from another regionally accredited institution or equivalent shall have been completed within four years of the graduate student's matriculation into the graduate program and cannot be older than six years at the time of graduation with a master's degree or graduate certificate from the University.

Field Practicum and Licensure

Placement in the Field Practicum

Social Work at the Master's level is a licensed profession in Utah. Practitioners must be able to apply professional knowledge, values, and skills ethically. Practice courses provide skill development activities in order for students to develop skills such as interviewing and assessment, intervention, and evaluation. During both years students complete internships during the *fall and spring* semesters. Students are assigned to social services agencies by the Field Director, with consideration of the students' interests and learning needs, and the availability of field agencies. These internships provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills learned in classes to real-life situations with clients. Field Practicum students are supervised and guided by professional social workers in agencies in order to ensure that they have productive educational experiences. The MSW program expects students to exemplify professional and ethical behavior in accordance with current professional social work standards. The MSW program expects all students to obey the law, to show respect for properly constituted authority, to perform contracted obligations, to maintain absolute integrity and high standards of individual honesty in academic work, and to observe a high standard of conduct within the academic and professional environment. In short, a student enrolled in the MSW program at UVU accepts the obligation to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner acceptable at an institution of higher learning and within the social work profession.

Field Practicum Requirements

The field experience entails completion of 950 (400 hours in the foundation year, and 550 hours in the advanced year) clock hours at the field agency, weekly attendance at a seminar on campus and enrollment in related, concurrent classes. The Field Director makes field agency assignments with input from the student and field agency staff. Most students feel that their field internships are among the most valuable experiences in the program. Field experiences often help a student narrow their choices for a field of practice within social work. Field Instructors can be very helpful in assisting students with the job search process. Many students are hired by agencies in which they completed internships, or by agencies they learned of while in field.

Licensure

Most states regulate the practice of social work through certification or licensure. Persons without these credentials are prohibited by law from calling themselves social workers or practicing social work. The State of Utah licenses social workers at several levels: Social Service Worker (SSW); Certified Social Worker (CSW); and Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). The SSW requires a bachelors degree, and with a BSW from an accredited (or from a program in candidacy) you may sit for the exam upon graduation, rather than having to wait for a year and fulfill the supervision requirements. The CSW and LCSW both require an MSW from an accredited program (or from a program in candidacy). For more information go to: http://www.dopl.utah.gov/licensing/forms/applications/074_social_work.pdf

Student Rights and Responsibilities

According to University policy, "a student subject to suspension or dismissal (from the University or the MSW program) may petition the Academic Standards Committee for an

exception to the Academic Standards Policy. To do so, he/she must submit a written appeal to the Standards Coordinator. In this petition, the student may request that he/she be granted a hearing before the Academic Standards Committee. The petition should set forth the extenuating circumstances that would warrant the granting of a waiver of the student's suspension, or dismissal status. Evidence should be presented which would indicate that the student has carefully considered and re-assessed educational objectives and has eliminated those factors which led to suspension, or dismissal status. If a student is dissatisfied with the decision of the Academic Standards Committee, the student has the right to present a written appeal to the Vice President for Student Services, within two weeks following notification of the committee's decision.”

General Rights

A student, while properly enrolled at the institution, will have the right to the following institution services, treatment, and information:

1. Free and open discussion, inquiry and expression, subject to constitutional limitations regarding time, place, and manner.
2. Protection against the institution’s improper disclosure of students’ records, work, views, beliefs, and political associations.
3. Procedural safeguard and personal privacy with respect to testing for drugs and infectious diseases (e.g.AIDS).
4. Timely and understandable information and respectful treatment regarding policies, refunds, lab fees, course fees, library fines, lab breakages and liability, etc.
5. Freedom from a discriminatory and offensive campus environment that may cause emotional stress or a hostile or offensive campus environment directed toward another person.
6. Freedom from sexual harassment.
7. Full protection under the Constitution for freedom of the press, including the Constitutional limitations on prior restraint and censorship

8. Due process of law recognized as being essential to the proper enforcement of institution rules.
9. Security for his/her person, papers, and personal effects against unreasonable searches and seizures.
10. Freedom to form and to operate an organized student association within the guidelines prescribed by the institution.
11. Access to the institution's Ombudsman for consultation in matters of personal and school issues and concerns.
12. Student representation through student government on institutional committees, councils, commissions, and other formally constituted bodies that make general policy and procedure decisions directly affecting students or that govern student activities and conduct.
13. Access to all student government sponsored activities.
14. Accurate information in advertising, recruitment, and orientation efforts.

General Responsibilities

A student assumes the responsibility to conduct himself/herself in an appropriate manner. Categories of misconduct that are not considered responsible behavior include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Failure to respect the right of every person to be secure from fear, threats, intimidation, harassment, hazing and/or physical harm caused by the activities of groups or individuals.
2. Sexual assault, harassment, or any other unwelcome verbal or physical sexual activity, including the support or assistance of such activities.
3. Unauthorized seizure or occupation of any institutional building or facility.
4. Obstruction, disruption or interference with teaching, disciplinary proceedings, institution-sponsored activities and services or events.
5. Use or possession of any weapon, explosive device, or fireworks on a person or storage of such on institutional property without prior written approval from the Chief of Campus Police.
6. Unlawful use, possession, distribution, sale, manufacture, or possession for purposes of distribution or sale of any controlled substance or illegal drug on any property or in any building owned, leased or rented by the institution or at any activity sponsored by the institution.

7. Initiation or circulation of any false report, warning or threat of fire, bombs or explosives on institutional premises or during institution-sponsored events.
8. Violation of the Utah Indoor Clean Air Act and/or the institution smoking policy (institution Policy 158 Tobacco).
9. Sale, possession, manufacture, distribution or consumption of alcoholic beverages on institution properties.
10. Unauthorized possession, forging, altering, misusing or mutilating of institutional documents, records, educational materials, identification, (e.g., personal ID, parking decal, etc.) or other institution property.
11. Violation of city ordinances and/or state statutes regarding gambling.
12. Delivery of false information to institutional personnel.
13. Theft or malicious destruction, damage or misuse of institution property or private property of another person on the institution campus or when engaged in activities sponsored or supervised by the institution off campus.
14. Intentional or reckless destroying, defacing, vandalizing, damaging or misusing the property, equipment, materials, services or data of the institution.
15. Unauthorized possession or use of a key to any institution facility or equipment.
16. Obscenity and lewd conduct as defined by institution policy, city ordinances, and/or state statutes.
17. Failure to adhere to all laws and regulations governing the duplication and use of copyrighted materials including, but not limited to, printed and audio materials, video, film, and/or computer software.
18. Unauthorized use or charges to any institution telephone for long distance calls. Institution telephones are for business use only.
19. Unauthorized off-campus fund raising activities on behalf of the institution. All fund raising must have prior written approval from the institution's Development Office.
20. Intent to defraud the institution in any financial matter including, but not limited to:
 - a. Non-redemption of personal checks refused by a bank;
 - b. Sale/resale of supplies, books, or equipment in violation of institution agreements;
 - c. Falsifying institution financial records; and/or

- d. Non-payment of tuition and fees as set forth by institution regulations.
- e. Failure to conduct oneself in a way that does not endanger the health and well-being of other student and institution personnel.
- f. Unauthorized commercial ventures or enterprises on institution property.
- g. Bringing animals on campus, except for those serving the disabled or those used for educational purposes.
- h. Allowing children in institution classrooms or laboratories (unless they are an integral part of instruction) or leaving children unattended in hallways and restrooms or at institution-sponsored events and functions.

Academic Responsibilities

1. Each student is expected to take an active role in the learning process by meeting course requirements as specified in written syllabi.
2. Each student is expected to display appropriate conduct in classroom situations that will enhance the learning environment.
3. Faculty members have the right to establish classroom standards of behavior and attendance requirements. Students will be expected to meet these requirements and make contact with faculty members when unable to do so.
4. Each student is expected to maintain academic ethics and honesty in all its forms, including, but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism as defined hereafter:
 1. Cheating is the act of using or attempting to use or providing others with unauthorized information, materials or study aids in academic work. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, passing examination answers to or taking examinations for someone else, or preparing or copying other's academic work.
 2. Plagiarism is the act of appropriating another person's or group's ideas or work (written, computerized, artistic, etc.) or portions thereof and passing them off as the product of one's own work in any academic exercise or activity.
 3. Fabrication is the use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings. Examples include but are not limited to:
 1. Citation of information not taken from the source indicated. This may include the incorrect documentation of secondary source materials.
 2. Listing sources in a bibliography not used in the academic exercise.
 3. Submission in a paper, thesis, lab report or other academic exercise of falsified, invented, or fictitious data or evidence, or deliberate and knowing concealment or distortion of the true nature, origin, or function of such data or evidence.
 4. Submitting as your own any academic exercise, (e.g., written work, printing, sculpture, etc.) prepared totally or in part by another.

UVU Graduate Student Handbook

MSW Students are graduate students at Utah Valley University and therefore subject to the policies and procedures in the UVU Graduate Student Handbook. The document may be accessed at the link below.

[Graduate Student Guide | Graduate Studies | Utah Valley University \(uvu.edu\)](#)

MSW Attendance Policy

Students should attend and participate in every class. Please communicate with instructors (not cohort members) as quickly and professionally as possible if you experience an unavoidable absence. Personal and family vacations, and time spent at conferences or specialized trainings are not considered an unavoidable absence. Students are allotted two absences per semester. Absenteeism may result in grade reductions and sanctions from the Program. Virtual attendance for in-person classes will not be offered unless granted instructor approval.

Sanctions

1. Sanctions must be applied in a fair and impartial manner. Sanctions are assigned in accordance with two criteria: (1) Educational value for the student found in violation of institution Policy 541, the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code, (2) Commensurability of the violation and the assigned sanction.
2. Academic sanctions that may be imposed include:
 1. Warning
 2. Requiring a student to retake an exam(s)
 3. Requiring a student to re-write a paper(s) and/or repeat an assignment(s)
 4. A grade reduction
 5. A failing grade
 6. Probation with specified conditions
 7. Suspension from the Department, School, or Institution (must be reviewed and confirmed by Vice President of Academic Affairs and President)
 8. Expulsion from the Department, School, or Institution (must be reviewed and confirmed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and President)
 9. Revocation of admission or degree (for fraud, misrepresentation, or other serious violations of institution standards in obtaining the degree; must be reviewed and confirmed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and President)
 10. Withholding degree until completion of process and other sanctions relating to a violation of the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code

Students are encouraged to report violations of this policy to an appropriate institutional office.

If a student is deemed to have violated professional and ethical standards of conduct they may be dismissed from the program. Consistent with University policy, programs are given decision-making power to dismiss students from their respective programs.

For a complete description of University Policy on Students' Rights and Responsibilities go to:

<https://www.uvu.edu/catalog/current/policies-requirements/student-rights-and-responsibilities.html>

NASW Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics
of the National Association of Social Workers

Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and
revised by the 2008 NASW Delegate Assembly

Preamble

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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.

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. There are many instances in social work where simple answers are not available to resolve complex ethical issues. 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, and 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.

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 wellbeing 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.