



نقابة الإختصاصيين في  
العمل الإجتماعي في لبنان  
SOCIAL WORKERS' SYNDICATE IN LEBANON

# Code of Ethics of Social Workers in Lebanon

Edition 2018

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## **Code of Ethics of Social Workers in Lebanon**

*Approved and validated by the executive board of the of Social  
Workers' Syndicate in Lebanon (SWSL)*

**Thursday 8 November 2018**

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# **Acknowledgments**



## **Acknowledgments**

The Syndicate of Social Workers of Lebanon (**SWSL**) acknowledges with thanks and gratitude the Canadian Association of Social Workers (**CASW**) and the Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec, for permission to consult and use sections of their respective copyrighted code of ethics, and this, in the development of the **SWSL** Code of Ethics.

**SWSL** also acknowledges having used many other codes of ethics in the development of the present code of ethics. Such resources are found in the References Section of this Code.





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# **Preamble**



## **Preamble**

The Syndicate of Social Workers of Lebanon (SWSL) is proud to announce the full update of its Code of ethics with a view to further consolidate the Social Work Profession, and to protect both social work professionals and beneficiaries from any harm that may occur during practice. The Syndicate of Social Workers of Lebanon (SWSL) puts the said Code at the disposal of all specialists in the field of Social Work, such as social work students, teachers, and professionals, as well as managers of health or social work centers or institutions.

Though the Social Workers' Code of Ethics is the initiative of the Syndicate of Social Workers of Lebanon (SWSL), it has been submitted by the said Syndicate to other knowledgeable parties to get their precious feedback thereon, or to add what they might see necessary thereon, contributing by this step to its successful development. The said parties are as follows:

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- Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale-USJ- Ex director: **Dr. Maryse Tannous;**

- Social Workers Association: **Mrs. May Mouffarij;**

- Modern University for Business & Science (MUBS): Dean of the Faculty of Education & Social Work, **Dr. Hoda Sleem**

- The following experts and specialists in the field of Ethics (listed in alphabetical order):

- Social Worker at SOS- International Investigator for the protection of children,  
**Mrs. Carla Choueifaty**
- Founder and Ex-President of the Syndicate of Social Workers of Lebanon (SWSL),  
**Mrs. Enaam Abou Jaoude;**
- Ex-Director of the Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale -USJ, **Mrs. Hiam Karii;**

- Ex-Director of the Ecole Libanaise de Formation Sociale -USJ, **Dr. May Hazzaz.**

A special thank also goes to the following persons:

-To the group of social workers, who have ensure the needed follow and sent us their comments on the said Code from the Ministry of Social Affairs;

-To **Mrs. Petronille Geara**, who has developed the first French draft of the Code of Ethics- a version that has been fine-tuned, and translated into Arabic and English later on; and

- The following members of the SWSL, who have contributed to the review, correction, and execution of the said Code:

- Mrs. Nadia Badran;
- Mrs. Rajaa Chatila;
- Mrs. Dani Karam Sikias;
- Mrs. Noha Roukoss;
- Mrs. Christine El Khoury;
- Mrs. Lina Nour El Dine;
- Mrs. Nisrine El Masri;
- Mrs. Jeanine El Kassouf.

It is noteworthy to say that the present Code of Ethics was approved and validated by the members of the SWSL executive board during its meeting of October 3, 2018.

Finally, SWSL recognizes with thanks the financial support of **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation** in the translation and in the printing of the said code into three languages: Arabic, French, and English. The said three versions of the said Code may be downloaded from SWSL website<sup>1</sup>, all rights being reserved to SWSL, the name of which must be mentioned when quoting from the said Code.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.socialworkerslb.com](http://www.socialworkerslb.com)



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**I- Context  
Code of Ethics**



## **I. Context of this Code of Ethics**

Ethical behavior lies at the core of every profession. The SWSL Code of Ethics sets forth values and principles to guide social workers' professional conduct.

Any Code of Ethics by itself cannot guarantee ethical behavior. Ethical behavior comes from a social worker's determined commitment to engage in ethical professional practice. Both the spirit and the letter of this Code of Ethics will guide social workers, who have a genuine desire to make sound judgments in the practice of their profession<sup>2</sup>.

The present Code of Ethics is divided into two major sections. The first section tackles the definitions related to social work, as well as the aims, core values and principles of the profession. As for the second section, it addresses social workers' professional duties and obligations in their practice toward their clients; in their professional relationships at work with their colleagues; to the profession itself and its promotion; to research; and toward society.

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<sup>2</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Code of Ethics, Ottawa.





**II- Social Work:  
Definition, Purposes,  
Aims, Values  
and Principles**





## **II. Social Work: Definition, Purposes, Aims, Values, and Principles**

### **2.1 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, and humanities, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.”*(Global Definition of Social Work being approved by the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014<sup>3</sup>).

### **2.2 Aim of the Code of Ethics**

This Code of Ethics serves the following purposes:

- It defines the guidelines of the social work practice from an ethical perspective.
- It contributes to adjust the development of professional conduct of social workers based on ethical principles. It is a tool that helps social workers to take ethical stands.
- It consolidates social workers’ professional identity.
- It is considered as a reference for social workers, who are entitled to adjudicate on the situations, in which the said Code is infringed<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Assembly General of the International Association of Social Work Institutes, 2014. International Definition of Social Work

<sup>4</sup> Upon the obtaining by the Social Worker’s Syndicate in Lebanon of the official license to deliver work permits to social workers, allowing them to practice their profession on the Lebanese territories, the Disciplinary Council of the said Syndicate shall be able to sanction any social worker, who infringes the Syndicate’s Code of Ethics.

## 2.3 Core Social Work Values and Principles<sup>5</sup>

The Social worker uphold the following core social work values:

Value 1: Respect for Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons

Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice

Value 3: Integrity in Professional Practice

Value 4: Confidentiality in Professional Practice

Value 5: Competence in Professional Practice

### 2.3.1 Value 1: Respect for Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons

Social work is based on a long-standing commitment to respect the inherent dignity and individual worth of all persons. Social workers acknowledge, and respect the diversity of the Lebanese society, taking into account the breadth of differences that exist among individuals, families, and socially, culturally, and religiously diverse groups and communities. Social workers uphold the human rights of individuals and groups as mentioned in the *Lebanese Constitution* (dated May 23, 1926, and amended by the Constitutional laws of September 9, 1943, and September 21 1990), and the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (dated December 10, 1948).

#### **Principles:**

- The social worker will respects the unique worth and inherent dignity of all people, and uphold human rights.
- The social worker upholds each person's right to self-determination, consistent with that person's capacity and with the rights of others.

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<sup>5</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Code of Ethics, Ottawa.

- The social worker respects the diversity among individuals in the Lebanese society and the right of individuals to their unique religious and ideological beliefs, without prejudice to the rights of others.
- The social worker respects the client's right to make choices based on voluntary, informed consent.
- The social worker, who has children as clients, will determine the child's ability to consent, and where appropriate, explain to the child and to the child's parents/guardians, the nature of the social worker's relationship to the child<sup>6</sup>
- The social worker upholds the right of society to impose limitations on the self-determination of individuals in order to protect them from harming themselves and others as well.

The social worker upholds the right of every person for safety from violence and the threat of violence (The principles concerning the right to safety and to security, which are constitutional values).

### **2.3.2 Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice**

The social worker believes in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity, and to afford them protection from harm. The social worker promotes social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources, paying special attention to the marginalized, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, and to persons with special needs. The social worker opposes prejudice and discrimination against any persons or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenges stereotyped views and actions that stigmatize particular persons or groups.

#### **Principles:**

- The social worker upholds the right of people to have access to resources to meet their basic human needs.
- The social worker advocates for fair and equitable access to public services and benefits.

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<sup>6</sup> Article 19 of Law N<sup>o</sup> 422 Protection of juvenile offenders and those at risk.

- The social worker advocates for equal treatment and protection under the law and challenges injustices, especially injustices that affect the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.
- The social worker promotes social development and environmental management in the interest of all people.

### **2.3.3 Value 3: Integrity of Professional Practice**

The social worker demonstrates respect towards the aim, values and ethical principles of the profession while practicing. The social worker maintains a high level of professional conduct by acting honestly and responsibly, and by promoting the values of the profession. The social worker strives for impartiality in professional practice, and refrains from imposing personal values, views and preferences on clients. It is the responsibility of the social worker to establish the tenor of their professional relationship with clients, and others to whom they have a professional duty, and to maintain professional boundaries. As an individual, and while practicing, the social worker makes sure to refrain from bringing the reputation of the profession into disrepute. An essential element of integrity in professional practice is ethical accountability based on this *Code of Ethics*, the IFSW *International Declaration of Ethical Principles of Social Work*, and other norms, and regulations set forth by the institutions rendering social work services. Where conflicts exist with respect to the sources of ethical guidance, the social worker is encouraged to seek advice and consult about the rules and regulation of the employing organization.

« L'intégrité dans l'exercice de la profession repose essentiellement sur l'obligation de rendre compte exprimée dans le présent Code de Déontologie, la Déclaration internationale des principes éthiques de service social de la FITS. Lorsque des conflits existent au sujet des sources de ces conseils déontologiques, le travailleur social est fortement incité à consulter voire à saisir la réglementation professionnelle de l'organisme employeur. »

#### **Principles:**

- The social worker demonstrates and promotes qualities of honesty, reliability, impartiality and diligence in professional practice.

- The social worker demonstrates adherence to the values and ethical principles of the profession, and promotes respect for the values and principles of the profession in the employing organization or the organization with which there is a professional affiliation.
- The social worker establishes appropriate boundaries in relationships with clients, and ensures that the relationship serves the needs of clients.
- The social worker values openness and transparency in professional practice, and avoids relationships where integrity or impartiality may be compromised, ensuring that the nature of the conflict is fully disclosed, should a conflict of interest be unavoidable.

### **2.3.4 Value 4: Confidentiality in Professional Practice**

A cornerstone of professional social work relationships is confidentiality with respect to all matters associated with professional services to clients. The social worker demonstrates respect towards the trust and confidence placed in him/her by clients, collectivities and other professionals by protecting the privacy of client information and respecting the client's right to control when or whether this information will be shared with third parties. The social worker discloses confidential information to other parties (including family members) only with the informed consent of clients, the clients' legally authorized representatives, or when required by law or court order. The general principle of confidentiality does not apply to the social worker when disclosure of confidential information is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable and imminent harm to a client or others. In all instances, the social worker discloses and reveals the information necessary to achieve the desired purpose.

#### **Principles:**

- The social worker respects the importance of the trust and confidence placed in the professional relationship by clients and members of the public.
- The social worker respects the client's right to confidentiality of information shared in a professional context.
- The social worker discloses confidential information, only with the informed consent of the client or permission of client's legal representative.

- The social worker may break confidentiality and communicate clients' information without permission when required or permitted by relevant laws, court order, or by this Code.
- The social worker demonstrates transparency with respect to the limits to confidentiality applying to professional practice, by clearly communicating these limitations to clients early in the relationship.

### **2.3.5 Value 5: Competence in Professional Practice**

The social worker respects a client's right to competent social worker services. The social worker analyzes the nature of social needs and problems, encourages innovative, effective strategies and techniques to meet both new and existing needs, and, where possible, contributes to the knowledge base of the profession. The social worker has a responsibility to maintain professional proficiency, to continually strive to increase professional knowledge and skills, and to apply new knowledge in practice commensurate with his/her level of professional education, skill and competency, seeking consultation and supervision as appropriate.

Principles:

- The social worker upholds the right of clients to be offered the highest quality service possible.
- The social worker strives to maintain and increase his/her professional knowledge and skills.
- The social worker demonstrates due care for the client's interests and safety by limiting professional practice to areas of demonstrated competence.
- The social worker contributes to the ongoing development of the profession and its ability to serve humanity, where possible, by participating in the development of current and future social workers and the development of new professional knowledge.



# **III- Ethical Duties and Obligations**





### **III. Ethical Duties and Obligations**

The following ethical duties and obligations concern the professional practice of social workers in their relationship to:

- Clients;
- Professional relationships;
- Colleagues;
- The workplace;
- The profession;
- Media;
- Research;
- The society.

#### **3.1 Ethical Duties to Clients <sup>7</sup>**

##### **3.1.3 Priority of Clients' Interest**

- The clients' interest is the fundamental professional obligation of the social worker, who ought to be primarily guided by such obligation during professional practice. Any act not being by its very nature in accordance with such obligation, shall be considered an infringement to the professional ethics.
- The clients' interest is the fundamental professional obligation of the social worker, who ought to be primarily guided by such obligation during professional practice. Any act not being by its very nature in accordance with such obligation, shall be considered an infringement to the professional ethics.
- The social worker does not discriminate against people on the following grounds: age, capacities, religion, sex, language, marital status, political affiliation, race, residence place, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.
- The social worker informs his/her clients about their right to consult another social worker at any time of the professional relationship.
- The social worker collaborates with other professionals and service providers in the interest of the clients, and with the clients' consent; the social workers acknowledges the clients' right to decision-making in this respect, and implicates them in any decision that concerns them.
- When interfering in the personal affairs of the clients, the social worker will limit questions to those related to the services provided.

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<sup>7</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Guidelines for Ethical Practice.

- The social worker immediately informs the clients about the factors, difficulties, or pressures likely to alter his/her capacity to provide a quality service.
- The social worker protects the rights and interests of clients who have a limited decision-making capacity and this when acting on behalf of the said clients, or when collaborating with third parties acting on behalf of the same.

### **3.1.2 Cultural Diversity Awareness and Recognition**

- The social worker must have a practical knowledge and understanding of the clients' cultural and racial affiliations, identity, values, beliefs, and habits. The social worker must demonstrate competence in professional practice, and this in accordance with the above-mentioned values.
- The social worker must acknowledge the right to diversity among and between people, communities, and cultures.
- The social worker must acknowledge and respect the impact his/her own antecedents, values, beliefs, and preferences might have on professional practice, and on clients whose antecedents and values are different.
- As much, as is possible, the social worker should use the language chosen by the clients when providing required services.

### **3.1.3 Clients' Self-Determination**

- The social worker respects and upholds the clients' right to self-determination, and supports the clients' efforts to define and clarify their objectives.
- The social worker discusses at the first possible opportunity with the clients their rights and responsibilities, and informs them with honesty and accuracy about the following subjects:
- The nature of the social work offered:
  - The mode of registration of the clients' personal information and data, indicating the persons having access to such data
  - The objective, the nature, the scope, and the known repercussions of the choices open to the clients
  - The potential risks and advantages of the social worker's interventions
  - The right of the clients to have access to / to ask for / to consult/ to have recourse to a second professional opinion, to refuse or to interrupt the provision of any service

- The right of the clients to have access to/examine their file; and,
  - The clients' right to inquire about the confidentiality limits.
- The social worker may limit the right of the clients to self-determination when, according to his/her professional judgment, the effective or potential acts of the clients cause a serious, predictable, or imminent danger to themselves or to other persons.
  - When the right of clients to self-determination is limited by the police, other service providers, or other third parties, the social worker must help the said clients to negotiate, and enjoy as much autonomy as possible.
  - When a judicial authority orders the social worker to assess the clients' situation, or when the social worker accepts to do the same under legal mandate, it is mainly toward the judge or his representative that such obligation is contracted. However, the social worker continues to have professional obligations toward the clients concerned, respecting the dignity of the same and demonstrating openness as to the principles of confidentiality and of professional competence.

### **3.1.4 Informed Consent**

- The social worker should make sure that the nature of the intervention is fully understood by the clients so that the latter give an informed consent to such interventions; the social worker should ensure as well that the clients understand the circumstances under which such consent may be required (orally or in writing).
- The social worker will not provide clients with any service unless the said clients give a valid informed consent to such service, or unless this service is imposed by law, or ordered by a judicial authority.
- In their professional relationship with the clients, social workers assess, as soon as possible, the capacity of the clients to give an informed consent to the services provided.
- The social worker who has children as clients, should determine at the very beginning of the relationship, the child's ability to consent, and where appropriate, explain to the child and to the child's parents/guardians, the nature of the social worker's relationship to the child or to the other persons who take care of the child's well-being.

- When dealing with clients having a limited ability to understand the nature of the informed consent, or to give such consent, the social worker should provide the clients concerned with the information adapted to their level of understanding, while limiting as less as possible their freedom of decision or action.
- When possible, the social worker should inform the clients about the decisions made concerning their case, unless such information proves to provoke or exacerbate a serious harm to other persons or members of the public in general.
- Should clients be unable to give informed consent, the social worker must protect their interests by ensuring that they are represented by a competent third party, such as the client's guardian for instance.

### **3.1.5 Confidentiality**

- The social worker should protect the confidential aspect of all pieces of information obtained from the clients or from other people concerning such clients, or concerning the clients' family, and this throughout their professional relationship with the clients, except in the following cases: Clients authorize the social worker in writing to disclose specific pieces of information; information disclosure is required by law or by court order; or social workers are bound to disclose the same, by virtue of other provisions of this Code of Ethics or professional practice norms.
- At any time of a professional relationship with clients, and preferably as early as possible, the social worker may, where appropriate, discuss with the clients the confidentiality nature, and the limits to their right to confidentiality, and this by reviewing with the clients the situations in which the disclosure of confidential information is required by law or by this Code of Ethics.
- When communicating confidential information is required by a Court order, the social worker will only disclose the least reasonably-needed amount of information, and inasmuch as possible, inform the clients about the said court-ordered obligation.
- The social worker should assess, and take into consideration the way every client wishes to use his right to confidentiality in his cultural context.
- When providing services to clients, families, couples or groups of people, the social worker will strive to reach an agreement among the stakeholders concerning the right of every party to confidentiality, and the obligation to

respect the confidential aspect of any information communicated by other people.

- The social worker who provides services to children, should explain to them and, where appropriate, to their parents, the method of the action taken when dealing with confidential information as applied on children, and this within the limits fixed by the Lebanese Penal Code, and by the provisions of Law N<sup>o</sup>422/2002, Article 19 integrated in the said Penal Code<sup>8</sup>.
- The social worker must inform the clients, inasmuch as possible, about the issue of communicating confidential information to a third party, and its potential repercussions, and this before such communication happens.
- The social worker must avoid useless conversations concerning the clients, and ensure that no confidential information about the same be discussed in public or semi-public places, particularly in corridors, waiting rooms, lifts, and restaurants.
- The social worker will take necessary precautions to ensure and safeguard clients' confidential information, when transmitting the same via computers, electronic mail, fax machines, answering machines, mobile phones, or by « chatting » on different applications or using other electronic means. The social worker should inform the clients about the limitations of confidentiality that are associated with such means of communication.
- The social worker must protect the clients' confidential written and electronic files; take reasonable measures to ensure that such files be stored securely; and make sure not to make them accessible to access-denied parties.
- Should the practices and the policies of an organism include the systematic examination by a supervisor or by a professional team of clients' files; the social worker must warn the said clients of the potential violation of confidentiality by such intervening parties.
- The social worker must take necessary measures to settle a potential transgression of the confidentiality principle.
- The social worker who thinks for good reasons that a child is mistreated and that he needs protection, must in accordance with the applicable laws share his/her concerns with the competent authorities.
- The social worker who, for good reasons, thinks that a client intends to harm a person, must, where possible, alert the person threatened and the police.

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<sup>8</sup> Law N<sup>o</sup> 422 Protection of juvenile offenders and those at risk

- The social worker, who righteously believes that a client intends to harm himself, must provide a professional opinion on the measures to take in this case, and this in accordance with the applicable laws, the professional practice norms, and the policies applied in the workplace.
- The social worker should not communicate any piece of information likely to disclose the identity of the clients during discussions conducted within the framework of a training session or of a lecture, unless the concerned clients expressly give their consent thereto.
- The social worker must not disclose any piece of information likely to reveal the identity of their clients during the discussions held with consultants, unless there is an informed consent from the clients concerned, or only when there is a compelling need for such disclosure.
- The social worker should not disclose the identity of the clients, or the source of information obtained regarding the said clients, unless they are obliged to do so by law.
- The social worker's obligation of preserving the clients' confidential information lasts indefinitely, even after contacts with the clients have ended, or even after the clients' death.
- The social worker must protect clients' right to confidentiality in the event of the social worker's termination of practice, or death, or incapacitation.

### **3.1.6 Follow-up and Maintenance of Client's Records**

- The social worker who is linked to clients by a written agreement for the delivery of social work services is responsible towards the said clients for maintaining their records.
- The social worker employed by a social work agency providing social services to clients shall be responsible, a) to the clients for maintaining the clients' records, and b) to the said agency to maintain the clients' records in a manner that facilitates the achievement by the agency of its objectives.
- The social worker must keep written records of the professional interventions and opinions provided to the clients, as per the norms and obligations imposed by the employing agency.
- The social worker should give a professional opinion substantiated by his/her own assessment of the clients' situation, or by another practitioner's documentation.

- When clients' records are shared with diverse organisms or professionals, the social worker should only record in them the information related to the clients' needs and that meet the employer's requirements, and the professional practice norms.
- The social worker must uphold the clients' right to view their records.
- Where clients are forbidden to have access to their records, or to access a part of the same, the social worker is bound to advise the said clients of their right to ask for a review of such decision, as per the relevant applicable laws, the work guidelines of the employer, or other applied rules, should such exist.
- Where clients are not satisfied with their records, the social worker should advise them about complaint procedures (internally or externally at a later stage).
- The social worker must protect the clients' records, keep them in a secure place, and retain them for the period required by the regulations of the social agency, or otherwise refer to the Standards respecting the keeping of records and consulting offices to seek advice<sup>9</sup>.
- The social worker must proceed with the transfer or the elimination of the clients' records in a way to uphold the clients' right to confidentiality and meet the applied professional norms and policies<sup>10</sup>.

### **3.1.7 Cessation or Interruption of Services**

- The social worker must renegotiate or terminate the professional services provided, when such services are no longer required, or no longer meet the needs of the clients.
- The social workers must uphold the right of clients willing to discontinue service, or to engage other practitioner, or to ask for a second professional opinion.

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<sup>9</sup>[https://beta.otstcfq.org/sites/default/files/guide\\_de\\_normes\\_pour\\_la\\_tenu\\_e\\_des\\_dossiers\\_et\\_des\\_cabinets\\_de\\_consultation.pdf](https://beta.otstcfq.org/sites/default/files/guide_de_normes_pour_la_tenu_e_des_dossiers_et_des_cabinets_de_consultation.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> bis

## **3.2 Ethical Duties in Professional Relationships<sup>11</sup>**

### **3.2.1 Appropriate Professional Boundaries**

- The social worker must maintain appropriate professional boundaries throughout his/her professional relationship with the clients, and even after the end of such relationship.
- The social worker will not exploit professional relationships for self-satisfaction or benefit.
- The social worker must not take an unfair advantage from a professional relationship, nor exploit anybody whatsoever to serve personal, religious, political, or business interests.
- The social worker cannot engage into a business relationship with clients, nor borrow them or lend them money.
- The social worker cannot accept payments in kind, or gifts, or others, from clients.

### **3.2.2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

- The social worker must avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and of impartial judgments.
- The social worker must inform the clients when a conflict of interest arises, be it real or potential, and should take reasonable steps to settle the issue in favor of the clients' interests.
- When the social worker provides services to two or more persons who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), he/she must clarify with all parties concerned, which individuals are considered clients and the nature of his/her professional obligations to the other individuals.

### **3.2.3 Physical Contact with Clients**

- The social worker must avoid having physical contacts with clients, and which may harm them.

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<sup>11</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Guidelines for Ethical Practice.



### **3.2.4 Sentimental Relationships or Sexual Contacts with Clients**

- The social worker must not engage in sentimental relationships or in sexual activities or contact with clients under any pretext whatsoever, even though such contact is initiated by the clients themselves.
- The social worker having provided professional services entailing a fiduciary relationship with former clients must engage neither in sentimental relationships, nor in sexual contact or activities with the same.
- The social worker must not engage in a sexual harassment behavior with anyone whatsoever (“Sexual Harassment” has not yet been defined in the Lebanese Law in general, and particularly in the Labour Law).

## **3.3 Social Worker’s Ethical Duties toward Colleagues<sup>12</sup>**

### **3.3.1 Respect**

- The social worker must maintain good relationships with colleagues working in the social work field or in other fields, marked with respect, integrity, and courtesy. The social worker must strive to understand the divergent professional points of view and practices.
- The social worker must not interfere in any professional relationship engaged between another social worker and a client, unless asked to do so by the client in writing, and if the social worker is convinced that this intervention is dictated by the interests and the well-being of the serviced client.

### **3.3.2 Collaboration and Consultation**

- Within the framework of collaboration with other professionals, the social worker must use their expertise for the benefit of clients.
- The social worker must seek other professional opinions and advice from colleagues any time it is deemed necessary and is in the clients’ interest.

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<sup>12</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Guidelines for Ethical Practice.

### **3.3.3 Conflict Management**

- When asked to judge colleagues' behavior or way of practicing their profession, the social worker must base opinions on valid arguments and presumptions.
- When a conflict arises between the social worker and other professionals, the social worker should try to settle the professional disputes in a way that safeguards the principles listed in this Code of Ethics, the norms of professional practice, and the honor of the social work profession.

### **3.3.4 Supervision and Consultation**

- The social worker should respect the principles listed in this Code of Ethics regarding relationships with (a) another social worker under his/her supervision (b) employees under his/her supervision (c) social work students he/she supervises.
- The social worker playing the roles of supervisor and consultant must have the needed knowledge and skills to exercise such functions.
- The social worker playing the roles of supervisor and consultant will exercise such functions only in the fields in which they have the needed knowledge and skills.
- The social worker must not engage in double or multiple relationships with the persons supervised, when such relationships are likely to exploit or harm such persons.
- When this is the case, the social worker playing the roles of supervisor or consultant must substantiate that the double or multiple relationships they are engaged in, do not exploit or harm the supervised persons.
- The social worker must assess the efficiency of the persons supervised in an equitable and respectful way which matches the expectations of the work place, while using tailored evaluation and supervision tools.

### **3.3.5 The Social Worker's Obligations towards Students**

- The social worker who acts as teacher and / or supervisor of practical trainings, must support the principles of respect for private life and of confidentiality, which are inherent to the relation of supervisor; establishing

the boundaries with the students at the very beginning of the professional relationship.

- Should a student be in need of a therapy, or asks for one, the social worker, who acts as teacher, and / or supervisor of practical trainings, should refer the student to a skilled professional, thus acknowledging that his/her role is focused on teaching and on work.
- The social worker acting as teacher and / or supervisor of practical trainings, must not engage in sentimental relations or sexual activities or contact with the supervised or taught social work students...
- It is incumbent upon the social worker, acting as teacher and / or supervisor of practical trainings, to clarify to the students the appropriate and culturally-tailored boundaries.

### **3.4 Ethical Duties in the Workplace<sup>13</sup>**

#### **3.4.1 Professional Practice**

- The social worker should acknowledge the goals and objectives fixed by the employing organization, organism, or service-providing party; the social worker should strive to reach such objectives, as per the ethical principles, which are appropriate to the social work practice.
- The social worker should ensure that their employing organisms know their ethical obligations. The social worker should formulate recommendations so as the applied work conditions and policies reflect a professional practice which is consistent with social work ethical rules.
- The social worker must ensure that his/her ethical, values, principles, and responsibilities be respected, even though they contravene the employer's policies and missions and the administrative orders.
- The social worker must strive to respect all the service-providing standards, and is accountable in this respect.
- When the policies and the methods of employers are in conflict with the social worker's duties towards the clients, or contravene this Code of Ethics, the social worker must note down this conflicting situation in details, and inform the employer about it.

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<sup>13</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Guidelines for Ethical Practice.

- The social worker who manages an organism must use its available resources honestly, and solely to fulfill the intended purposes.
- The social worker who participates in conflicts between employers and employees, or to pressure means at work and to strikes, should be guided in his/her actions by the social work values, the Code of Ethics, and the professional practice norms.

### **3.4.2 Duties of Managing Social Workers**

- The social worker in management or in similar administrative positions, must strive to do as follows : (a) to ensure the recruitment and the maintaining at work of a sufficient number of staff members; (b) to provide acceptable work conditions;(c) to facilitate the access to professional consultation or supervision services;(d) to facilitate the access by employees working under his/her authority to ongoing training and professional education, as well as to the resources they need to improve their professional skills.
- The social worker should see to it that, if need be, employees have the possibility to express themselves, or benefit from an adequate professional support, especially when they live difficult or traumatizing experiences.

## **3.5 Ethical Responsibilities towards the Profession<sup>14</sup>**

### **3.5.1 Maintaining and Enhancing the Reputation of the Social Work Profession**

- The social worker must promote excellence in the social work profession.
- The social worker will uphold the dignity and integrity of the social work profession, and will base his/her practice on reliable information taken from a recognized social work knowledge base.
- The social worker should not mention the level of social work education reached, until a recognized educational institution has officially awarded them the title of social worker.
- The social worker should mention and describe all of the education, training, experience, professional affiliations achieved, and the competence and nature of the service provided with honesty and accuracy.

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<sup>14</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Guidelines for Ethical Practice.

- Only when only asked by the clients, the social worker should explain about the experience, training, and competence acquired, and the nature of the service he/she provides, as well as the actions taken.
- The social worker should have and conserve an acceptable level of knowledge, professional qualifications, and must regularly update this knowledge, in a manner that is convenient with the professional practice norms, and the social work policies.
- The social worker should not make misleading or exaggerated claims of efficacy concerning past or anticipated achievements with clients within the framework of professional services or regarding continued education.
- Le travailleur social ne devrait pas faire de déclaration fausse, trompeuse ou exagérée sur ses compétences concernant ses enseignements et réalisations passées ou prévues dans le cadre de services professionnels ou bien son enseignement suivi.
- The social worker must endeavor to promote the profession of social work, its processes and outcomes and defend the profession against unjust criticism.
- The social worker must distinguish between his/her actions and declarations made as a private citizen, and those made as social work professionals, while ensuring that no external third party's interest brings the reputation of the social work profession into disrepute.

### **3.5.2 Responsibilities to Colleagues with Non-Ethical Practices**

- The social worker who has doubts about the degree of conformity to this Code of Ethics by some colleagues' actions, must take appropriate measures and behave in conformity with this Code, as well as with the social work professional norms.
- The social worker must inform the concerned association about any breach by another social worker of this Code of Ethics, which is likely to harm the client, or affect the efficiency of the social services provided.
- The social worker must inform the concerned association about any person practicing social work without any social work diploma or permit<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Upon the obtaining by the Social Workers' Syndicate in Lebanon of the official license to deliver work permits to social workers, allowing them to practice their profession on the Lebanese territories, the Disciplinary Council of the said Syndicate shall be able to sanction any social worker, who infringes the Syndicate's Code of Ethics.

### **3.6 Ethical Duties in the Media<sup>16</sup>**

- The social worker should never share information with the media about any situation concerning an accompanied person.
- The social worker should only share information related to a specific issue with the aim to raise public awareness on this issue.
- The social worker should prepare and sign with the television channel an agreement on the specific points to be discussed during the interview on television, on the radio or on the internet.
- The social worker should obtain the informed consent of the accompanied person to participate in media testimony.
- The social worker should inform the person about all the risks associated with the disclosure of confidential information on media.
- The social worker should prepare on behalf of the client, a confidentiality agreement with the television or radio channel that includes the specific points and information that the accompanied client will share. The social worker should inform the client and obtain his informed consent about the specific information included in the confidentiality agreement with the channel.
- The social worker should use measures to protect the confidentiality and the identity of the accompanied person with the media (e.g. blurring the image, changing the voice of the accompanied person, etc ...).

### **3.7 Ethical Duties in Research<sup>17</sup>**

#### **3.7.1 Research Methods**

- The social worker should as much as possible, educate themselves about rigorous research practices.
- The social worker must observe the conventions of ethical scholarly inquiry when engaged in study and research, and utilize only appropriately qualified personnel.

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<sup>16</sup> Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec (OTSTCFQ), (2017). Code of Ethics.

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005). Guidelines for Ethical Practice.

### **3.7.2 Risk Reduction**

- The social worker should prioritize the interests of the persons taking part in the research over his/her own interests, and over those of the research project.
- Before starting a research project, or before participating in it, or before publishing the findings of the same, the social worker will carefully evaluate the possible consequences of such project on persons and on society.
- Before starting any research project, the social worker will present the same to a committee of ethics.
- The social worker must strive to protect the participants in the research from any discomfort, suffering, harm, or loss on physical, mental, and emotional levels.
- The social worker must take the necessary measures to ensure that the participants have access to appropriate support services.
- The social worker must ensure that adequate means be put in place to uphold the dignity and the privacy of the participants in any research project.

### **3.7.3 Informed Consent, Anonymity and Confidentiality**

- The social worker must ensure that informed consent to participation has been obtained from either the potential participants or persons with lawful authority to make decisions on behalf of the prospective participants. Children and others whose ability to provide consent is compromised for any reason, should be offered the opportunity to express their assent or objection to research procedures and their views will be given due regard.
- The social worker must ensure that consent is given voluntarily, without coercion or inferred disadvantage for refusal to cooperate. The social worker must especially clarify to the participants that in general they may withdraw from a research study, without compromising the quality of the service provided, not the future access to other social services.
- The social worker should seek to ensure the anonymity and/ or confidentiality of research participants, and discuss with them only in limited circumstances and for professional purposes.
- The social worker should seek to preserve the anonymity of the participants when making connections at a later stage of the research project.

- The social worker should keep the research material in a secure place during the period prescribed in the pertinent ethical guidelines.

### **3.7.4 Prohibition of Manipulation**

- The social worker should not elaborate or conduct research projects that imply the resort to manipulation or to the withdrawal of the obligation of the participants' informed consent to research (for example: certain forms of naturalistic observation and of archival research), unless the said practice has been considered justifiable by a third party that examined the research project, taking into consideration its anticipated scientific, educational, or practical value; and when it is impossible to use other methods as efficient, without having resort to manipulation, or to the withdrawal of the consent obligation.

### **3.7.5 Accuracy of the Reports on the Research Findings**

- The social worker should draw up reports on the research findings with accuracy and objectivity, and acknowledge the contribution of other persons in the same, and respect the copyrights/authorship law. In research and scholarly endeavors, credit is given only for work actually performed.
- The social worker should inform the participants, in as much as it is possible, or their duly-authorized representatives, of the part of the research results/findings, which concerns them.
- As much as is possible, the social worker should submit the research results which point out to or substantiate social inequalities or injustices to the relevant parties.

## **3.8 Ethical Duties to Society**

### **3.8.1 Social Justice**

The social worker must promote social justice, and combat injustice.

### **3.8.2 Social Action**

- The social worker should engage in activities upholding identification, documentation, and actions aiming at preventing and eliminating domination,



exploitation, and discrimination against any person, group or social class on the basis of age, abilities, ethnic origin, sex, language, marital status, ancestral origin, political affiliation, race, religion, geographic location, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

- The social worker should strive to participate in social and political actions that aim at ensuring that all people have equitable access to the resources, services, and opportunities that are required to meet their basic human needs, and foster their full self-development.
- The social worker must do their best to bring about political and legislative changes aiming at improving existing social conditions in order to meet citizens' fundamental human needs, and promote social justice.
- The social worker must strive to expand choice and potential for all persons, with special regard to those persons or groups who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, oppressed or exploited.
- The social worker should endeavor to create conditions that foster the respect of social and cultural diversity in Lebanon. The social worker should promote policies and practices that respect differences; uphold dissemination of cultural knowledge and resources; advocate for programs and institutions that show cultural competence; and promote policies that guaranty the rights of all people, and consolidate the principles of social justice and equity for all.

### **3.8.3 Participation of the General Public**

- The social worker should endeavor to promote the informed participation of the public and of institutions in the elaboration of social policies.

### **3.8.4 Public Emergent Situations**

- The social worker should inasmuch as possible provide professional services during public emergency situations.

### **3.8.5 Environment-Friendly Actions**

- The social worker should strive to advocate for a clean and sound natural environment, and for the elaboration of environmental strategies that go along with social work principles and practices





# **IV- Implementation Mechanism**



## **IV. Implementation Mechanism**

### **4.1. Founding the implementation committee**

- A.** Establish a committee to verify the implementation of the code of ethics, measures the difficulties facing the implementation, and provides professional counseling.
- B.** Consists of members of the syndicate and a number of experts in the subject of professional ethics
- C.** The committee's tasks shall include the following:
  - i. Monitoring proper implementation and follow-up
  - ii. Receiving complaints or reviewing violations related to the provisions of the Code of Ethics.
  - iii. Verify the validity of the complaint and deal with it in a most appropriate way.
  - iv. Prepare reports and reviews regarding complaints and submit them to the syndicate board and to the concerned parties.
  - v. Receive consultation related to the implementation of the Code of Ethics

### **4.2. Procedures for submitting a complaint and managing it**

- The committee shall dedicate a telephone number and e-mail address for receiving complaints.
- The committee shall record the complaint upon receipt in an individual case file which holds an individual case number with the date of receipt and the means of communication.
- Afterwards, the committee shall verify the validity of complaints during a meeting and according to the following steps:
  - o Verify the existence and status of complainant
  - o Verify that the complaint meets the basic requirements for admission, and that the content is linked to the articles and content of the Code of Ethics.
  - o Verify the legitimacy and accuracy of the information cited in the complaint through investigating and collecting evidence. This should include interviewing the complainant and defendant, as well as any other relevant party, obtaining applicable supporting documents and recording witness testimonies.

- After conducting the necessary investigation, the committee shall issue a report with all the findings and recommendations enclosed
- The committee will submit the enclosed report to the Syndicate board.
- The syndicate board shall review the report, express its opinion on the results, examine the recommendations made by the Committee, and issue a unanimous decision.
- The complaints are to be handled confidentially and in consideration of the safety of the complainant.
- The deliberations within the Committee and between the Committee and the Syndicate Board remain confidential and to be documented with special minutes.

### **4.3. Submitting a complaint**

Who is entitled to file a complaint?

- Beneficiary
- A Colleague
- An institution

Any of the above mentioned could submit a complaint if she/he believes that there is a breach or violation of the Code of Ethics.

The complaint should contain the following information:

- Name of the applicant
- The name, address and telephone number of the social work that the complaint is filed against her/him, and the institution in which she/he works.
- Explain the context of the complaint in detail with mentioning the place, the date and persons presence when the violation occurred.
- Sources of information that will help to investigate the complaint.
- Any additional information.

#### **4.4. Professional consultation**

- The committee shall receive consultation on the number and the electronic address of the Syndicate.
- The Committee shall record them in a special register bearing a special number with the date of receipt and the means of communication.
- The Committee shall hold a meeting to consider the consultation to submit a detailed report, indicating its findings and the recommendations it proposes.
- The Committee shall submit the report to the Syndicate Board.
- The Syndicate Board shall review the report, present its opinion on the results, examine the recommendations made by the Committee, and issue a resolution unanimously.
- The deliberations within the Committee and between the Committee and the Syndicate Board remain confidential and to be documented with special minutes.

#### **4.5. Procedures against violators**

- A warning shall be addressed to the social worker or institution violating the Code of Ethics.
- In case of replication of the violation, the name of the social worker or the institution that violates the Code of Conduct shall widely advertised on all the concerned parties.
- Canceling the membership to the Syndicate and add the violator to the blacklist if the violation is replicated.

#### **4.6. Cooperation and Partnership**

The Syndicate is keen on dialogue and cooperation with all concerned parties in the profession, professionals and beneficiaries in order to protect all parties professionally and in order to activate and apply this code.

The Syndicate seeks to cooperate with all concerned parties to develop and improve labor standards, raise the level of protection and provide services according to national and international standards of the profession.

#### **4.7. Reviewing and amending the code of ethics**

This code of Ethics shall be amended according to changes applied to local laws related to the profession and recommendations that will be deliberated at the launching conference of the first Edition of this Code of Ethics on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and/or as required in connection with the performance and on the basis of its effectiveness in practice.



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# References



## References

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# **Annex**



## **Annex 1: Definitions**

**Self-determination:** A client's right to freedom of choice without interference from others, and based on principles of informed consent (6).

**Client:** A person, family, group or persons, incorporated body, association or community on whose behalf a social worker provides or agrees to provide a service or to whom the social worker is legally obligated to provide a service (1).

**Competency:** The ability to understand the action and its implications (6).

**Confidentiality:** A professional value that demands that professionally acquired information be kept private and not shared with third parties unless the client provides informed consent or a professional or legal obligation exists to share such information without client informed consent (1).

**Conflict of Interest:** Includes any interest that would interfere with the duties of loyalty and freedom of judgment and action owed by the social worker to the client or prospective client or that would be likely to affect adversely the judgment or advice of the social worker on behalf of the client or prospective client (6).

**Informed /Enlightened Consent:** having received all appropriate and necessary information, and having been informed of the consequences of the consent, the client is able to give consent with full awareness of the ramifications (7).

**Fiduciary Duty:** A duty that has been established where one party has placed its trust and confidence in another and the latter has accepted – expressly or by operations of law – to act in manner consistent with the reposing of such trust and confidence (6).

**Discrimination:** Includes treating people unfairly or holding negative or prejudicial attitudes based on age, color, disability, gender, language, marital status, national or ethnic origin, race, geographic location, religion, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic status (6).

**Child:** The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by general Assembly resolution of the United Nations on 20 november 1989 passed in 1959, and ratified by the Lebanese government in 1991,

defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years, unless national law recognizes an earlier age of majority<sup>18</sup>.

**Sexual Harassment:** Manifested by the unwelcome sexual comments or lewd statements, unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in circumstance where a reasonable person could anticipate that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated<sup>19</sup>.

**Dual/Multiple Relationships:** Dual or multiple relationships include circumstances in which social workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, such as professional, social work or business relationships<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (NBASW), (2007), Code of Ethics.

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## **Annex 2: Informed /Enlightened Consent and its Conditions**

There are three types of consent:

- 1-Consent to pass on information to a third party (including consent on behalf of a minor)
- 2-Consent to provide access to a record (including the consent on behalf of a minor)
- 3-Consent to be provided with care or services (including consent on behalf of a minor)

### **Validity of the Consent**

Obtaining consent is an unavoidable stage of the social worker's professional practice in any place whatsoever, and is a guaranty of respect towards the client's will what regards his private life, and the decisions he takes for himself. For each consent certain conditions should be fulfilled to guaranty its validity:

- Consent must be manifest: a clear and explicit gesture (preferably a written consent), the client is aware that he is consenting;
- Consent must be free, without any pressure or discrimination on the part of the professional; clients consent with full confidence.
- Consent should be informed/ enlightened: having received all appropriate and necessary f information, and having been informed of the consequences of the consent, clients will be able to consent with full awareness of the consent ramifications.
- Consent should be given for specific purposes and for a limited period of time: after receiving an explanation regarding the reasons for transmitting information, the accessing to records, or for the care to be provided, and its duration.

### **Exceptions to Consent**

- For diverse reasons, and mainly to ensure the safety of the particulars, exceptions to consent are provided for in laws governing the transmission of personal information. Some of these exceptions are the responsibility of public establishments or institutions. Others are the responsibility of the professional, who may, or in certain cases, must pass on information to a third party without the client's consent, particularly in the following cases:

- To prevent an act of violence, including a suicide, if the professional considers that a person or a group of people shall face an imminent threat of death or serious injury
- By a Court order while exercising its functions
- To refer a child's case to the Director of Youth Protection, if the professional believes, for a good reason, that the security or the development of the said child is or may be compromised (Law on the Protection of Youth)
- In the case of a referred child or in the case of a ward of the Director of the Youth Protection, if the latter requires the information so as to assume his youth protection mandate
- In the case of an unfit adult person
- In the case of a dead person, should his heir, or legal representative or recipient of certain benefits require information in order to validate his rights or responsibilities