

*Ethical Viewpoint***A Code of Ethics for Social Workers**

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*At its core Social work must respond to the moral imperative of caring for the neediest among us. This entails re-claiming and building on the commitment of early social workers 'to work with forces that make for progress . . . to forward the advance of the . . . common people'*  
(Richmond, 1899, p. 151)

Social work has always been a value-based profession; throughout its history and has confronted ethical challenges in providing value-based practice in the human-service field [1]. To help meet these challenges, social workers have defined guidelines for professionally and socially acceptable practitioner conduct. The main aim of *code of ethics* is to articulate its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards in order to guide the conduct of social work professionals [2].

In July 2014, the Global Definition of Social Work was approved in the general meeting of International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and General Assembly of International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). This definition states that “*Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing*” International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) 2014.

**Social Work Code of Ethics: Global Standards**

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the largest social work organizational member body that includes 470,000 social workers from all continents and 80 countries round the world, has developed ethical standards for social workers [1]. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organization that strives to promote social work through efforts related to social justice, human rights, and social development through international collaboration (<http://ifsw.org/what-we-do/>). The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and the United Nations Children’s Fund granted the IFSW Special Consultative Status. In 1994 the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) introduced ethical standards for social workers [3]. IFSW, representing the social work profession internationally, proclaims the following human rights as a common standard and guide for the work of all professional social workers (<http://ifsw.org/policies/human-rights-policy/>) The National Association of Social workers Delegate Assembly approved the first edition of the NASW Code of Ethics on October 13, 1960. Since then, the Code has emerged as the standard bearer for defining the values and principles that guide social workers’ conduct in all practice areas. The NASW Code is used as a model for social work practice across the United States and worldwide. It has been adopted by many organizations and incorporated into a number of state social work licensing laws. The last major revision came in 1996 when the NASW Delegate Assembly addressed a wider understanding of ethical issues that included media, publicity, and health care.

In 2006, a Social Work Ethics Summit was hosted by the NASW, to examine the relevance of the current code; the group concluded that the Code did not need revision but recommended

ethical education for social workers. The last revision to the Code came in 2008, which incorporated sexual orientation, gender identity, and immigration status into non-discrimination standards (<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/History>)

### **Social Work Code of Ethics: Indian Context**

The Indian Government has not recognized any formal body or has not declared the uniform code of ethics for Professional Social workers which will be applicable all over India. Establishment of professional body is one of the main characteristics of any profession. In India there are multiple social work associations separated by geographical boundaries. This poses a major challenge in formulating a Standard code of Ethics. An attempt initiated in this direction was the formation of the Indian Network of Professional Social Work Association (INPSWA) with the association of six Indian professional associations that created a new level of national social work unity (<http://ifsw.org/news/india-joins-ifsw/>)

The INPSWA members are –

- Indian Society of Professional Social Workers, founded in 1970.
- The Karnataka Association of Professional Social Workers, founded in 1977.
- Bombay Association of Trained Social Workers founded, in 1989
- Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers, founded 2013.
- The National Association of Professional Social Workers, founded in 2014.
- Professional Social Workers Association, founded 2004.

The India Network of Professional Social Work Association (INPSWA) has now joined the International Federation of Social work.

The Social workers Educators forum in India has prepared a Draft Declaration of Ethics in Social Work which was intended to serve as a guide to the members of the social work profession to base their work on recognized knowledge, philosophy and skills. The Declaration is rooted in the contemporary social reality which has a historical background and in the framework of humanistic values, based on the intrinsic worth of all human and non-human life. The Declaration provides general ethical principles to guide conduct with respect to self and the profession, work with the marginalized and other people in need, the society and the state, co-workers and employing organizations and social work education and research. (<http://ijsw.tiss.edu/collect/ijsw/import/vol.58/no.2/335-341.pdf>)

The National Association of Professional Social worker in India (NAPSWI) has also formulated a Code of Ethics to articulate its basic values, ethical principles, and ethical standards in order to guide the conduct of social work professionals. The underlying objectives of the Code of Ethics are as follows:

- Sets forth ethical guidelines to control professional conduct of social workers
- Provide ethical standards to which the people can hold the social work profession answerable
- Serves as a guideline for the development of ethically based professional conduct and helps
- Social work professionals, especially new comers to take a stand on various issues and situations
- Stimulate ethical discourse between professionals in social work and social organizations,
- Training and professional development institutions, other disciplines and professional organizations
- Strengthen the professional identity and self-conception of professionals, their networks and the organizations in which social work is practiced.

### **Fundamental Ethical Values and Principles from the Human Rights Perspectives**

The International Federation of Social workers has been the most articulate in embracing the principles of human rights as a core component of the social work profession. The International

Federation of Social workers maintains that “The social work profession, through historical and empirical evidence, is convinced that the achievement of human rights for all people is a fundamental prerequisite for a caring world and the survival of the human race... The social work profession accepts its share of responsibility for working to oppose and eliminate all violations of human rights” (<http://ifsw.org/policies/human-rights-policy/>).

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. The broad ethical principles are based on social work’s core values of service, social justice, Integrity dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, Sustainability and Competence [4].

Based on “humanitarian and democratic ideals,” the Ethical Principles articulates the basic values of the profession of social work and defines standards of professional behaviors highlighting the best pathways social workers need to address in their practice as Professionals. It is imperative that Social workers must update ethical practice standards and codes in accordance with the complexity of practice issues in the context of cultural and social diversity. The emerging concern is to focus more on establishing Professional Practice standards based on social work’s value-based mission in the midst of contemporary Political , Economic, Social and Global challenge.

Figure 1 – Ethical principles in social work

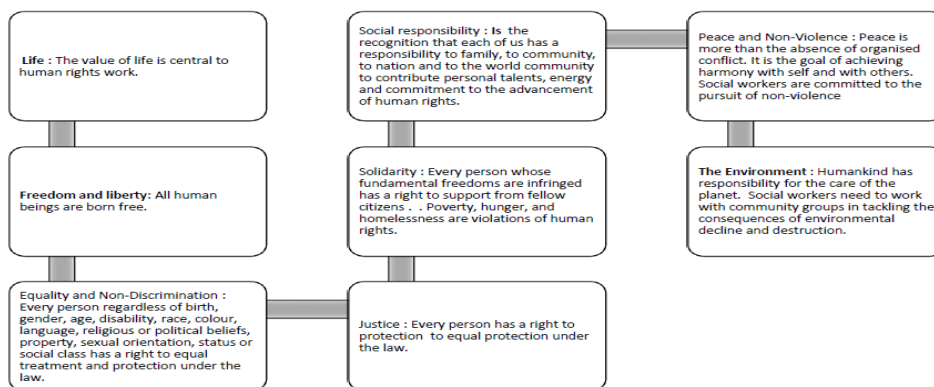
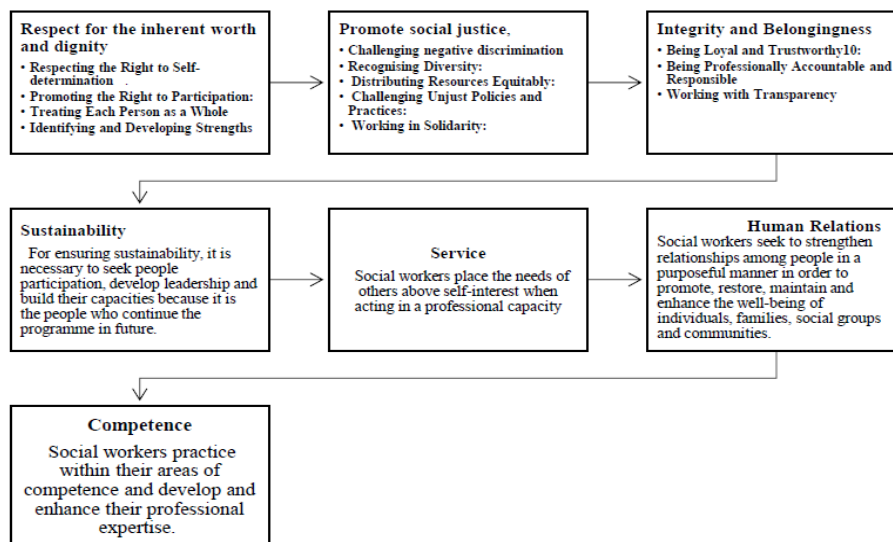


Figure 2 – Guidelines for all social workers



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