



## **MSW PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK**

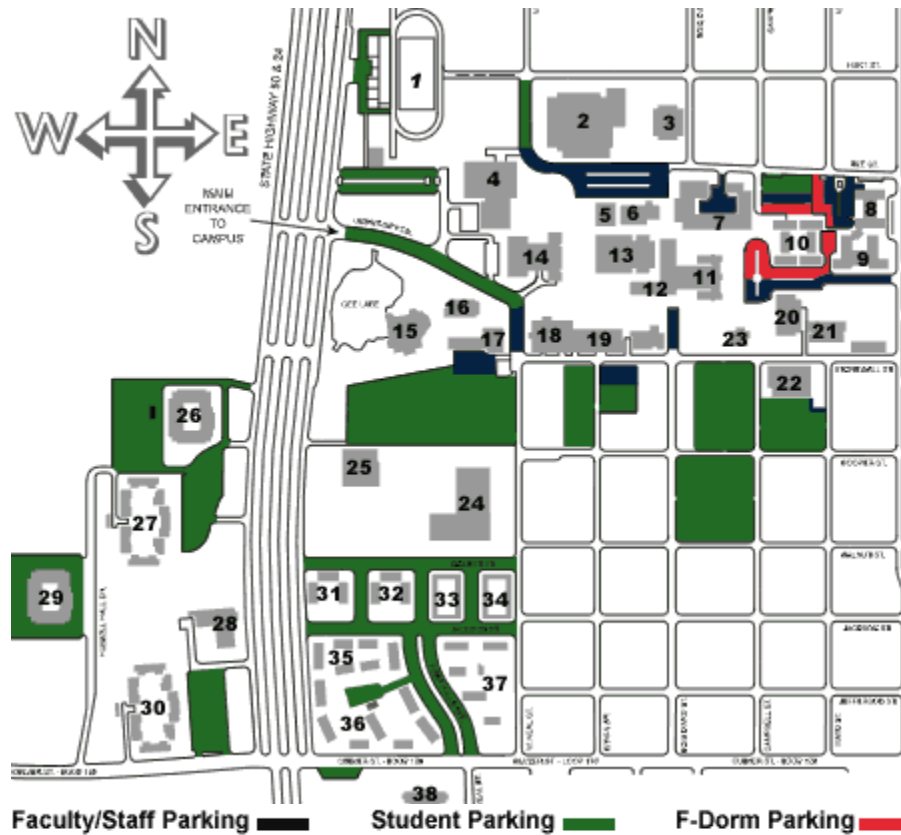
This handbook is intended as a supplement to the University's *Student Handbook* and *Graduate Catalog*. This handbook provides information about the MSW program requirements, as well as answers to frequently asked questions. Faculty advisors are happy to assist students with any needed clarification of the material in this handbook, and provide answers to questions.

Effective 2008

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**MAIN CAMPUS MAP**



**Numerical Key**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Memorial Stadium                                      | 23. Heritage House - Gardens                                  |
| 2. University Field House                                | 24. The New Pride   |
| 3. Whitley Gymnasium                                     | 25. Jerry D. Morris Recreation Center                         |
| 4. Memorial Student Center                               | 26. Smith Hall  |
| 5. D. Whitney Halladay - Student Services                | 27. Berry Hall  |
| 6. Frank Young - Education North                         | 28. Watson Center   |
| 7. Hall of Sciences                                      | 29. Hubbell Hall  |
| 8. Henderson   | 30. Sikes Hall - Children's Learning Center                   |
| 9. Binnion   | 31. G-2 Coop, Acker Hall, G-1 Coop                            |
| 10. F Dorms  | 32. G-4 Coop, McNeal Hall, G-3 Coop                           |
| 11. Arthur C. Ferguson - Social Sciences                 | 33. Cowling Hall  |
| 12. J. Cullen Sowers - Education South                   | 34. Leberman Hall   |
| 13. James G. Gee Library                                 | 35. Craddock, Wray , Bledsoe, Webster, Neu, Fling, Petty Hall |
| 14. McDowell Administration Building                     | 36. McGill, Lutz, Stone, Phillips, Walker, Hart Hall          |
| 15. Performing Arts Center                               | 37. Workman, Freeman, Marshall, C. V. Hall, Mitchell Hall     |
| 16. Art Building   | 38. Whitley Hall  |
| 17. Music Building                                       |   |
| 18. Agriculture  |   |
| 19. Industrial Engineering & Technology                  |   |
| 20. Journalism   |   |
| 21. Hall of Languages                                    |   |
| 22. Staley T. McBrayer - Instructional Printing Facility |   |

## THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

“Social Work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities to enhance or restore their capacity for the social functioning and to create societal conditions favorable to their goals” (National Association of Social Workers, 1983).

Social workers engage in the professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques in order to help people obtain tangible services; engage in problem solving with individuals, families, and groups; and assist communities or groups in their efforts to provide or improve social and health services.

“The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all of these factors” (National Association of Social Workers, 1983).

Social work traces its beginnings to the 1880's when two separate movements, the Charity Organization societies, and the settlement houses, began to flourish in the United States. These movements addressed human problems caused by the poverty and vulnerability that were by-products of immigration and industrialization. Several specialties, such as medical social work, had developed by 1915. The various specialized groups began to solidify and unify, culminating in the establishment of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in 1955. This professional association has guided the strengthening and growth of social work over the past 45 years.

Profession social worker have special skills and knowledge needed by society. In order to become a social worker, one must first earn a social work degree from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Additionally, in most states, one must become certified or licensed to practice social work. Degree and licensing requirements help ensure competent practitioners. Social workers must practice in accordance with ethical guidelines established by NASW and the state in which they practice.

Social workers who hold a master's and /or a doctoral degree in social work assist clients who have complex needs. This is possible because they have comprehensive knowledge in a special area of social work practice. Specialties include community organization; therapy with individuals, small groups, or families; research; and agency administration.

Social workers often work with very vulnerable people, so practicing according to a professional code of ethics is imperative. The 1996 code of Ethics of NASW can be found in Appendix A.

## **SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

Social work education is available at three levels: baccalaureate degree programs in social work, master's degree programs in social work, and doctoral degrees in social work or social welfare.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) regulates baccalaureate and master's level programs. This is done through accreditation. Accredited programs have demonstrated that they meet rigorous standards established by CSWE to ensure that students receive an adequate preparation for competent practice. Accreditation must be reaffirmed every eight years. CSWE also requires that all accredited MSW programs provide curriculum content to prepare graduates autonomous professional social work practice.

In most states, the minimum educational preparation for professional social work practice is the BSW, and only graduates of accredited programs may be licensed to practice. The MSW degree provides graduates with advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized area of social work, and allows them to engage in independent advanced practice.

### **MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM (MSW)**

The geographic region to be served by the Texas A&M-Commerce MSW program consists of 24 counties ranging from sparsely populated rural counties to urban counties located within or near the metroplex area of Dallas-Fort Worth. Such vast differences in geography have resulted in unique needs and concerns. This region spans the northeast quadrant of Texas from Sherman and Denison at the far northwest to Tyler at the southwest; from Longview at the southeast to Texarkana at the east, and then back along the northern Red River boundary of the state through Paris to Bonham to complete the region. This designated area will be the primary beneficiary and source of students for the new MSW program.

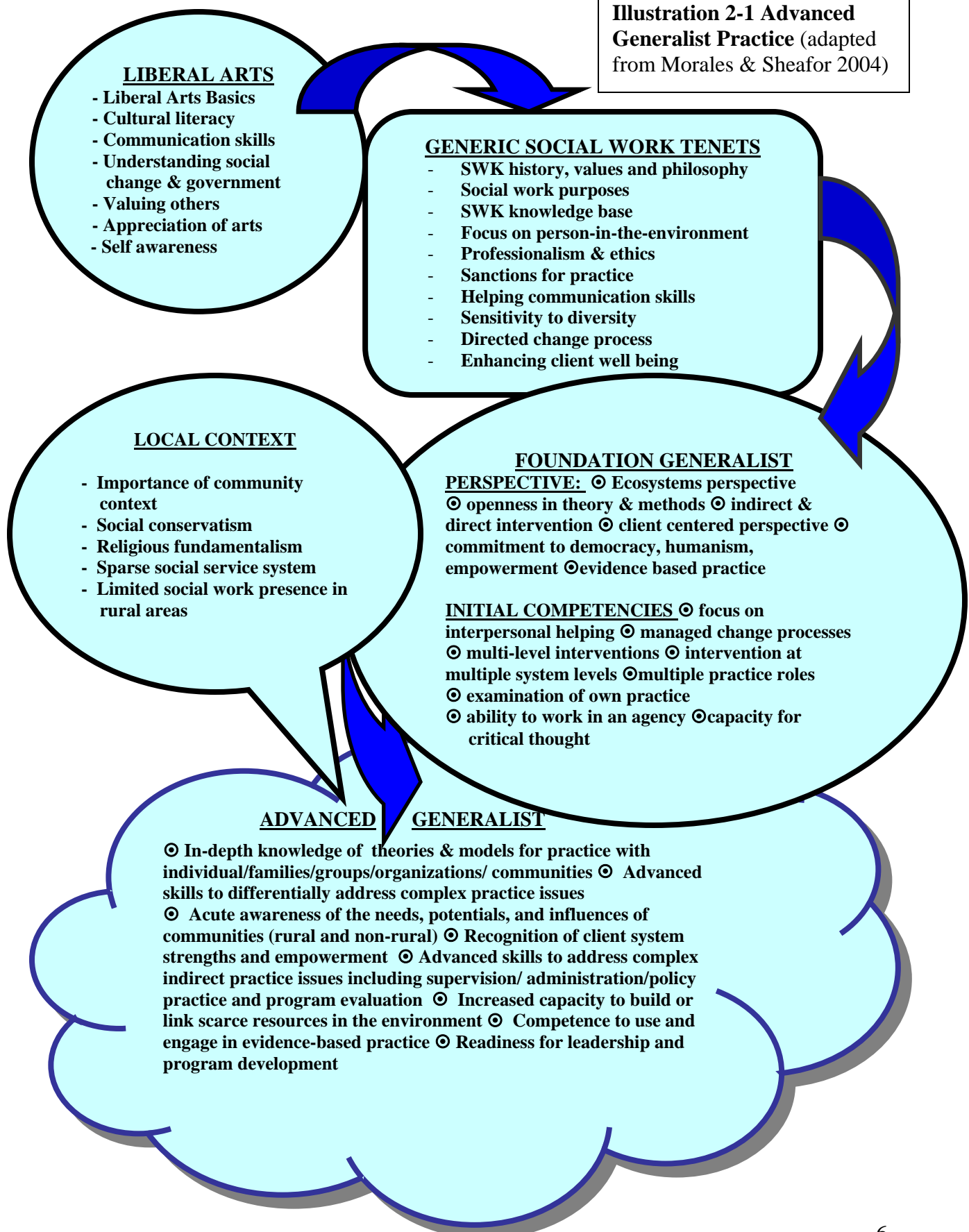
### **DEFINITION OF ADVANCED GENERALIST PRACTICE**

The A&M University-Commerce Master of Social Work program is based on the advanced generalist model. The central premise of the advanced generalist model includes use of holistic approaches to multi-level systems interactions and multi-role interventions.

Four assumptions guiding an advanced generalist curriculum are 1) MSW practice requires in-depth research-based learning opportunities; 2) Advanced generalists must be able to apply knowledge across multiple intervention levels; 3) Advanced generalists practice within the person-situation-environment paradigm; and 4) Advanced generalist social work practice is a logical expression of practice for work with diversity communities.

The advanced generalist social worker engages in more difficult and complex practice tasks using an expanded knowledge base about individuals, groups, organizations and communities. The advanced generalist practitioner must have direct practice skills to intervene with individuals, families and groups while also possessing indirect practice skills, such as administration, program evaluation, and research. The following diagram illustrates the advanced generalist model of our program

**Illustration 2-1 Advanced Generalist Practice** (adapted from Morales & Sheafor 2004)



## **MISSION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES**

The social work program at Texas A&M-Commerce is a part of the university community, and the program's mission and purposes derive from those of the University. The **university's mission statement**, revised in 2006, is as follows:

*Texas A&M University-Commerce provides a personal educational experience for a diverse community of life-long learners. Our purpose is to discover and disseminate knowledge for leadership and service in an interconnected and dynamic world. Our challenge is to nurture partnerships for the intellectual, cultural, social, and economic vitality of Texas and beyond.*

The university's mission statement reflects the importance of diversity, scholarship, leadership, and service. Its inclusiveness provides a strong organizational context for our social work program.

The Social Work Department is located in the College of Education and Human Services, the largest college at Texas A&M-Commerce. As a part of the College, the Social Work Department shares in the mission to serve the people of Northeast Texas in a manner consistent with the traditions and methods of the social work profession. The mission of the College of Education and Human Services is:

*The College of Education and Human Services exists to promote and enhance the development of professional practitioners, researchers, and leaders who are exemplary and dedicated to enriching the quality of life for persons within and beyond our region*

## **MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT**

The mission statement for the Social Work Department reflects our commitment to preparing competent, skilled social work professionals who will impact their communities. We encourage student leadership and the development of knowledge for work with client systems. We envision our students enhancing service delivery systems as they complete internships and enter the profession. Guided by our mission, goals, and objectives, our program embraces the profession's history, purposes, philosophy and prepares students with requisite social work knowledge, values, and skills for competent practice.

***The Department of Social Work promotes and enhances the education and development of professional social workers who seek to improve social, economic and environmental conditions for diverse populations.***

## **PROGRAM PURPOSES, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES**

The social work department is defined by its role in the university, its commitment to the people of the region, and its continuity with the traditions, values and methods of the social work profession. The following statement of purpose is adopted by The Council on Social Work Education, and describes the mandated purposes of social work education at CSWE accredited college and university social work programs. The emphasis on the knowledge, values and skills

of the profession will be echoed throughout this document, and this emphasis informs all curriculum offerings and scholarly activity undertaken by the program.

**E.P. 1.1 Purposes of Social Work Education** *The purposes of social work education are to prepare competent and effective professionals, to develop social work knowledge, and to provide leadership in the development of service delivery systems. Social work education is grounded in the profession's history, purposes, and philosophy and is based on a body of knowledge, values, and skills. Social work education enables students to integrate the knowledge, values, and skills of the social work profession for competent practice.*

The goals of the social work program derive from the mission statement and form the source from which all curriculum development and instruction proceeds. The goal of the program to produce advanced generalist practitioners is deemed the most appropriate way to serve the people of Northeast Texas, and is wholly consistent with the traditions and methods of the social work profession.

### **MSW Program Goals**

**GOAL M1. Provide students with the knowledge, values, and skills of advanced generalist social work practice.**

- M 1.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking and systematic approaches, based on the generalist perspective, to advanced generalist practice interventions with all levels of client systems.
- M 1.2 Students will demonstrate skills and knowledge as change agents for effective functioning within organizations and various environmental contexts.
- M 1.3 Students will demonstrate the knowledge, values and skills needed for autonomous practice.
- M1.4 Students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to use and provide supervision and consultation in practice settings.
- M1.5 Students will demonstrate professional written and oral communication skills in all aspects of social work practice.

**GOAL M2. Promote the use of evidence-based theoretical frameworks for practice and research consistent with social work values and ethics.**

- M 2.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in evidence-based practice as both consumers and developers of research to inform and evaluate practice which includes cultural and ethical considerations.
- M 2.2 Students will use empirically-based theories and knowledge to understand human development and behavior across the lifespan and interactions among and between all levels of client systems.

**GOAL M3. Socialize students to the profession of social work.**

- M 3.1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of social work values and ethics in interactions with clients and colleagues
- M 3.2 Students will demonstrate sensitivity, knowledge, competency, and respect for all aspects of client diversity.
- M 3.3 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history and purposes of social work, and the current issues confronting the profession.

**GOAL M4. Prepare graduates who have the capacity to promote social and economic justice through the development of policies and services.**

- M 4.1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between policy and social and economic justice.
- M 4.2 Students will demonstrate the ability to apply strategies used to combat the effects of poverty, oppression, and discrimination on client systems to promote social and economic justice.
- M4.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze, develop and influence social policies and programs affecting both rural and urban client systems.

**SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT FACULTY & STAFF**

**Dr. Brenda Moore**, Ph.D., LMSW-AP, Assistant Professor and Department Head

**Dr. Linda Openshaw**, DSW, LCSW, Associate Professor and MSW Program Director

**Dr. Hugh Clark**, Ph.D., LMSW-AP, Associate Professor and BSW Program Director

**Dr. Lon Johnston**, PhD., LCSW, Associate Professor

**Dr. Larry Watson**, Ph.D., LCSW, Associate Professor

**Dr. Rebecca Judd**, Ph.D., LMSW, Assistant Professor

**Sherry Sheffield**, LCSW, Assistant Professor

**Patsy Boshears**, LCSW, Instructor

**Brian Brumley**, LMSW , Title IV-E Director & BSW Field Director

**Chuck Nash**, LMSW & MSW Field Director

Administrative Staff

Peggy Galloway, Department Administrative Assistant  
Pam Hammond, MSW Secretary and Title IV-E Administrative Assistant  
Amy Toole, BSW Secretary

## ADMISSION

There are two steps to admission:

- 1) Admission to the Graduate School and
- 2) Admission to the Social Work Department

The Graduate School admissions policies are described in the Graduate Catalog. Students are required to complete the graduate application form (which can be done online at [www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool](http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool)).

Students must also apply separately for admission to the Social Work Department. More information and required forms are available online at [http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/socialwork/documents/MSW\\_Admission\\_Packet.pdf](http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/socialwork/documents/MSW_Admission_Packet.pdf).

The **deadline for the completion of all admissions materials** is:

**July 15** for **Fall** Admission (Foundation and Advanced Standing)

**October 15** for **Spring** Admission (Advanced Standing Only)

**March 15** for **Summer** Admission (Advanced Standing Only)

## ENROLLMENT CLASSIFICATION

**1) Foundation Admission** – This is a full-time, two year program offered over four regular semesters and one summer. Regular admission is the option open to students whose major is in a non-social work area—(admitted for **fall semester only**). **At this time, foundation classes are only offered on the Mesquite campus** (SWK 501, 503, 511, 513, 521, 531, 541, and 553).

**2) Advanced Standing Admission** – Applicants who have a BSW from a CSWE accredited program may apply for Advanced Standing admission (and may be admitted in fall, spring, or summer semesters at either Commerce or Mesquite)

A successful applicant must show the capacity to complete graduate-level work as evidenced by past academic performance. The MSW program will admit students who show the greatest capacity to complete graduate-level work and become effective social work practitioners. Students will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, creed, national origin, age, disability status, sexual orientation or gender. The program is committed to recruiting applicants who represent a diverse population.

A Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is not required for those applicants who have a 3.0 or better overall grade point average (GPA) in their undergraduate work or a 3.0 GPA on their last 60 hours of undergraduate work. All others are expected to take the GRE. There is currently no required score on the GRE – it is used to assess mastery of undergraduate content.

Once students have been fully admitted to the MSW program, they **must** attend a **mandatory orientation prior to receiving clearance** for registration in classes. Failure to attend the orientation will result in delayed enrollment into the program.

The MSW admissions process for the foundation and advanced standing (concentration) programs are the same. Documents that are required for a student's admission file to be considered complete include: Notice of acceptance to the graduate school at TAMU-Commerce; official transcripts from the student's undergraduate program(s), GRE scores if required, three letters of reference, a current resume, and a complete autobiographical statement as required in the admissions packet.

The Department Admissions Committee reviews all applications for evidence of ability to complete graduate level social work courses. In the case of students applying to the foundation program, transcripts are also assessed for the liberal arts background that is required for admission. At least two members of the admissions committee utilize a rubric to assess each document that is part of the student's admissions file and to determine the student's level of acceptance into the program. Based upon the rubric and the recommendation of the admissions committee, a student can be admitted unconditionally or on probation. (If there is a "split" decision regarding any potential student, a third member of the admissions committee must assess the application packet along with the MSW Director.) A student admitted on probation must complete 12 hours with a 3.0 overall GPA in order to continue in the social work program.

A letter of acceptance or non-acceptance will be sent to the student regarding the decision of the Admissions Committee. All foundation and advanced standing applicants are required to attend a MSW student orientation prior to registering for classes.

### **MSW STUDENT ADVISING**

All newly admitted students are assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to the MSW program. Students entering the program are also required to attend an orientation prior to the semester they begin classes which provides a "group" advising function. This orientation session outlines all aspects of the MSW program and university requirements. This orientation is led by the MSW Director, a member of the admissions committee, and the MSW Field Director. At this time, a degree plan is completed for each student that identifies the courses which they are required to take and the semester in which they should complete the courses for timely graduation. The degree plan becomes part of the student's academic file and the student is given a copy of the plan.

The following guidelines are used when advising students in the foundation and concentration years of the MSW program:

1. All newly admitted students are to be advised **prior to beginning** classes.
2. No grades of C or lower will be accepted in field courses. No grade of D will be accepted toward the MSW degree.

3. Students must have at least a 3.0 GPA to graduate. If at any point a student's GPA drops below a 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation. A student who fails to achieve a 3.0 overall graduate GPA by the end of the subsequent semester of enrollment will be placed on academic suspension for a period of two semesters. (Two summer terms count as one semester.) After the academic suspension is served, the student may be allowed to re-enroll only upon the recommendation of the major department head and with the approval of the Graduate Dean. Failure to achieve an overall 3.00 graduate GPA during any subsequent semester of enrollment will result in suspension and the student will not be allowed to pursue further graduate study in a degree program for three years.
4. Students with probationary admission status who fail to achieve a 3.00 graduate GPA after the completion of twelve semester hours will be suspended and will not be allowed to pursue further graduate study in a degree program for three years.
5. A student receiving a grade of "C" or lower in four graduate courses will be suspended and will not be allowed to pursue further graduate study at this institution for three years. This provision applies to all courses taken **including all duplicated courses**; all drop/fail courses; and all incomplete courses when an "X" has changed to and "F".
6. A student who **fails to meet the professional expectation of the field for which they are preparing may be suspended from further study** in that program by the department administering that program.

Because schedules are a more difficult for MSW students who are working or in field placements during the day and taking classes at nights and on Saturdays, most students schedule appointments to meet with their advisors. Also, students are most likely to use their assigned Faculty Field Liaisons for academic and professional advising. They meet with their Liaison every week in field seminar and this provides an opportunity explore issues of academic or professional concern.

All faculty are very open to meeting with students and providing support as they progress through the program. Even though our program has grown significantly, we still know all of our students on a first-name basis and become familiar with them over the course of the program. Advising is an important part towards our program goal of socialization to the profession.

### **LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE**

The Masters of Social Work program at Texas A&M University-Commerce assumes that students have gained a liberal arts perspective from their undergraduate work. The "liberal arts perspective" for student admission is comprised of strong oral and written skills to convey knowledge across multi-media to diverse population; the skills of collecting, ordering and synthesizing relevant information, the skill of discriminating how persons share common biological, social and cultural traits, and yet are unique across cultures; the knowledge of governments and how social change takes place; the knowledge of human value in the arts, including visual, literary, musical, performing, etc; and the skill of self-awareness and acceptance of others.

The liberal arts or core curriculum contains a broad knowledge base that enhances students' conceptualization of a holistic framework for social work generalist practice. Further, the core

curriculum provides skills, knowledge, and values of a broadly educated person as articulated by our accrediting body the Council on Social Work Education. We expect liberal arts students who have completed the undergraduate program to have a cluster of knowledge and skill components that encompass the following dimensions:

1. Strong oral and written skills to convey knowledge across multi media to diverse populations.
2. The skills of collecting, ordering, and synthesizing relevant information.
3. The skill of discriminating how persons share common biological, social, and cultural traits, and yet are unique across cultures.
4. The knowledge of governments and how social change takes place.
5. The knowledge of human value in the arts, including visual, literary, musical, performing, etc.
6. The skill of self-awareness and acceptance of others.

The liberal arts perspective provides knowledge of languages, mathematics, and analytic skills which help MSW students understand, organize, and communicate knowledge of systems across cultures. Understanding of science enhances social workers' skills of assessment, leading to understanding of systematic problem solving, and expanded awareness of accountability to client systems. American world history and political science help provide a developmental context to interpreting laws, policies, and procedures, of groups, organizations, and nations. The arts and humanities help students comprehend the myriad ways of human expression across cultures. Finally, students deepen self-awareness and promote self-growth through examining their own ethical and value systems vis-à-vis other disciplines and holistic ways of knowing the world.

In addition to our basic definition of "liberal arts perspective", the MSW program relies on incoming students to have undergraduate classroom exposure to introductory content in psychology, sociology, and human biology so that students can move quickly into foundation human behavior and social environment and social work practice content.

### **DETERMINING THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE OBTAINED THE LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE**

The ideal educational background for students in the masters program is a BSW degree; however, there are two levels of entry into the MSW program: BSW graduates and other undergraduate degreed persons. To ensure equivalency of liberal arts backgrounds across BSW and non-BSW graduates, the application procedure for the Masters Program requires students to provide copies of their official transcripts from their undergraduate programs. Members of the Department Admission Committee compare the student's transcript to the required six dimensions of a liberal arts perspective: 1) the dimension of oral and written communication skills across multi media requires a minimum of 9 semester hours in communication courses, 2) the dimension of collecting ordering, and synthesizing relevant information requires a class in college algebra plus two courses in the natural sciences, 3) the dimension of discriminating bio-psychosocial characteristics across diverse cultures requires at least 3 semester hours in social/behavioral sciences, 4) the dimension of understanding governments and how social change takes place requires American and World History and six additional semester hour of Political science, 5) the dimension of knowledge of human value in the arts requires one 3 semester hours from the humanities. Students lacking one of the six

liberal arts categories may take that liberal arts class prior to being admitted to the MSW program.

### **TRANSFER OF CREDIT HOURS**

Students may transfer hours from other graduate programs. However, the criteria vary depending upon if they are from a non-MSW graduate program or from a CSWE-accredited MSW program.

#### **TRANSFER FROM NON-MSW GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

Students admitted to the MSW program may request consideration of the transfer of no more than nine credit hours from a non-MSW graduate program.

These courses may **not** be older than 7 years from the date of admission and students must have received a grade of B or higher. We recognize that many graduate programs require a course that contains content on social justice for oppressed populations and a course that requires content in research methods. Therefore consideration will be given to a combination of nine credit hours that include any of the following:

1. Elective course(s)
2. A course with content equivalent to the content required in SWK 541: Social Justice of Oppressed Populations
3. A course with content equivalent to the content required in SWK 531: Research for Practice

The process for consideration of transfer courses is as follows:

1. Any student who wishes to have our MSW program consider acceptance of a course(s) must submit a Graduate Transfer/Substitution Course Request form to the MSW Program Director.
2. The letter should list the courses the student wishes considered for transfer and a copy of the course syllabus for each course must accompany the form.
3. Upon receipt of the form for consideration, the MSW Program Director will submit the request to the Social Work Department Curriculum Committee for review of the request, the course outline/s and consideration of approval of the transfer of credit/s by the Curriculum Committee.
4. If a student requests the MSW program to consider transfer of a research course, approval of that course must also be obtained from the Graduate School prior to approval by the MSW program. In such an event, the MSW Program Director will submit the request and a copy of the research methods course outline to the Graduate School for their consideration. Upon approval of the Graduate School, the request will be submitted to the department Curriculum Committee for final department approval.
5. The decision of the Curriculum Committee may be one of the following:

- a. Full approval;
- b. Probationary approval
- c. Approval with some additional expectations\*; or
- d. Denial of the request.

\*If (b) the curriculum committee chair will specify in writing what additional requirements are expected of the student.

Consistent with CSWE accreditation standards, **no academic credit, course waivers, or field practicum credit is awarded in whole or in part for life and/or work experiences or any combination of the two.**

### **TRANSFER OF CREDIT HOURS FROM A CSWE ACCREDITED MSW PROGRAM (or program in candidacy)**

Because of CSWE accreditation, the curriculum content of the foundation year is essentially the same in all MSW programs. Therefore, students may request to transfer up to 12 credit hours or up to 1/3 of the credit required for a master's degree may be accepted as transfer credit from another CSWE-accredited program (or in candidacy). This is the maximum transfer credit allowed under Texas A&M-Commerce Graduate School Policy.

These course/s may not be older than 7 years from the date of admission and students must have received a grade of B or higher. The request for transfer of these courses is similar to that for non-MSW classes and is as follows:

1. Any student who wishes to have the MSW program consider acceptance of a course/s must submit a formal petition of request to the MSW Program Director.
2. Students must complete the application process described in the previous section related to non-MSW Programs..
3. If a student requests the MSW program to consider transfer of a research course, approval of that course must also be obtained from the Graduate School, prior to approval by the MSW program. In such an event, the MSW Program Director upon receipt of such a request will submit the request and a copy of the research methods course outline to the Graduate School for their consideration. Upon approval from the Graduate School, the request will be submitted to the department Admissions Committee for final department approval.
4. Students will not be allowed to transfer any advanced credit hours other than electives from a non-CSWE accredited BSW or MSW program or one that has not been admitted to candidacy by CSWE.

### **FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME ENROLLMENT**

Our program is designed to accommodate full-time and part-time students. However, most classes are only offered once each year, so if a student does not take a class that they are scheduled to take in the fall semester, it will not be offered again until the following fall

9/17/2008

semester. Therefore, academic advising is extremely important in order for students to graduate in a timely manner.

The following chart illustrates the typical degree plan for the MSW program for full-time students who are entering as Foundation students (highlighted courses) in the fall semester. The second year courses are for students who are entering the program as Advanced Standing (already have their BSW degree) or students who have completed ALL required foundation classes.

Foundation students **MAY NOT** enroll in any concentration courses, with the exception of SWK 510 – AGP in Mental Health and SWK 597 – Social Work Elective, until they have completed ALL FOUNDATION CLASSES, including SWK 553 - Foundation Field Internship.

Our classes are scheduled in the evenings or Saturdays. Typically, fall and spring classes are scheduled from 6pm – 9pm during the week. Some schedules may include “stacked” classes which are scheduled from 4:30 – 7:10 pm, followed by another class 7:20 – 10:00 pm. Field seminars are required for the Field Internship classes (SWK 553, 555, 557, and 559) and are scheduled from 5 pm – 6pm. The class schedule will vary by semester, depending upon faculty assignments and other variables.

**FULL-TIME PROGRAM - FALL START sequence**  
**Foundation classes available ONLY in Mesquite**

<b>FOUNDATION COURSES</b>	
<b>FALL- Full-Time Foundation</b>	
SWK 501	Generalist Practice with Individuals, Families & Sm Groups
SWK 511	Human Behavior in the Social Environment I
SWK 531	Research for Practice
SWK 541	Social Justice for Oppressed Populations
<b>SPRING- Full-Time Foundation</b>	
SWK 503	Generalist Practice: Organizations & Comm
SWK 513	Human Behavior in the Social Environment II
SWK 521	Foundations of Social Welfare Policy
SWK 553	Foundation Field Internship
<b>CONCENTRATION COURSES (Advanced Standing)</b>	
<b>FALL – Full-Time Concentration</b>	
SWK 508	Social Work Supervision and Administration
SWK 509	Advanced Generalist Practice with Small Groups
SWK 559	Advanced Generalist Practice Field Internship
SWK 595	Research Literature And Techniques (also offered in Spring)
<b>SPRING – Full-Time Concentration</b>	
SWK 505	Advanced Generalist Practice with Individuals
SWK 506	Advanced Generalist Practice with Families
SWK 510	Advanced Generalist Practice in Mental Health (also offered in Summer)
SWK 555	Advanced Generalist Practice Field Internship
SWK 595	Research Literature And Techniques (also offered in Fall)
<b>SUMMER Full-Time Concentration</b>	
SWK 507	Organizations, Communities and Social Policy
SWK 597	Elective - Special Topics
SWK 590	Integrative Seminar in Advanced Generalist Practice
SWK 557	Advanced Generalist Practice Field Internship
SWK 510	Advanced Generalist Practice in Mental Health (also offered in Spring and May-mini)

Advanced standing (Concentration Year) students may also start in the spring or summer term.

The following chart illustrates the typical degree plan for the MSW program for part-time students who are entering as Foundation students (highlighted courses) in the fall semester. Students are often start the program as full-time and then switch to part-time. Students should be aware that this may delay graduation more than anticipated because of the class scheduling.

**PART-TIME PROGRAM FALL START sequence**  
**Foundation classes available ONLY in Mesquite**

<b>YEAR 1 – Part-Time Foundation</b>	
<b>FALL</b>	
SWK 511	Human Behavior in the Social Environment I
SWK 541	Social Justice for Oppressed Populations
<b>SPRING</b>	
SWK 513	Human Behavior in the Social Environment II
SWK 531	Research for Practice
<b>YEAR 2 – Part-Time Foundation continued</b>	
<b>FALL</b>	
SWK 501	Generalist Practice with Ind, Families & Sm Groups
SWK 521	Foundations of Social Welfare Policy
<b>SPRING</b>	
SWK 503	Generalist Practice: Organizations & Communities
SWK 553	Field Foundations Practicum
<b>YEAR 3 – Part-Time Concentration continued or YEAR 1 for Advanced Standing Start</b>	
<b>FALL Concentration</b>	
SWK 508	Social Work Supervision and Administration
SWK 509	Advanced Generalist Practice with Sm Groups
<b>SPRING Concentration</b>	
SWK 505	Advanced Generalist Practice with Individuals
SWK 506	Advanced Generalist Practice with Families
<b>SUMMER Concentration</b>	
SWK 507	Organizations, Communities & Social Policy
SWK 597	Elective - Special Topics
<b>YEAR 4 – Part-Time Concentration continued or YEAR 2 for Advanced Standing continued</b>	
<b>FALL Concentration</b>	
SWK 595	Research Literature And Techniques
SWK 559	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum
<b>SPRING Concentration</b>	
SWK 510	Clinical Practice in Mental Health (also offered in Spring Semester)
SWK 555	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum
<b>SUMMER Concentration</b>	
SWK 557	Advanced Generalist Field Practicum
SWK 590	Integrative Seminar in Advanced Generalist Practice

The Master of Social Work program at Texas A&M-Commerce is designed to meet the educational needs for professional social workers. Approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 1997, the program was accredited with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 2005. Each instructor will provide students with a course syllabus for

each course that will specify the course requirements and criteria for evaluating student academic and professional development.

## FIELD PRACTICUM

The Field Practicum is an essential element of Texas A&M University-Commerce's graduate social work education. The design of the Field Practicum Program facilitates the integration of classroom theory with agency-based practice and provides support to students as they engage in this dynamic process.

The Field Practicum prepares students to apply the generalist/advanced generalist practice model. This model is reinforced through applying the knowledge and skills taught in the social work courses. Students are expected to use critical thinking skills to apply the advanced generalist model in various settings or contexts of practice.

The primary goal of the Field Practicum is to provide students with opportunities to gain experiential knowledge as an advanced generalist practitioner. The Field Practicum provides students the opportunity to accomplish the program objectives in a professional practice setting under the supervision of MSW field instructors who have been approved by the university.

The Field Practicum consists of 900 hours of field practicum experience. The first agency field practicum for foundation students consists of 260 hours (15-16 hours/week) to be completed during the student's second semester of the foundation year. Students are to have completed SWK 501, 511, 531, and 541 prior to approval for the Foundation Field (SWK 553). This field practicum is ONLY offered in the spring semester.

The concentration field practicum (Advanced Generalist Field or AGF), required of both two-year and advanced standing students, consists of 640 hours over **three semesters** (15-16 hours/week). All field practica provide opportunities for students to apply theory, knowledge, skills, and values across multiple levels of systems (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities).

Concurrent coursework provides students with the educational foundation to apply the problem-solving model across client systems. Assignments throughout the curriculum, required for classes and for the practicum, allow students to demonstrate competency in working with various systems. Students are expected to complete their third semester of field in the semester in which they plan to graduate and are enrolled in SWK 590. The major case study for SWK 590 is related to the students' culmination of work in the classroom and field.

Additional information on the field practicum is elaborated in the Field Manual found online at <http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/socialwork/programs-field-msw.htm#manual>

## DESCRIPTIONS OF COURSES

501. *Generalist Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups (3 sh)* - FOUNDATION  
This practice course provides students with an understanding of and experience with social work practice skills, values, and knowledge within the context of a strengths perspective. Students will learn problem-solving skills, empowerment based practice skills, relationship building and data gathering skills as they relate to all client systems, but

particularly regarding individuals, families, and small groups. Content on diversity and working with populations at risk will be presented throughout the course. Role play, video tapes, and written assignments will be utilized. Prerequisites: Admission to the MSW program.

503. *Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

This practice course builds on the Generalist Practice with individuals, families, and small group's course extending the concepts of empowerment based practice and the strengths perspective to client systems such as organizations and communities. Practice skills will be obtained through written assignments, role plays, and video tapes. The relationships between communities and organizations and at risk populations are infused throughout the course. Prerequisites: Social Work Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups;

505. *Advanced Generalist Practice with Individuals (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This direct practice course provides students with advanced theories and models in working with individuals. This course emphasizes critical thinking and demonstrating the application of advanced generalist interventions with individuals. By the end of the course, students are expected to demonstrate knowledge, values, and skills for autonomous practice and the synthesis of guiding theories and evidence-based research used in intervention.

506. *Advanced Generalist Practice with Families (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This practice course provides students with advanced theories and models for working with families with special emphasis on community issues affecting families. This course emphasizes critical thinking and demonstrating the application of advanced generalist interventions to work with families. Students will use a strengths perspective for developing multidimensional assessments, interventions and evaluations for families in various settings.

507. *Organizations, Communities and Social Policy (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This advanced practice course provides students with theory and practice skills necessary for independent practice and intervention with organizations and communities. This course extends the concepts of empowerment and strengths-based practice to work with macro systems. Consideration is given to the integral role played by policy and the importance of influencing or developing policies as a method of change.

508. *Social Work Supervision and Administration (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This practice course provides students with theories, knowledge and skills needed for supervision and leadership in human service organizations. Students will use critical thinking and analytical skills to understand the relationship between policy and social and economic justice. Special emphasis is placed on resource development and administrative practices.

509. *Advanced Generalist Practice with Small Groups (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This practice course provides students with advanced group work theory and skills necessary to carry out social work interventions with small groups. Students will explore the application of evidence-based practice in group work with diverse populations. Students will develop the ability to apply group work skills to practice and evaluate their effectiveness.

510. *Clinical Practice in Mental Health (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This course is designed to present the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV TR) as a knowledge base for enhancing social workers'

understanding of individual biopsychosocial functioning and to expand their ability to use the DSM-IV TR to work with at-risk populations, across diverse settings, and with diverse mental health professionals. The course will prepare social workers to perform comprehensive assessments and to devise effective interventions for clinically impaired populations. Ethical dilemmas inherent in categorizing and labeling will be highlighted along with cultural concerns in using a homogenous system of diagnostic classes.

511. *Human Behavior in the Social Environment I (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

This course is designed to provide first semester foundation students with an understanding of the biophysical, psychological, and behavior aspects of human development. Content in this first course in human behavior covers interactions between individuals and their environments and between families and their environments from birth through adolescence. Systems theory is the underlying context used to underpin all other major theories of individual and family development. Prerequisites: Introduction to Psychology and Introduction to Sociology.

513. *Human Behavior in the Social Environment II (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

This course builds on the theory and knowledge attained in HBSE I and presents theories of life span development from young adulthood through the end of life. Course content explores other issues of diversity including gender roles, sexism, and sexual identification. Models and theories of client's systems behavior are presented within the context of the larger systems theory. Prerequisite: Human Behavior in the Social Environment I

521. *Foundation of Social Welfare Policy (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

This foundation course in social welfare policy introduces students to social policy development, social welfare institutions, and the historical and existing policies underpinning the development of social policy. Course content is designed to emphasize the effect of social policies on client systems at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Special attention is given to the interaction between social welfare policies and at-risk populations.

531. *Research for Practice (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

The course presents the application of the scientific method in social work practice. The methods of empirical research for knowledge building, the role of research in theory construction, research designs and data analysis, and methods of practice and program evaluation are introduced. Students learn to apply qualitative and quantitative research methods to the problems of social work practice.

541. *Social Justice for Oppressed Populations (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

This course provides students with knowledge about social work with diverse populations, mechanisms of social oppression, and social work's efforts to bring about social and economic justice. The emphasis of this course is on understanding client groups who are particularly oppressed in our society due to factors of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability. In addition, the course discusses culturally-relevant micro and macro strategies for empowering these diverse groups.

553. *Field Foundations Practicum (3 sh)* FOUNDATION

This course provides students with the opportunity to apply the values, theories, knowledge, and skills learned in class with individuals, families (or households), small groups, organizations and communities while in an agency setting. Students are placed in field agencies under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are required to complete a minimum of 260 clock hours and attend a weekly field seminar. Prerequisites: SWK 501,

511, 521, 531, and 541 and additionally, the following courses are either prerequisites or co-requisites: SWK 503, 513, and 521.

555. *Advanced Generalist Practice Field (Spring Field - 4 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This field practicum provides students with experiential opportunities designed to integrate theory and advanced generalist practice with client systems in an agency setting. Students are required to complete a minimum of 240 clock hours and attend a weekly field seminar.

557. *Advanced Generalist Practice Field Practicum (Summer Field – 2 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This field practicum provides students with experiential opportunities designed to integrate theory and advanced generalist practice with client systems in an agency setting. Students are required to complete a minimum of 160 clock hours and attend a weekly field seminar.

559. *Advanced Generalist Practice Field (Fall Field – 4 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This field practicum provides students with experiential opportunities designed to integrate theory of advanced generalist practice with client systems in an agency setting. Students are required to complete a minimum of 240 clock hours and attend a weekly field seminar.

590. *Integrative Seminar in Advanced Generalist Practice (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

The capstone seminar provides the student with the opportunity to integrate content and skills from all graduate coursework. The student applies the knowledge, values and skills gained in the graduate program to a client system intervention in the field practicum setting. Critical thinking skills, self assessment, and practice evaluation requirements are developed in a major case study paper. (Prerequisites: SWK 595; concurrent enrollment in final (third) semester of Field Practicum, and enrollment in the final semester of the program).

595. *Research Literature and Techniques (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

This course provides students with information on advanced techniques of practice and program assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs are taught. Evaluation research design, instrument selection and development, and techniques of data analysis are addressed. Ethical and behavioral issues in evaluation research are presented. Development of an evaluation research design based on a practicum assignment is required. This class prepares the students for successful completion of SWK 590 requirements.

597. *Electives (3 sh)* CONCENTRATION

Examples of Social Work electives which have been offered in the past are as follows:

1. Treatment issues of children and adolescents
2. Gerontology
3. Developmental Disabilities
4. Spirituality
5. Social work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
6. Financial Management in Human Service Organizations

Electives from other disciplines may also be considered on a case by case decision.

## **ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR**

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment” (Texas A&M-Commerce Student Handbook). Students’ behavior, attitudes, and values will be assessed throughout the program to ensure their ability to perform professional social work practice.

Students are expected to maintain appropriate and acceptable behavior in the classroom and in field settings. As representatives of the social work program at Texas A&M-Commerce, students are ambassadors for our profession and our program. Offensive, disrespectful, or discourteous behavior is considered unacceptable and can serve as grounds for dismissal from the program (see subsequent sections on Removal from the Program). In addition, students are expected to reflect the NASW Code of Ethics for professional conduct.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

It is the policy of Texas A&M University-Commerce and the Social Work Department to do everything we can to accommodate students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example, in accessibility, seating placement or in arrangements for examinations should not hesitate to inform the instructor. If required, large type, Braille or cassette recordings of syllabus or assignments can be provided.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**  
**Texas A&M University-Commerce**  
**Halladay Student Services Building**  
**Room 303 A/D**  
**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**  
**Fax (903) 468-8148**  
[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The Department of School Work does not discriminate with regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability or status as a veteran, sexual orientation, gender identity, familial status or political affiliation in administration of its educational programs, admissions or employment practices.

### **STUDENTS WITH CRIMINAL BACKGROUNDS**

Students who have criminal backgrounds may apply and be accepted to the MSW program. However, students should be aware that their convictions may prohibit them from acceptance for field internships (a requirement for completion of the MSW program) or from becoming licensed upon graduation. The department's Admissions Committee considers several factors related to criminal offenses on an individual basis in determining acceptance into the program: type of offense, when it was committed, duration or impact of offense, and response of the applicant to having committed the offense. If the Admissions Committee perceives that the offense indicates there is potential for harm to clients or others, admission may be denied.

Many of our field agencies require students to complete criminal background checks and may prohibit placement of individuals with convictions. Every effort will be made to find an accepting agency, but the program cannot be responsible for finding internships for students under these circumstances. And students cannot complete the degree without completing the required internships.

### **STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

Students who have mental health issues may apply and be accepted to the MSW program. However, the department faculty adheres to the NASW Code of Ethics and the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners (TSBSWE, standard 10) for guidance in working with students with mental health and personal issues which impact their practice with clients.

The NASW Code of Ethics 2.09, 2.10 and 4.05 address personal impairment and incompetence. Standard 4.05(b) states "Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others." These guidelines offer clear suggestions for self-care and professional responsibility.

Our faculty have a duty and obligation to ensure that students who are placed in the field are competent to practice. Often those who are experiencing mental health issues, crisis, or distress are the least likely to self-assess their inability to function as they should. Therefore, we encourage students to seek professional assistance when needed and have the responsibility to deny or withdraw students from field internships under such circumstances until such a time as they are capable of competent practice.

### **STUDENT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Student obligations and responsibilities are listed in the Texas A&M University-Commerce Student's Guidebook, under the "Student Code of Conduct" with examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Social work students are expected to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct, and to avoid any actions which would violate this Code. Students are also expected to adhere to the NASW Code of Ethics (found in Appendix A).

## **STUDENT COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE POLICY**

For a student complaints regarding curriculum, program, course content, level of difficulty, attendance, or grading policy (e.g. workload, unmet needs, inappropriate materials, etc.), the following procedures apply:

1. The student shall discuss it with the faculty member in question.
2. If the complaint remains unresolved, or if the concern was a program-wide issue, the student shall put the complaint in writing and go to the MSW Program Director.
3. The Program Director shall forward a copy of the written complaint to, and discuss the issue with, the faculty in question.
4. The faculty in question shall prepare a written response to the student's complaint and submit it to the MSW Program Director.
5. The Program Director shall meet with the faculty and student together.
6. If the complaint remains unresolved, the Program Director shall submit the written student complaint and the written faculty response to the Head of the Department of Social Work.
7. The Department Head shall determine the appropriate course of action.
8. If the student's complaint remains unresolved, the student shall go to the Dean of the Graduate School.

## **STUDENT APPEALS**

Social work students may appeal any adverse action taken by Department faculty. The appeal process is:

1. Within 10 days of the student's receiving official notice of the adverse action, the student notifies the Department Head in writing of the intent to appeal. The student states the grounds for the appeal and provides supporting documentation.
2. Within 10 days following the receipt of the student's written notification, the Department Head notifies the student and appropriate faculty of a decision, or a course of action to arrive at a decision.
3. If not satisfied with the Department Head's decision, the student may contact the Dean of the Graduate School who will advise the student of options and assist them in pursuing their appeal.

For grade appeals, students should follow the written procedures as stated in the Graduate Catalog ([www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool](http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool))

## TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM

Termination from the program is the most adverse action the Social Work faculty can take. It can occur for two reasons: unsatisfactory grades or inappropriate conduct including unprofessional performance.

**Academic Performance:** To be admitted to the program and to field placements, and to remain in good standing, social work students must have and maintain an overall GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. MSW faculty members submit a notice to the advisor of each student who is scoring below 3.00 at mid-term. The advisor then meets with the student to plan for the remaining coursework and to advise the student of services and resources available from the department, local community, field agencies and the University to help the student meet the minimum grade requirement of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale.

A student who fails to meet or maintain the 3.00 GPA requirements shall be placed on probation or suspension from the MSW program according to the Texas A & M University-Commerce Graduate Catalog.

**Unprofessional Behavior or Misconduct:** Termination may result from inappropriate student conduct including professional misconduct. Examples include:

1. Failure to meet generally accepted standards of professional social work conduct including the Social Work Code of Ethics
2. Failure to demonstrate generally accepted standards of personal integrity and emotional stability required for competent professional practice; or
3. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior toward other students, faculty, or staff, either on campus or at a field agency, that strongly indicates the student is unable to behave in a professional manner.

## POLICY ON REMOVAL FOR IMPROPER PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

“A student who fails to meet the professional expectation of the field for which they are preparing may be suspended from further study in that program by the department administering that program” (Graduate School).

When faculty or others (such as a field instructor) identify a major concern regarding a student's behavior or performance, the first step is to conference directly with the student and develop a plan for response. The department documents such concerns on a Conference Contact Form which outlines the concern noted, the date these were discussed with the student, the student's response and plan for remediation. The Conference Contact Form is filed in the student's file. Email is considered an acceptable form of documentation. Regardless of how the format, the key point is that the student is directly confronted with any serious concerns at the earliest possible time.

If the problem or behavior continues, then the MSW Program Director is notified. A report of inappropriate student conduct, including unprofessional performance, will be promptly reviewed

by the MSW Program Director. He or she shall interview the student and any involved faculty (or field instructor) to determine a complete scenario of events for clarification of the information and develop a plan for resolution. Documentation will be placed in the student's folder.

If the problem is unresolved, the Department Head should be notified. A conference will be held with all involved parties and the Department Head will determine if the student needs termination from the program. The student will have the right of appeal as noted above.

Violations of ethical behavior are taken seriously. Social workers, like other professionals, are charged with the responsibility of upholding ethical conduct within their profession. Any violation of the standards set forth in either the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics (1997) shall be brought to the immediate attention of the person(s) involved.

For a student complaint regarding a fellow student's unprofessional, unethical behavior(s), the following procedures apply: When a student observes a perceived ethical violation, they should

1. Address their concern to the perpetrator, where feasible
2. If there is no resolution, the incident should be reported to a faculty member for investigation
3. The faculty member shall inform the MSW Program Director
4. The Program Director shall investigate and take appropriate actions
5. If the matter is unresolved, it may be referred by any of the parties to the Department Head.

### **POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING**

Plagiarism is the "[A]ct of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts of passages of his [or her] writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product of one's own mind." (Black's Law Dictionary, Abridged Fifth Edition, 1983). When a student gives proper credit to the source, it is not plagiarism.

Some examples of cheating include copying answers from another's test or assignment, using notes during an exam, giving or receiving help on assignments, and submitting work already submitted for a previous class for credit in another class. The most common occurrence of plagiarism occurs when students use information off the Internet without proper citations or references. Taking entire sections of content from a webpage is considered plagiarism!

If a student suspects cheating is occurring during an exam, the student must immediately notify the instructor, so that the instructor can evaluate the situation while it is occurring.

Law, University policy, and ethical standards all require that students refrain from plagiarism or cheating in any form. Social workers must be honest and trustworthy, therefore, social work students must avoid any behavior that is dishonest, or impairs the trust of others. Instances of suspected plagiarism and/or cheating will be thoroughly evaluated. Students found in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action by the Department and University.

### **POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Students are expected to be present for all class meetings of any course for which they are enrolled. Students are responsible for learning about and complying with the attendance policy stated in the *Graduate Catalog*, *Student's Guidebook*, and faculty syllabus.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The University limits access to confidential information about students. The Social Work Department keeps student folders containing degree plans, advisement notes, and program application materials, copies of correspondence, field application materials, and field evaluations. Student folders are kept in locked file drawers and can only be accessed by Department faculty. After graduation, student folders are filed with other alumni folders which are also kept in locked. Only Department faculty and staff have access to these files.

## **Appendix A**

### **Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers**

**Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 1999 NASW Delegate Assembly**

#### **Preamble**

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being 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 well-being 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.

\*For information on NASW adjudication procedures, see *NASW Procedures for the Adjudication of Grievances*.

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 well-being 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.

Social workers should contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics. Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession's literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.

Social workers should act to prevent the unauthorized and unqualified practice of social work.

## **Ethical Standards**

The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all social workers. These standards concern (1) social workers' ethical responsibilities to clients, (2) social workers' ethical responsibilities to colleagues, (3) social workers' ethical responsibilities in practice settings, (4) social workers' ethical responsibilities as professionals, (5) social workers' ethical responsibilities to the social work profession, and (6) social workers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society.

Some of the standards that follow are enforceable guidelines for professional conduct, and some are aspirational. The extent to which each standard is enforceable is a matter of professional judgment to be exercised by those responsible for reviewing alleged violations of ethical standards.

### **1. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Clients**

#### **1.01 Commitment to Clients**

Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients' interests are primary. However, social workers' responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised. (Examples include when a social worker is required by law to report that a client has abused a child or has threatened to harm self or others.)

#### **1.02 Self-Determination**

Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Social workers may limit clients' right to self-determination when, in the social workers' professional judgment, clients' actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others.

### **1.03 Informed Consent**

(a) Social workers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services, limits to services because of the requirements of a third-party payer, relevant costs, reasonable alternatives, clients' right to refuse or withdraw consent, and the time frame covered by the consent. Social workers should provide clients with an opportunity to ask questions.

(b) In instances when clients are not literate or have difficulty understanding the primary language used in the practice setting, social workers should take steps to ensure clients' comprehension. This may include providing clients with a detailed verbal explanation or arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator whenever possible.

(c) In instances when clients lack the capacity to provide informed consent, social workers should protect clients' interests by seeking permission from an appropriate third party, informing clients consistent with the clients' level of understanding. In such instances social workers should seek to ensure that the third party acts in a manner consistent with clients' wishes and interests. Social workers should take reasonable steps to enhance such clients' ability to give informed consent.

(d) In instances when clients are receiving services involuntarily, social workers should provide information about the nature and extent of services and about the extent of clients' right to refuse service.

(e) Social workers who provide services via electronic media (such as computer, telephone, radio, and television) should inform recipients of the limitations and risks associated with such services.

(f) Social workers should obtain clients' informed consent before audio taping or videotaping clients or permitting observation of services to clients by a third party.

### **1.04 Competence**

(a) Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience.

(b) Social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques.

(c) When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps (including appropriate education, research, training, consultation, and supervision) to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from harm.

### **1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity**

(a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

(b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

(c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

### **1.06 Conflicts of Interest**

(a) Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Social workers should inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients' interests primary and protects clients' interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client.

(b) Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

(c) Social workers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there are a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers should take steps to protect clients and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. (Dual or multiple relationships occur when social workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.)

(d) When social workers provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), social workers should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered clients and the nature of social workers' professional obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services. Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (for example, when a social worker is asked to testify in a child custody dispute or divorce proceedings involving clients) should clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.

## **1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality**

- (a) Social workers should respect clients' right to privacy. Social workers should not solicit private information from clients unless it is essential to providing services or conducting social work evaluation or research. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.
- (b) Social workers may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent from a client or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of a client.
- (c) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that social workers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. In all instances, social workers should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose; only information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made should be revealed.
- (d) Social workers should inform clients, to the extent possible, about the disclosure of confidential information and the potential consequences, when feasible before the disclosure is made. This applies whether social workers disclose confidential information on the basis of a legal requirement or client consent.
- (e) Social workers should discuss with clients and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of clients' right to confidentiality. Social workers should review with client's circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the social worker-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.
- (f) When social workers provide counseling services to families, couples, or groups, social workers should seek agreement among the parties involved concerning each individual's right to confidentiality and obligation to preserve the confidentiality of information shared by others. Social workers should inform participants in family, couples, or group counseling that social workers cannot guarantee that all participants will honor such agreements.
- (g) Social workers should inform clients involved in family, couples, marital, or group counseling of the social worker's, employer's, and agency's policy concerning the social worker's disclosure of confidential information among the parties involved in the counseling.
- (h) Social workers should not disclose confidential information to third-party payers unless clients have authorized such disclosure.
- (i) Social workers should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Social workers should not discuss confidential information in public or semipublic areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.

(j) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients during legal proceedings to the extent permitted by law. When a court of law or other legally authorized body orders social workers to disclose confidential or privileged information without a client's consent and such disclosure could cause harm to the client, social workers should request that the court withdraw the order or limit the order as narrowly as possible or maintain the records under seal, unavailable for public inspection.

(k) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients when responding to requests from members of the media.

(l) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients' written and electronic records and other sensitive information. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients' records are stored in a secure location and that clients' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.

(m) Social workers should take precautions to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of information transmitted to other parties through the use of computers, electronic mail, facsimile machines, telephones and telephone answering machines, and other electronic or computer technology. Disclosure of identifying information should be avoided whenever possible.

(n) Social workers should transfer or dispose of clients' records in a manner that protects clients' confidentiality and is consistent with state statutes governing records and social work licensure.

(o) Social workers should take reasonable precautions to protect client confidentiality in the event of the social worker's termination of practice, incapacitation, or death.

(p) Social workers should not disclose identifying information when discussing clients for teaching or training purposes unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information.

(q) Social workers should not disclose identifying information when discussing clients with consultants unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information or there is a compelling need for such disclosure.

(r) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of deceased clients consistent with the preceding standards.

### **1.08 Access to Records**

(a) Social workers should provide clients with reasonable access to records concerning the clients. Social workers who are concerned that clients' access to their records could cause serious misunderstanding or harm to the client should provide assistance in interpreting the records and consultation with the client regarding the records. Social workers should limit clients' access to their records, or portions of their records, only in exceptional circumstances when there is compelling evidence that such access would cause serious harm to the client. Both clients'

requests and the rationale for withholding some or all of the record should be documented in clients' files.

(b) When providing clients with access to their records, social workers should take steps to protect the confidentiality of other individuals identified or discussed in such records.

### **1.13 Payment for Services**

(a) When setting fees, social workers should ensure that the fees are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the services performed. Consideration should be given to clients' ability to pay.

(b) Social workers should avoid accepting goods or services from clients as payment for professional services. Bartering arrangements, particularly involving services, create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in social workers' relationships with clients. Social workers should explore and may participate in bartering only in very limited circumstances when it can be demonstrated that such arrangements are an accepted practice among professionals in the local community, considered to be essential for the provision of services, negotiated without coercion, and entered into at the client's initiative and with the client's informed consent. Social workers who accept goods or services from clients as payment for professional services assume the full burden of demonstrating that this arrangement will not be detrimental to the client or the professional relationship.

(c) Social workers should not solicit a private fee or other remuneration for providing services to clients who are entitled to such available services through the social workers' employer or agency.

### **1.14 Clients Who Lack Decision-Making Capacity**

When social workers act on behalf of clients who lack the capacity to make informed decisions, social workers should take reasonable steps to safeguard the interests and rights of those clients.

### **1.15 Interruption of Services**

Social workers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, disability, or death.

### **1.16 Termination of Services**

(a) Social workers should terminate services to clients and professional relationships with them when such services and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the clients' needs or interests.

(b) Social workers should take reasonable steps to avoid abandoning clients who are still in need of services. Social workers should withdraw services precipitously only under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to

minimize possible adverse effects. Social workers should assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services when necessary.

(c) Social workers in fee-for-service settings may terminate services to clients who are not paying an overdue balance if the financial contractual arrangements have been made clear to the client, if the client does not pose an imminent danger to self or others, and if the clinical and other consequences of the current nonpayment have been addressed and discussed with the client.

(d) Social workers should not terminate services to pursue a social, financial, or sexual relationship with a client.

(e) Social workers who anticipate the termination or interruption of services to clients should notify clients promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or continuation of services in relation to the clients' needs and preferences.

(f) Social workers who are leaving an employment setting should inform clients of appropriate options for the continuation of services and of the benefits and risks of the options.

## **2. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues**

### **2.01 Respect**

(a) Social workers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.

(b) Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals. Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

(c) Social workers should cooperate with social work colleagues and with colleagues of other professions when such cooperation serves the well-being of clients.

### **2.02 Confidentiality**

Social workers should respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions. Social workers should ensure that such colleagues understand social workers' obligation to respect confidentiality and any exceptions related to it.

### **2.03 Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

(a) Social workers who are members of an interdisciplinary team should participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives,

values, and experiences of the social work profession. Professional and ethical obligations of the interdisciplinary team as a whole and of its individual members should be clearly established.

(b) Social workers for whom a team decision raises ethical concerns should attempt to resolve the disagreement through appropriate channels. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, social workers should pursue other avenues to address their concerns consistent with client well-being.

#### **2.04 Disputes Involving Colleagues**

(a) Social workers should not take advantage of a dispute between a colleague and an employer to obtain a position or otherwise advance the social workers' own interests.

(b) Social workers should not exploit clients in disputes with colleagues or engage clients in any inappropriate discussion of conflicts between social workers and their colleagues.

#### **2.05 Consultation**

(a) Social workers should seek the advice and counsel of colleagues whenever such consultation is in the best interests of clients.

(b) Social workers should keep themselves informed about colleagues' areas of expertise and competencies. Social workers should seek consultation only from colleagues who have demonstrated knowledge, expertise, and competence related to the subject of the consultation.

(c) When consulting with colleagues about clients, social workers should disclose the least amount of information necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation.

#### **2.06 Referral for Services**

(a) Social workers should refer clients to other professionals when the other professionals' specialized knowledge or expertise is needed to serve clients fully or when social workers believe that they are not being effective or making reasonable progress with clients and that additional service is required.

(b) Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should take appropriate steps to facilitate an orderly transfer of responsibility. Social workers who refer clients to other professionals should disclose, with clients' consent, all pertinent information to the new service providers.

(c) Social workers are prohibited from giving or receiving payment for a referral when no professional service is provided by the referring social worker.

#### **2.07 Sexual Relationships**

(a) Social workers who function as supervisors or educators should not engage in sexual activities or contact with supervisees, students, trainees, or other colleagues over whom they exercise professional authority.

(b) Social workers should avoid engaging in sexual relationships with colleagues when there is potential for a conflict of interest. Social workers who become involved in, or anticipate becoming involved in, a sexual relationship with a colleague have a duty to transfer professional responsibilities, when necessary, to avoid a conflict of interest.

## **2.08 Sexual Harassment**

Social workers should not sexually harass supervisees, students, trainees, or colleagues. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, sexual solicitation, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

## **2.09 Impairment of Colleagues**

(a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's impairment that is due to personal problems, psychosocial distress, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties and that interferes with practice effectiveness should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.

(b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague's impairment interferes with practice effectiveness and that the colleague has not taken adequate steps to address the impairment should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

## **2.10 Incompetence of Colleagues**

(a) Social workers who have direct knowledge of a social work colleague's incompetence should consult with that colleague when feasible and assist the colleague in taking remedial action.

(b) Social workers who believe that a social work colleague is incompetent and has not taken adequate steps to address the incompetence should take action through appropriate channels established by employers, agencies, NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, and other professional organizations.

## **2.11 Unethical Conduct of Colleagues**

(a) Social workers should take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues.

(b) Social workers should be knowledgeable about established policies and procedures for handling concerns about colleagues' unethical behavior. Social workers should be familiar with national, state, and local procedures for handling ethics complaints. These include policies and

procedures created by NASW, licensing and regulatory bodies, employers, agencies, and other professional organizations.

(c) Social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should seek resolution by discussing their concerns with the colleague when feasible and when such discussion is likely to be productive.

(d) When necessary, social workers who believe that a colleague has acted unethically should take action through appropriate formal channels (such as contacting a state licensing board or regulatory body, an NASW committee on inquiry, or other professional ethics committees).

(e) Social workers should defend and assist colleagues who are unjustly charged with unethical conduct.

### **3. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings**

#### **3.01 Supervision and Consultation**

(a) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation should have the necessary knowledge and skill to supervise or consult appropriately and should do so only within their areas of knowledge and competence.

(b) Social workers who provide supervision or consultation are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

(c) Social workers should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with supervisees in whom there is a risk of exploitation of or potential harm to the supervisee.

(d) Social workers who provide supervision should evaluate supervisees' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

#### **3.02 Education and Training**

(a) Social workers who function as educators, field instructors for students, or trainers should provide instruction only within their areas of knowledge and competence and should provide instruction based on the most current information and knowledge available in the profession.

(b) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should evaluate students' performance in a manner that is fair and respectful.

(c) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients are routinely informed when services are being provided by students.

(d) Social workers who function as educators or field instructors for students should not engage in any dual or multiple relationships with students in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the student. Social work educators and field instructors are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries.

### **3.03 Performance Evaluation**

Social workers who have responsibility for evaluating the performance of others should fulfill such responsibility in a fair and considerate manner and on the basis of clearly stated criteria.

### **3.04 Client Records**

(a) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflects the services provided.

(b) Social workers should include sufficient and timely documentation in records to facilitate the delivery of services and to ensure continuity of services provided to clients in the future.

(c) Social workers' documentation should protect clients' privacy to the extent that is possible and appropriate and should include only information that is directly relevant to the delivery of services.

(d) Social workers should store records following the termination of services to ensure reasonable future access. Records should be maintained for the number of years required by state statutes or relevant contracts.

### **3.05 Billing**

Social workers should establish and maintain billing practices that accurately reflect the nature and extent of services provided and that identify who provided the service in the practice setting.

### **3.06 Client Transfer**

(a) When an individual who is receiving services from another agency or colleague contacts a social worker for services, the social worker should carefully consider the client's needs before agreeing to provide services. To minimize possible confusion and conflict, social workers should discuss with potential clients the nature of the clients' current relationship with other service providers and the implications, including possible benefits or risks, of entering into a relationship with a new service provider.

(b) If a new client has been served by another agency or colleague, social workers should discuss with the client whether consultation with the previous service provider is in the client's best interest.

### **3.07 Administration**

(a) Social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet clients' needs.

(b) Social workers should advocate for resource allocation procedures that are open and fair. When not all clients' needs can be met, an allocation procedure should be developed that is nondiscriminatory and based on appropriate and consistently applied principles.

(c) Social workers who are administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that adequate agency or organizational resources are available to provide appropriate staff supervision.

(d) Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment for which they are responsible is consistent with and encourages compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics. Social work administrators should take reasonable steps to eliminate any conditions in their organizations that violate, interfere with, or discourage compliance with the Code.

### **3.08 Continuing Education and Staff Development**

Social work administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development for all staff for which they are responsible. Continuing education and staff development should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to social work practice and ethics.

### **3.09 Commitments to Employers**

(a) Social workers generally should adhere to commitments made to employers and employing organizations.

(b) Social workers should work to improve employing agencies' policies and procedures and the efficiency and effectiveness of their services.

(c) Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that employers are aware of social workers' ethical obligations as set forth in the NASW Code of Ethics and of the implications of those obligations for social work practice.

(d) Social workers should not allow an employing organization's policies, procedures, regulations, or administrative orders to interfere with their ethical practice of social work. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that their employing organizations' practices are consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.

(e) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organization's work assignments and in its employment policies and practices.

(f) Social workers should accept employment or arrange student field placements only in organizations that exercise fair personnel practices.

(g) Social workers should be diligent stewards of the resources of their employing organizations, wisely conserving funds where appropriate and never misappropriating funds or using them for unintended purposes.

### **3.10 Labor-Management Disputes**

(a) Social workers may engage in organized action, including the formation of and participation in labor unions, to improve services to clients and working conditions.

(b) The actions of social workers who are involved in labor-management disputes, job actions, or labor strikes should be guided by the profession's values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Reasonable differences of opinion exist among social workers concerning their primary obligation as professionals during an actual or threatened labor strike or job action. Social workers should carefully examine relevant issues and their possible impact on clients before deciding on a course of action.

## **4. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals**

### **4.01 Competence**

(a) Social workers should accept responsibility or employment only on the basis of existing competence or the intention to acquire the necessary competence.

(b) Social workers should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions. Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work. Social workers should routinely review the professional literature and participate in continuing education relevant to social work practice and social work ethics.

(c) Social workers should base practice on recognized knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics.

### **4.02 Discrimination**

Social workers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.

### **4.03 Private Conduct**

Social workers should not permit their private conduct to interfere with their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

### **4.04 Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception**

Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

#### **4.05 Impairment**

(a) Social workers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.

(b) Social workers whose personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties interfere with their professional judgment and performance should immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload, terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

#### **4.06 Misrepresentation**

(a) Social workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and actions engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the social work profession, a professional social work organization, or the social worker's employing agency.

(b) Social workers who speak on behalf of professional social work organizations should accurately represent the official and authorized positions of the organizations.

(c) Social workers should ensure that their representations to clients, agencies, and the public of professional qualifications, credentials, education, competence, affiliations, and services provided, or results to be achieved are accurate. Social workers should claim only those relevant professional credentials they actually possess and take steps to correct any inaccuracies or misrepresentations of their credentials by others.

#### **4.07 Solicitations**

(a) Social workers should not engage in uninvited solicitation of potential clients who, because of their circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence, manipulation, or coercion.

(b) Social workers should not engage in solicitation of testimonial endorsements (including solicitation of consent to use a client's prior statement as a testimonial endorsement) from current clients or from other people who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

#### **4.08 Acknowledging Credit**

(a) Social workers should take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed and to which they have contributed.

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(b) Social workers should honestly acknowledge the work of and the contributions made by others.

## **5. Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Social Work Profession**

### **5.01 Integrity of the Profession**

(a) Social workers should work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.

(b) Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.

(c) Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession. These activities may include teaching, research, consultation, service, legislative testimony, presentations in the community, and participation in their professional organizations.

(d) Social workers should contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics. Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession's literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.

(e) Social workers should act to prevent the unauthorized and unqualified practice of social work.

## References

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