

# Statement of Ethical Principles and Professional Integrity.

The statement of ethical principles enables social workers to ensure the professional integrity of their practice. It is also the basis for all social work codes of ethics for members of International Federation of Social Work (IFSW).

Members of IFSW are required to support their social work members in upholding these ethical principles, their own code of ethics and the integrity of the profession.

All IFSW policies including the definition of social work stem from these ethical principles. <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/>

## Principles:

### 1. Human Rights and Human Dignity

Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth, dignity of all people and the individual, social and civil rights that follow from this. Social workers often work with people to find an appropriate balance between competing human rights.

#### 1.1 The Right to Self-Determination

Social workers respect and promote people's rights to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.

#### 1.2 The Right to Participation

Social workers promote the full involvement of people in empowering ways that enable active participation in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.

#### 1.3 Respect for the Person and their community

Social workers work with people within the family, community, societal and natural environments and seek to respect all aspects of life.

#### 1.4 Respect for Privacy in Family and Community Life.

Social workers respect that all people have a right to privacy in their own lives unless there is a risk of harm or abuse to themselves or others.

#### 1.5 Recognizing Strengths

Social workers work with people to identify their strengths as individuals, groups, communities and societies, thereby promoting their empowerment and self-determination.

## **1.6 Interdependency of People**

Social workers work within the context of families, social groups, communities, societies and globally supporting interdependent relationships and social structures that recognize and value diversity.

## **2. Social Justice**

Social workers have a responsibility to engage people in achieving social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. This means:

### **2.1 Challenging Discrimination and Oppression.**

Social workers have a responsibility to engage people in eliminating all forms of discrimination and oppression

### **2.2 Respecting Diversity in Societies**

Social workers work with people to strengthen inclusive communities that respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they live.

### **2.3 Access to Equitable Resources**

Social workers advocate for the equitable distribution of resources and wealth.

### **2.4 Challenging Unjust Policies and Practices**

Social workers must challenge employers, policy makers, politicians and civil society, situations where policies and practices are socially unjust and undermine human rights but may apply for dispensation from this requirement through their national body to the IFSW Ethics Commission if such challenge attempts endanger their or other's safety.

### **2.5 Building Solidarity**

Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society, working with people to achieve transformational change for socially inclusive societies.

## **3. Professional Integrity**

It is the responsibility of members to develop and regularly update their own codes of ethics or ethical guidelines, to be consistent with the principles in this statement. It is the responsibility of national organizations to inform social workers, schools of social work, governments, civil society and employers about these codes. . Social workers should act in accordance with the ethical code current in their country. Social workers are expected to develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do their job. This means:

**3.1** Social workers should not allow their skills to be used for inhumane purposes, such as torture, interrogation, military surveillance or terrorism. This includes the use of weapons in their private or professional lives when there is the intention to harm or intimidate people.

**3.2** Social workers should act with integrity. This includes not abusing the relationship of trust with the people using their services, recognizing the

boundaries between personal and professional life, and not abusing their position for personal benefit or gain. It is recognized that the giving and receiving of gifts is a part of the social work and cultural experience in many cultures and countries. In such situations this should be referenced in the country's code of ethics.

**3.3** Social workers have a duty to take the necessary steps to care for themselves professionally and personally in the workplace, in their private lives and in society.

**3.4** Social workers need to acknowledge that they are accountable for their actions to the people they work with, their colleagues, their employers, the professional association and to the law, and that these accountabilities may at times conflict with each other.

**3.5** Social workers should foster and engage in ethical debate with their colleagues and employers and take responsibility for making ethically informed decisions.

**3.6** Social workers should be prepared to state the reasons for their decisions informed by evidence, values, ethical and legal considerations and be accountable for their choices and actions.

**3.7** Social workers should work to create conditions in their workplace environments and in their countries, where the principles of this statement and those of their own national code are discussed, evaluated and upheld.