Ethics

2017 Changes to the Code of Ethics

- Encourage social workers to discuss with clients policies concerning use of technology in the provision of professional services. Clients should have a clear understanding of the ways in which social workers use technology to deliver services, communicate with clients. Search for information about clients online, and store sensitive information about clients.
- Encourage social workers who plan to use technology in the provision of services to obtain client consent to the use of technology at the beginning for the professional–client relationship.
- Advise social workers who use technology to communicate with clients to assess each client’s capacity to provide informed consent.
- Advise social workers to verify the identity and location of clients they serve remotely (especially in the case there is an emergency and also to enable social workers to comply with laws in the client’s jurisdiction).
- Alert social workers to the need to assess clients’ ability to access and use technology particularly when social workers are providing online and remote services. It also encourages social workers to help clients identify alternative methods of service delivery if the use of technology to deliver services is not appropriate.
- Advise social workers to respect clients’ privacy and obtain client consent before conducting an online search for information about clients.
- Highlight the need for social workers to understand the special communication challenges associated with electronic and remote service delivery and how to address these challenges.
- Advise social workers who use technology to comply with the laws of both the jurisdiction in which the social worker is regulated and located and that in which the client is located.
- Advise social workers to be aware of, assess, and respond to cultural, environmental, economic, disability, linguistic, and other social diversity issues that may affect delivery or use of services.
- Discourage social workers from communicating with clients using technology for personal and on-work-related purposes, to maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Advise social workers to take reasonable steps to prevent clients’ access to social workers personal social networking sites and personal technology, again to avoid boundary confusion and inappropriate dual relationships.
- Suggest that social workers should be aware that posting personal information on professional web sites or other media could cause boundary confusion, inappropriate duel relationships, or harm to clients.
- Remind social workers to be aware that clients may discover personal information about them on the basis of their personal affiliations ad use of social media.
- Suggest that social workers should avoid accepting request from or engaging in personal relationships with clients on online social networks a=or other electronic media.
- Advise social workers to take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of electronic communications, including information provided to clients or third parties.
- Advise social worker to develop and disclose policies and procedures for notifying clients of any breach of confidential information in a timely manner.
- Advise social workers to inform clients of unauthorized access to the social worker’s electronic communications or storage systems.
• Advise social workers to develop and inform clients about their policies on the use of electronic technology together information about clients.

• Advise social workers to avoid posting any identifying or confidential information about clients on professional web sites or other forms of social media.

• Advise social workers using technology to facilitate evaluation or research to obtain clients’ informed consent for the use of such technology. The code also encourages social workers to access clients’ ability to use technology and, when appropriate, offer reasonable alternatives.