

NASW Ethical Principles: Some Suggested Activities and Advocacy for Antiracism and Social Justice

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).

Activities and Advocacy

- Address client needs by understanding racial discrimination and the trauma it causes.
- Reach out to agencies in your community that provide services to people of color to offer your services.
- Reach out to law enforcement in your community to offer workshops and trainings.
- Participate in community meetings and public discussions that address racism and injustice.
- Direct government and community agencies to current and relevant information focused on racism, trauma and injustice.

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.

Activities and Advocacy

- Provide public input when racial/discrimination/violence occurs.
- Work with NASW or other organizations to assure that your professional voice is heard.
- Vote and support candidates running for public office who promote social justice and equality.
- Write articles in media outlets that inform and educate citizens about social injustice with a call to action for antiracism and social justice.
- Participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations.

- Communicate with elected officials at every level about racist policies and practices that must change.
- Speak out when racist and discriminatory statements are made in your presence.
- Develop opportunities for antiracism and social justice advocacy in communities.

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.

Activities and Advocacy

- Conduct continuous self-assessment to ensure you are personally and professionally demonstrating what is stated in this principle.
- Seek feedback from others regarding your words and actions to develop further self-awareness.
- Discuss with your clients the skills and attitudes needed to resolve conflicts.
- Use visual cues and language that reflects value and respect for diverse people.
- Exercise cultural humility when engaging with others, recognizing that they are the expert on their culture.
- Recognize that attending training does not grant you expertise about the racial and cultural experiences of others.
- Practice listening to others when they share who they are and what they value.

Value: *Importance of Human Relationships*

Ethical Principle: *Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.*

Activities and Advocacy

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.

- Become a relationship builder in your community, offer your services to schools, law enforcement and community agencies.
- Strive to improve your relationships with other social workers.
- Create and/or participate in diverse group activities to broaden relationships.
- Share affirming messages that reflect your value of others.
- Utilize vendors and patronize businesses that reflect your value of diversity.
- Avoid use of "color-blind" jargon and speak the truth that people are different.

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.

Activities and Advocacy

- Examine and reflect upon your thoughts and beliefs on racial justice, white privilege, and economic justice.
- Increase your understanding of implicit bias, prejudice and racism and use this knowledge to move from awareness to action.
- Conduct or attend workshops or training in these areas.
- Address inequity around hiring, promotions and leadership opportunities in your agencies.
- Speak up for racial and social justice when people of color are not present.
- Demonstrate anti-racist congruency in your personal and professional life.

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.

Activities and Advocacy

- Increase your knowledge about the impacts of implicit bias, prejudice and racism and use this information to move from awareness to action.
- Invest in learning more about others through genuine relationship-building.
- Participate in learning opportunities facilitated by Black and Brown people.
- Reference and utilize research that includes racial and cultural competence and humility.
- Participate in community events that honor racial and cultural differences.
- Utilize assessments and interventions that incorporate strengths-based perspectives of Black and Brown people.
- Include racial and cultural competence and humility in supervision.