

Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

SOCIAL WORKER CANDIDACY

A Guide for Candidates and Candidate Supervisors

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Acknowledgments

The Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers gratefully acknowledges the significant contribution made by candidate supervisors and employers to the developing practice of new social workers, to social work education and to the practice of social work.

NSASW wishes to thank employers for their continued support to candidates and to employees who offer candidacy supervision. It is through their support of the candidacy process that they have an opportunity to assist in the development of competent social work practitioners who will benefit not only their own organizations, but also the larger social work community.

NSASW also wishes to thank everyone who has provided such valuable comments and feedback during the consultation process.

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INTRODUCTION

In Nova Scotia, provincial legislation requires that persons practising as social workers be registered with the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (NSASW). To become registered as a social worker and thus permitted to use the title of social worker, a candidate with the BSW degree must complete at least **two years**, or a minimum of **3,859 hours**, of paid supervised social work experience. A candidate with the MSW degree must complete at least **18 months**, or a minimum of **2,573 hours** of paid supervised social work experience for registration. (Section 22(2)(a) Social Workers Act).

Candidacy hours are based upon a 37.5 hour work week. The Board *may* consider part-time work as acceptable experience on an appropriately pro-rated basis. Overtime or extra work cannot be used to reduce the number of years of required supervision.

All new applicants for registration must demonstrate to the Board that they have the knowledge, values and skills necessary to competently practice social work.

The social worker candidacy period is designed to provide graduates of recognized schools of social work with a wide range of social work learning opportunities and experiences, as well as supervised assistance and guidance in the development of competent social work practice through the integration of academic knowledge, applied skill, and ethical practice.

This document is designed to answer the many questions posed by candidates and candidate supervisors as they navigate their way through the candidacy process. The information should prove useful to candidates and supervisors in establishing goals and objectives for the candidacy period, evaluating the candidate's progress and in the completion of necessary documentation.

THE GOALS OF SUPERVISION

Candidacy supervisors have the distinct role of overseeing the professional and ethical progress of candidates within their work experience and informing the Board of Examiners of candidates' progress. Supervisors contribute to candidates' progress toward approval by the NSASW's Board of Examiners as Registered Social Workers.

It is in the best interest of the social work profession and the public to ensure that those whom we designate as "Registered Social Workers" are able to demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and the good character to serve their clients both competently and in a manner which enhances the stature of the profession.

The candidacy process which is required for registration fulfils several purposes:

1. It provides supervised experience in order to allow the candidate to integrate formal learning, knowledge and skills into competent social work practice.
2. It enhances the candidate's awareness and use of the Social Work Code of Ethics in competent practice.
3. It provides the Board with regular detailed assessment of the candidate's progress in the understanding and application of social work principles, ethical decision-making, and standards of practice.
4. It reinforces the importance of ongoing supervision and continuing education within the membership of the NSASW.
5. It promptly identifies any problems which may arise during the candidacy process and offers the opportunity to address these issues.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL WORKER CANDIDATES

Social Worker candidates must be employed in a position which provides the opportunity for them to obtain relevant social work experience.

The social work candidate is responsible for:

1. selecting a candidacy supervisor;
2. attending supervisory meetings at times mutually agreed upon and contracted for in the Written Contract for Candidacy Supervision;
3. contacting the candidate supervisor, and ensuring that the Record of Supervision (Form A) is completed and submitted to the Board of Examiners in a timely manner as prescribed in the Regulations;
4. notifying the Board of Examiners of any significant changes in the work setting, job description, supervisory arrangements, and candidacy goals; and
5. notifying the Board of Examiners in writing of any concerns relating to aspects of the supervision experience.

Selection of the Candidate Supervisor

The selection of the supervisor is the responsibility of the candidate. Candidate supervisors *must* be approved by the Board of Examiners. In order to be approved by the Board, the supervisor:

1. shall have at least two years of full time (or equivalent) experience as a professional social worker acceptable by the Board of Examiners;
2. shall have training in the broad area of practice in which supervision is offered;
3. may be supervising no more than three candidates at any one time; and
4. shall be a social worker registered in Nova Scotia. However, if a candidate is practicing in another jurisdiction, the Board may approve that the candidate be supervised by a social worker registered in that province or country.

When selecting a supervisor, the candidate can choose:

- an RSW in their or another workplace who has experience in the field that the candidate is working in; or
- social workers in private practice; or
- a social worker who has volunteer time to provide supervision to candidates.

It is recommended that the candidate supervisor not be the direct employment supervisor of the candidate. Exceptions may be permitted with the approval of the Board. (See Regulation, Section 11(1). Also, see section on Conflict of Interest.)

When necessary, the Board will offer all possible assistance to candidates having difficulty finding a supervisor.

Once the candidate selects a supervisor, the name must be provided to the Registrar who verifies their RSW status and gives approval to contract with the person selected. (See Form C, Candidate Supervisor Information.)

DUTIES OF THE CANDIDATE SUPERVISOR

1. **Supervision time:** each month the candidate and supervisor must commit themselves to spend at least two hours together in face-to-face meetings or via teleconference and/or video conference. Supervisory sessions should last a minimum of one hour. As a result of supervision the candidate supervisor must be prepared to provide objective and constructive assessment of the candidate to the Board of Examiners.
2. **Contract:** the supervisor and the candidate must set up a written learning contract which will outline the times or meeting, content to be covered, goals and objectives of supervision, evaluation of progress and preparation of timely reports to the Board. The candidate supervisor must be prepared to intervene in problematic situations requiring attention at a level of skill not yet mastered by the candidate. *Supervisors are reminded that failure to submit reports on time may result in penalties to their candidates.* (Refer to Appendix C, The Written Contract for Candidacy Supervision.)
3. **Content:** the content of the meetings is related to the general practice of social work and not the workplace management of the caseload. However, examples from the workplace may be used to highlight and demonstrate social work knowledge, values and skills.

That is, the content will focus on the candidate's development of skill in applying the NSASW Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and social work competencies.

Throughout the candidacy period the supervisor should refer to the classification components of professional levels of practice outlined in the "Standards for the Classification of Social Work Practice," approved by NSASW at the 1992 Annual General Meeting. Content should be supplemented by specific readings and activities designed to clarify and demonstrate developing skill as a social worker.

- A. **The current Standards of Practice (amended, May 8, 2015) outlines the following, in section VII A (page 8) and it is suggested that the supervisor and the candidate review these as a general outline as to what needs to be covered during the candidacy period:**
 - I. Demonstrate a knowledge of and adherence to the Code of Ethics.
 - II. Review and adopt the requirements of the Classification for Social Work Practice approved by Council.
 - III. Apply a constructive and appropriate relationship with the client keeping in mind that "client" may be an individual, couple, family, group, community, or the general public.
 - IV. Demonstrate skills in the intervention process. (See list, page 10 of the Standards of Practice.)
 - V. Review confidentiality issues from practice examples and clarify when it is appropriate to release confidential information.
 - VI. Apply proper record keeping and clarify what is appropriate to record and what is not appropriate to maintain an adequate client file.
 - VII. Discuss advocacy and social justice issues and how to participate in social action activities.
 - VIII. Clarify the candidate's responsibilities to the profession.
 - IX. Search for any conflict of interest and clarify how to avoid potential conflict.

- X. How to obtain and make appropriate use of supervision/consultation.
- XI. Clarify what professional development activities qualify for the 40 hours of professional development per year for members of the profession.
- XII. How to conduct ethical research activities.

B. **Interpretation and Application of the Code of Ethics**

- I. Primary professional obligation
- II. Integrity and objectivity
- III. Competence
- IV. Limit on professional relationship
- V. Confidential information
- VI. Outside interest
- VII. Limit on private practice
- VIII. Ethical responsibility to the workplace
- IX. Ethical responsibility to the profession
- X. Ethical responsibility for social change

C. **Classification of Social Work Practice**

Supervisors may find it helpful to refer to the “Classification of Social Work Practice” when examining the progress of the candidate. This classification uses the following factors to assist the supervisor in determining the level of professional practice that the candidate should be able to demonstrate depending upon the educational base that the candidate has acquired. For example, the Basic Professional Level requires a BSW degree. The Specialized Professional Level requires an MSW degree. The Independent Professional Level requires an MSW degree with significant supervised experience. The factors to be used to determine each professional level are as follows:

- I. Knowledge required by a social worker - the specific professional knowledge, information or facts (methods, human development, systems, strategies for change, professional values, etc.) the candidate must have to understand and respond to client needs (not policies, regulations, procedures required by the agency.)
- II. Level of responsibility - the extent to which the social worker is required or permitted to use own judgement.
- III. Social work competencies and skills necessary to perform as a social worker.
- IV. Situational complexity - the degree of complexity involved in understanding, assessing, responding to, or interpreting situations faced by clients and the social environment in which the situation occurs.
- V. Social consequences - the degree of importance to society of the type of work performed or consequences if this work is not performed properly.

- VI. Vulnerability of client groups - the degree of vulnerability and dependability of the client on the social worker.
- VII. Social function - the contribution of the activity to social justice.

D. **Social Work Competencies**

NSASW has prepared a draft document which can be used as a guideline during the supervision period.

- I. Relationship skills - Skills that form the basis for establishing the social worker's working relationship with the client.
 - a. communicate and engage
 - b. promote and enable
 - c. utilize anti-oppressive theory and practice
- II. Assessment and evaluation skills - Basic skills that permit the orderly assessment, remediation, and prevention of social problems and the enhancement of social functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities.
 - a. identify and assess social problems
 - b. develop and implement a service plan
 - c. evaluate the outcome of the service plan
- III. System skills - Skills that require the specialized knowledge of social systems which permit the delivery of human service programs including the ability to develop and promote social policies and programs aimed at improving social conditions and promoting equality of individuals and communities.
 - a. link people with resource systems
 - b. promote effective and humane systems
 - c. create new and/or improved systems
- IV. Professional development skills - Skills that ensure a philosophy of life long learning so as to remain knowledgeable, efficient, competent, and practice with high ethical standards.
- 4. **Reports** - The supervisor shall conduct a detailed evaluation of the candidate's progress and submit these on a timely basis. (See Section on Reports.)

FEE FOR SUPERVISION

The Board encourages supervisors to provide their services at no charge to the candidate as part of their general responsibility to the profession. (See Chapter 9, Code of Ethics.) However, there is no policy prohibiting payment of supervisors.

In cases where supervisors are being paid for supervision, the Board must be informed and the details of the arrangement should be clearly spelled out in a contract between the supervisor and the candidate.

BENEFITS TO CANDIDACY SUPERVISORS

The role of Candidacy Supervisor is highly valued. Candidacy Supervisors are an important link in the model for continuing education within the membership of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers. In recognition of their contribution:

- * The NSASW Board of Examiners will acknowledge their contribution in CONNECTION, the NSASW newsletter and in the Annual Report.
- * Candidacy Supervisors may request that twelve (12) hours of their combined Orientation Training and candidate supervisory hours be considered toward the required 40 hours of annual professional development.
- * Candidacy Supervisors will be acknowledged in writing for their participation at the commencement and completion of the supervision period.
- * Candidacy Supervisors will be honoured at a recognition luncheon to be held in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting or other social work functions for their contribution to the developing practice of social workers.
- * Candidacy Supervisors providing candidacy supervision as part of their regular job responsibilities may have a letter of appreciation sent to their employer.

THE SUPERVISORY CONTRACT
AND
SUPERVISORY REPORTS

CONTRACT

At the beginning of the candidacy process, the candidate and supervisor must complete The Written Contract for Candidacy Supervision (Appendix C) and submit it to the Board for approval. The Contract identifies the candidate and approved supervisor, as well as the agreed upon times for supervision and reporting.

This document also indicates the candidate's goals and learning objectives and opportunities. The goals should relate to the candidate's primary areas of professional functioning. It is expected that to complete this form, the supervisor and candidate will:

1. evaluate the candidate's supervisory needs as they relate to present practice and future professional aspirations;
2. establish clear, specific and measurable goals for supervision within the areas identified; and
3. develop methods of monitoring and evaluating the candidate's progress toward achieving the established goals.

Candidates continue with regular supervision until such time as approval from the Board of Examiners is confirmed and RSW status is granted.

REPORTS

It is the responsibility of the Board of Examiners to monitor and credit the quality and quantity of each candidate's supervised practice. For this reason it is required that supervisors submit regular reports ("Record of Supervision" – Form "A") which include documentation of the timing, nature, and content of each supervisory session and a review of the candidate's progress.

The "Record of Supervision" - Form "A", found in the Regulations, is extremely important to the candidacy program. Timely submission of the reports is an integral part of the process and without these reports the progress of the candidate cannot be periodically evaluated and ultimately the candidacy cannot be completed. (See Form A - "Record of Supervision").

Supervisors should complete the Reports in consultation with the candidate, and both should sign them prior to submission.

As with the establishment of the goals of supervision, evaluation of a candidate's progress is an ongoing process, requiring clear and constructive communication between supervisor and candidate.

Both the candidate supervisor and the candidate are responsible for ensuring the timely submission of the Record of Supervision.

Reports Should Include:

1. The employment and supervision status of the candidate: The Record of Supervision must clearly identify any gaps in supervision.

Direction should be sought from the Board to ensure accuracy in the calculation of the accumulation of supervised hours toward the required hours of supervision as stated in the Social Workers Act.
2. Information about changes in supervisors: The candidate must notify the Board immediately and seek direction in the approval of a subsequent supervisor.
3. Information about changes in goals: These should be submitted to the Board for approval at the earliest opportunity.
4. A description of the supervisory sessions: These should be sufficiently detailed to allow the Board to discern their nature and content.
5. The supervisor's evaluation of the candidate's progress in achieving goals and adherence to the Code of Ethics.
6. Candidate's comments.

The Board will not approve the completion of the candidacy process and register the candidate as an RSW until all reports have been completed to the satisfaction of the Board of Examiners.

TIME LINES

Upon approval of the candidacy contract, the supervisor shall, within one month of the candidacy start date, submit a copy of the record of supervision (Form "A"). After the Board has approved the first supervisory report, subsequent reports may be submitted at six month intervals for BSW's and four and a half month intervals for MSW's (minimum of 12 hours of supervision). Regular reporting continues until such time as the candidate has successfully completed all the requirements for registration as per Section 11(6) of the Regulations. (See Appendix A.)

The reports must reflect, in detail, the content of the supervisory sessions and progress as a practising social worker in terms of professional development, goal setting, knowledge and understanding of the Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, social work knowledge, values and skills.

Supervisors are reminded that failure to submit reports may result in the removal of the candidate from the Social Worker Candidate Register. In Nova Scotia, Social Work positions shall only be filled by individuals who are Registered Social Workers or who are Social Worker Candidates.

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

If problems arise during the candidacy period, the Registrar must be contacted immediately by either the supervisor or the candidate.

If the candidate supervisor is not the workplace supervisor, issues related to jurisdiction may arise. In these cases, good communication between the candidate, the candidacy supervisor and the workplace supervisor needs to take place. In situations where there is a difference of opinion between the candidate supervisor and the workplace supervisor as to the progress being made by the candidate, the final determination will be made by the candidate supervisor and the Board of Examiners.

The Supervisory Process

If at any point during the candidacy period the supervisor, candidate and/or the Registrar identifies a problem with any aspect of the process, it is expected that immediate efforts will be made to rectify the problem. All parties have a responsibility to identify and/or resolve problems as they arise. Possible outcomes may include, but are not limited to, an alteration to the approved goals, an extension of the supervisory period, or a change in the candidacy supervisor.

The goals can be altered with the agreement of all parties; a change in the candidacy supervisor will require approval of the Registrar; and the Registrar has the right to require that the candidate terminate a supervisory relationship if circumstances warrant this action.

In all cases, the Board of Examiners is to be notified should problems of jurisdiction and/or conflict arise in the supervision of candidates. This is the responsibility of both the candidate supervisor and the candidate.

Candidacy Reports

Candidacy reports must be submitted on time by the contract. The content of the reports must adhere to the standards set out by the Board. If Reports are not submitted in a timely and appropriate manner, action will be taken by the Board of Examiners.

After 30 days delay, candidates and supervisors will be notified by registered letter that their Report has not been received by the Board. The candidate will be given a clear time frame to ensure submission of the Report. Failure to respond promptly will result in further action by the Board.

Unless submission of the late or corrected Report is received by the Board, it will be assumed that the candidate has withdrawn from the candidacy process and their name will be removed from the register. The employer *must* be notified of this change in status.

Former candidates will have to reapply to the Board of Examiners to re-enter the candidacy process. The Board *may* credit previously approved supervision hours as part of the new candidacy process.

Candidate Unsuitability

Circumstances might arise when the Board of Examiners requires a social worker candidate to withdraw from the process if deemed unsuitable to practice in the profession of social work. Generally, such a decision would be made as part of a collaborative process involving the candidacy supervisor, the social worker candidate and the Registrar. However, the final decision rests with the Board of Examiners.

Situations which might lead to a decision to terminate candidacy include, but are not limited to, a medical condition that affects the candidate's ability to perform at an acceptable level of service; a breach of the Code of Ethics; a criminal conviction; and/or persistent substance abuse.

Conflict of Interest

To avoid any conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest, the candidacy supervisor chosen must not have a significant personal or financial relationship with the candidate (eg., marital, common-law, "best friends," familial, shared residence, etc.) The only exception to a financial relationship would be in the case of the employee/employer relationship. In such cases, the parties must openly discuss potential or actual conflicts brought about as a result of the dual relationship.

Confidentiality

In accordance with the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, social worker candidates shall protect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all professionally acquired information concerning them. The candidate's "Record of Supervision" shall not contain names or other potentially identifying information of clients. The candidate shall follow the employer's policies and procedures regarding confidentiality as long as they do not contravene the professional code of ethics.

The candidate should always consult the NSASW Standards and Ethics Committee when in doubt about issues of confidentiality.

Insurance

It is recommended that all social workers, candidate supervisors and candidates purchase their own social workers' liability insurance.

REGULATION

Section 11(1) of the Regulations states:

“The supervisor selected by the candidate for candidacy supervision also may provide direct employment supervision to the Social Worker Candidate but other sources of supervision are preferred and all supervisory arrangements must have prior approval by the Board.”

Section 11(5) of the Regulations states:

“Prior to the commencement of the candidacy period, the supervisor shall submit to the Board or to the Candidacy Committee, which shall report to the Board, a copy of the written contract for candidacy supervision (Form “B”) to ensure that goals have been established and supervisory sessions have begun. Upon approval of the contract, the copy of the record of supervision (Form “A”) and shall submit reports every six months thereafter until such time as successfully completed all the requirements for registration. Failure to submit reports in a timely manner may result in removal of the candidate from the social worker candidate register.”

Section 11(6) of the Regulations states:

“The social worker candidate, upon completion of his/her candidacy supervision, shall continue as a social worker candidate until the Board approves the candidate as a Registered Social Worker”