

Candidacy Framework

1. About the NSCSW

The Nova Scotia College of Social Workers exists to serve and protect Nova Scotians by effectively regulating the profession of social work. The NSCSW establishes, maintains, and regulates standards of professional practice in order to ensure that Nova Scotians receive the services of skilled and competent social workers who are knowledgeable, ethical, qualified, and accountable to the people who receive social work services.

We believe that the people of Nova Scotia are entitled to receive the highest caliber of care from their social workers. To ensure this we provide membership services to support Registered Social Workers in maintaining the highest standards of professional competence, enabling participation in a broader provincial social work community to advocate for improvement to social policies, programs, and social justice.

2. Our Values

The work of NSCSW is grounded in integrity and professionalism which calls on us to be respectful, accessible, ethical, and progressive. For further information about NSCSW see <http://nscsw.org/about/>

3. Purpose of the Social Work Candidacy/Mentorship Program (SWCMP)

The social worker Candidacy/Mentorship program is designed to provide graduates of accredited schools of social work with a strategic, supportive and educational professional development experience rooted in principles of adult learning. By linking new graduates and those re-entering practice (candidates) with experienced practitioners (mentors) the Candidacy/Mentorship program provides new graduates with educational and supportive mentorship to integrate knowledge, apply skill, and action ethics in their first years of practice.

Regular, structured, and documented meetings between candidates and mentors, over 2500 hours of practice, support new graduates as they develop a professional identity, grapple with ethical issues, explore professional concerns related to their practice experience, integrate theory and practice, develop self-awareness, and refine a unique practice framework.

Within the current political, social and economic environment in Nova Scotia, the social work profession has struggled to hold a clear vision of its professional identity. In this environment, practitioners continually face a complex tension between social work values, ethics and standards and the demands and structures of the work place. On one side, there is a pull towards the profession's principles and values which are embedded in social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. On the other side, often social workers are pulled towards a maintenance of the status quo

by asserting social control. This environment has created a need for social workers in Nova Scotia to support one another in negotiating this tension through the Candidacy/Mentorship program.

The Candidacy/Mentorship program is part of the NSCSW's mandate to protect the public. The program is designed to ensure that new graduates have the skills, competence and good character to practice social work in Nova Scotia.

4. Guiding Principles of the Social Work Candidacy/Mentorship Program (SWCMP)

- i. The SWCMP is grounded in the values, ethics and principles of the social work profession.
- ii. The SWCMP ensures that all Registered Social Workers in Nova Scotia have the knowledge and skill to practice competent ethical social work in order to protect the public.
- iii. The SWCMP provides mentorship in a supportive environment in order to explore complex ethical issues and to build a commitment to lifelong learning.
- iv. Recognizing the varied strengths and needs of each candidate, the SWCMP program supports multiple paths to reach the learning objectives.
- v. The SWCMP builds an understanding of the professional social work identity and the complexity of social work practice.
- vi. The SWCMP advances the uniqueness of the social work voice and the role it plays in broader systemic change and social justice.
- vii. The SWCMP is meant to be available to all practicing social workers in a regular, consistent and structured fashion.

5. Objectives of the Social Work Candidacy/Mentorship Program (SWCMP)

The profession of social work in Nova Scotia is guided by two key documents;

- The NSCSW Standards of Practice 2017, and the
- Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics as amended for the NSCSW, 2008

After completing the Social Work Candidacy/Mentorship Program (SWCMP) a candidate will;

5.1 Demonstrate the understanding and application of each of the above documents.

2.1. 5.2 Integrate the content and spirit of both documents into their day to day social work practice/theory.

6. Understanding the Social Work Candidacy/Mentorship Process

6.1. How to Register;

- i. Once an applicant has completed all of the requirements of an accredited degree, they can apply for registration with the College. The Registration process is outlined [here](#). Once your application is complete it will be presented to the Board of Examiners for approval.
- ii. Notification of the Board's decision is e-mailed to you within a week after the decision. In addition, your name is added to the Register of Social Worker Candidates.
- iii. Once you are Registered you are able to start your Candidacy

6.2. Who Do I Contact;

- i. For assistance with your registration and Candidacy process please connect with
Alexandra Nelson - Regulatory and Applications Administrator
Telephone: (902) 429-7799 x 221
Email: alex.nelson@nscsw.org

6.3. Selecting a Mentor:

- i. The Candidate begins by selecting a Mentor.
- ii. If a Candidate is finding it difficult to find a Mentor, please contact the office. The College keeps listings of RSW's who have agreed to be Mentors.

When Candidates are selecting Mentors, they must Consider

- iii. The Mentor should have at least two years of full time experience as a professional social worker acceptable by the Board of Examiners and be Registered as a:
 - a. Registered Social Worker
 - b. Registered Social Worker (Associate)
 - c. Registered Social Worker (Retired Associate)

iv. The Mentor should have training in the broad area of practice in which mentorship is offered;

- v. The mentor should have completed Mentorship training through the NSCSW;
- vi. The Mentor may be mentoring no more than three candidates at any one time; and
- vii. It is strongly recommended that the candidate mentor 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.

- viii. Once the candidate selects a mentor, the name must be provided to the Registrar who verifies their RSW and the Board of Examiners approves the mentorship.

6.4. *Writing a Learning Agreement;*

The SWCMP is guided by a Learning Agreement jointly developed by the Candidate and Mentor at the beginning of the Candidacy Process. The Learning Agreement provides clarity and direction for all parties. It also guides the selection of appropriate learning activities. Learning Agreements ensure that the unique learning needs and styles of each Candidate are respected while still addressing the overall objectives of the candidacy/mentorship program articulated in Section 5.

When developing a Learning Agreement remember that;

- i. learning agreements are not employment driven;
- ii. The learning objectives in each learning agreement should promote overall professional development related to social work values, knowledge, and skills across contexts.

See Appendix for support on writing clear achievable learning objectives

6.5. How Often Do They Meet;

- i. Each month the candidate and Mentor must commit themselves to a 2 hours face-to-face meetings or via teleconference and/or video conference.
- ii. The mentors must be prepared to provide objective and constructive assessments based on mentors learning agreement

6.6. Can You Do It in Groups;

- i. Yes! Group mentoring is an option

- ii. Group mentoring utilizes multiple mentors and/or multiple learners in a group setting.
- iii. When working in groups due attention must be given to the unique learning objectives of each Candidate.

6.7. Candidates: Responsibilities and Rewards

Responsibilities

- i. Candidates must normally start their Candidacy within 6 months of becoming Registered.
- ii. Candidates must seek Board of Examiners approval of their mentor. (Log into your NSCSW profile to fill out the application for Mentorship approval).
- iii. Candidates are responsible for crafting their learning objectives. Learning objectives must be approved by your mentor and the Executive Director/Registrar. (Log into your NSCSW profile and fill in the Candidacy Learning Objectives). Once inputted your mentor and the Executive Director/Registrar will provide comments, questions and/or approval).
- iv. Candidates are responsible for tracking their practice hours on a monthly basis. Candidates can count all paid experience that falls with the Social Worker Scope of Practice. In addition, 500 of those hours can be in a volunteer role (Log into your NSCSW profile to track hours).
- v. Candidates must normally complete the 2500 hours within a 5-year period.

Rewards

- i. Candidates can count (20) hours of their mentorship meeting hours be towards the required 40 hours of annual formal professional development.
- ii. Candidates are rewarded by learning from the practice wisdom of experienced social workers and through scheduled opportunity to reflect on one's practice in the midst of often hectic schedules/workplaces.

6.8. Mentors: Responsibilities and Rewards

Responsibilities



- i. The mentor will support the Candidate reflect and build on their written learning objectives.
- ii. Once the learning objectives are approved the mentor and candidate will determine the best mechanism for assessments (See appendix for assessment support).
- iii. Mentors are encouraged to support Candidates achieve their learning objectives through activities and assessments as well create space for areas of growth that the Candidate has identified (See Appendix for activity support).
- iv. The mentor must be prepared to intervene in problematic situations requiring attention at a level of skill not yet mastered by the candidate.
- v. The mentor will conduct a detailed evaluation of the candidate's progress and submit this half way through the Candidacy hours and upon completion of those hours.

Rewards

The role of Candidacy Mentor is highly valued. Candidacy Mentors are an important link in the model for Professional Development within the membership of the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers. In recognition of their contribution:

- vi. Candidacy Mentors can count (20) hours of their combined Orientation Training and Candidate mentorship hours be considered toward the required 40 hours of annual formal professional development.
- vii. Candidacy Mentors will be acknowledged in writing for their participation at the commencement and completion of the supervision period, in Connection Magazine.
- viii. Candidacy Mentors are invited to attend all NSCSW conferences free of charge
- ix. Candidacy Mentors may request to have a letter of appreciation sent to their employer from NSCSW.

6.9. Nature of The Mentorship Process (Not Supervisory)

- i. The mentorship process focuses on professional concerns and relates to practice experience to support Candidates to better understand social work philosophy, become more self-aware, and refine their knowledge and skills.

- ii. The mentorship process is designed to decrease professional stress and provide the Candidate with nurturing conditions that complement their success and encourage self-efficacy. Mentorship is underscored by a climate of safety and trust, where Candidates can develop their sense of professional identity.
- iii. The process is distinct from administrative supervision that social workers commonly receive from their employer. Administrative supervision is the implementation of administrative methods that enable social workers to provide effective services to clients. Administrative supervision is oriented toward agency policy or organizational demands and focuses on a supervisee's level of functioning on the job and work assignment.

7. Procedures for Social Work Candidacy/Mentorship Program (SWCMP)

7.1. Reports;

- i. Candidates and Mentors are responsible for submitting two reports to the Executive Director/Registrar. First report will be completed after the first 1250 hours and final report on completion of the total hours
- ii. Reports should document the following areas:
 - Progress on the Candidates approved learning objectives;
 - How the mentor has assessed progress of learning objectives;
 - Any additional objectives that have been identified since the previous report?
- i. The Executive Director/ Registrar will respond with questions, concerns and approval of reports within two weeks of receiving them.

7.2. Fees;

- i. The Board of Examiners encourages mentors 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 Mentors. In cases where Mentors are being paid, the Board of Examiners must be informed and the details of the arrangement should be clearly spelled out in a contract between the Mentor and the Candidate.

7.3. Trouble Shooting;

- i. If at any point during the Candidacy period the Mentor, candidate and/or the Executive Director/ Registrar identifies a problem with any aspect of the process, it is expected that immediate efforts will be made to rectify the problem.
- ii. All parties have a responsibility to identify and/or resolve problems as they arise. Possible outcomes may include, but are not limited to, an extension of the mentorship period, or a change in the mentor.
- iii. The Executive Director/ Registrar has the right to require that the candidate terminate a mentorship relationship if circumstances warrant this action.
- iv. In all cases, the Board of Examiners is to be notified should problems of jurisdiction and/or conflict arise in the mentorship of Candidates. This is the responsibility of both the mentor and the Candidate.

Conflict of Interest

- v. To avoid any conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest, the Mentor chosen must not have a significant personal or financial relationship with the Candidate (eg., marital, common-law, “best friends,” familial, shared residence, etc.)

Confidentiality

- vi. In accordance with the Nova Scotia College 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.
- vii. The candidate shall follow the employer’s policies and procedures regarding confidentiality as long as they do not contravene the professional Code of Ethics.
- viii. The Candidate should always consult the NSCSW Executive Director/ Registrar when in doubt about issues of confidentiality.

Insurance

- ix. It is recommended that all social workers, Mentors candidates purchase their own social workers’ liability insurance.

7.4. Unsuitability;

- i. 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.
- ii. Generally, such a decision would be made as part of a collaborative process involving the Mentor, the Social Worker Candidate and the Executive Director/Registrar. However, the final decision rests with the Board of Examiners.
- iii. 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.

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