

# Standards of Practice for Clinical Social Work Specialists

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## Land Acknowledgement

The NSCSW is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq, whose inherent rights were recognized in the Peace and Friendship Treaties that were signed from 1725 to 1779. This series of treaties did not surrender Indigenous land, resources or sovereignty to the British Empire, but instead established rules for an ongoing relationship between nations. The treaties were later reaffirmed by Canada in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and remain active to this day.

The NSCSW joins our members and our communities in the labour of reconciliation, and we are grateful to live and work together as treaty people in Mi'kma'ki.

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## Reflection and Repair

Decolonizing ourselves and our practice includes learning to recognize the ways in which we are each affected by the various systems within which we live and work. Each of us, depending upon our social location and intersectional positionality, may be simultaneously privileged and oppressed.

For example, all of us with non-Indigenous origins continue to benefit from being able to live on unceded Mi'kmaw land. But this privilege is tempered by the fact that many Black Nova Scotians have ancestors who were uprooted from their homelands in Africa and brought to Mi'kma'ki against their will. And every generation since their arrival has also seen waves of newcomers seeking refuge after being displaced by imperialist violence and its consequent disasters.

Our origins intersect with other elements of our identities to create the social context of our lived experience. Race and gender interact with class, age, dis(Ability), ethnicity, and more.

Developing deep and nuanced understanding of how our positionality affects the work we do, as well as naming and confronting the larger systemic forces at play (e.g. white supremacy, colonialism, neoliberalism) is essential to ensuring safer practice.

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## Introduction

These standards outlined by the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW) are intended to be used in conjunction with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, establishing the minimum expectations for clinical specialists in the field. **Clinical specialists are social workers who have been approved by the Board of Examiners to deliver clinical social work services in a private setting.** These standards serve as a foundational framework guiding clinical specialists in their practice, ensuring that they not only adhere to the ethical and professional benchmarks set forth by the NSCSW. By integrating these standards with the broader ethical standards, clinical specialists are equipped to provide, ethical, and effective services to those in need, fostering a positive effect on individual and community well-being through their dedicated efforts in private practice environments.

The Board of Examiners defines the scope of the clinical social work specialization as social work in a private practice that:

- a. provides mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis assessments which situate the individual within their social context inclusive of the family, political, economic and cultural factors with a focus on the social determinants of mental health;
- b. utilizes therapy through principles of research-based, bio-psycho-social-spiritual approaches that are culturally relevant to the social context of the service user to achieve their mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis goals;
- c. engages directly with individuals, couples, families and groups focused on complex issues affecting individual and family functioning and their relationships including, but not limited to, mental health, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis; and
- d. clinical social work is informed by the broader concepts intrinsic to social work including human rights and social justice.

## *Context of clinical social work practice*

Clinical specialists within Nova Scotia delivery mental health services in a private setting. Crucial to this work is acknowledging the significant historical role of social work in shaping clinical services, especially for economically and racially marginalized communities, these standards underscore the necessity of addressing oppressive systems and practices, emphasizing restorative justice, reconciliation, and the elimination of intersectional biases. The NSCSW is committed to fostering anti-oppressive, trauma-informed, anti-colonial, and anti-racist practices within the field. This commitment is crucial for confronting the profession's colonial and racist legacies and advocating for a more equitable, inclusive, and compassionate approach to social work in Nova Scotia.

The NSCSW stands firm on the principles of equality and humanitarianism, striving to create a society that champions justice in every aspect of life. Clinical Social Worker Specialists, facing ethical challenges across various contexts, continually adapt their practices to effectively meet both individual and collective needs. Empowering marginalized groups and advocating for systemic changes to uphold human rights both locally and internationally remain central goals of the profession. The NSCSW recognizes the resilience of African descendants, Acadian communities, and the adverse effects of colonial practices on Indigenous peoples, among others.

The process of decolonizing social work, which involves understanding the impact of colonialism, addressing intersecting oppressions, and working towards their eradication, is integral to the role of clinical specialists. These professionals are crucial in learning from history, fostering partnerships, and ensuring the safety and well-being of diverse communities. The NSCSW values its members' efforts in establishing and adhering to ethical and professional standards for social work practice, ensuring that clinical specialists contribute meaningfully to healing and growth within this region of Mi'kma'ki.

## *Core concepts*

The scope of the clinical social work specialization is to provide social work services related to mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis assessments which situate the individual within their social context, including familial, social, economic, and cultural, with a focus on the social determinants of mental health.

The purpose of practice is to promote recovery, restore individual and family wellbeing, enhance the development of everyone's self-determination, and advance principles of social justice.

Clinical social work practice occurs at the interface between the individual and the environment: activity begins with the individual, and extends to the contexts of family, social networks, community, and the broader society.

## **The person**

At the level of engaging with the person, Clinical Social Work Specialists are concerned with assessment, intervention planning as well as progress and outcome monitoring. The specifics of

these functions will be determined by the setting and role of the social worker. Some social workers are sole Clinical Social Work Specialists while others may be part of a team or a unit. Irrespective of the setting, Clinical Social Work Specialists collaborate with the relevant professionals and people who have an effect on the person's wellbeing.

## **Social context**

At the level of social context, clinical social work is concerned with the way each person's experience shapes and is shaped by their social environment and influences their mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis. Its concerns include understanding:

- the internal and external factors affecting vulnerability and resilience;
- the strengths and stressors in family and caregiving functioning, support networks, culture, community, class, ethnicity and gender;
- human behavior and its influence on the family unit which is a complex social system in which members interact to influence each other's behaviour;
- the influence of wider social issues such as income economic well-being, employment, and housing; and
- the environment and how it is influenced and shaped.

## **Social consequences**

At the level of social consequences, social work acts on the effect of through mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis problems on a sense of self, life chances, family wellbeing, and on economic security, employment, and housing. Social work is also concerned with the potential connection between mental health and broader health, and welfare issues such as child protection, homelessness and domestic violence.

## **Private practice definition**

Defined in Section 2(j) of the Social Workers Act, "private practice" refers to social work services provided by self-employed individuals, characterized by personal liability, independent clinical and administrative oversight, and direct billing for services rendered.

## **Defining health**

The World Health Organization's constitution defines health as more than the absence of disease, calling it a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Mental health is essential for cognitive and emotional functions, interpersonal relationships, earning capabilities, and overall life enjoyment, thereby necessitating global prioritization for its promotion, protection, and restoration.

## Factors affecting mental health

Mental health can be adversely affected by a myriad of factors, including psychological, personality, and biological influences, socio-economic challenges such as low income and limited education, environmental stresses like social changes and discrimination, and personal lifestyle and physical health issues.

In addressing broader social justice concerns, social workers play a critical role in enhancing conditions related to mental health.

### *How to use these standards*

The Standards of Clinical Social Work Practice serve multiple critical roles, from delineating professional responsibilities to ensuring public safety and fostering ongoing professional growth. These standards articulate the expected ethical behaviours, abilities, knowledge, skills, and practices necessary for social workers to provide safe, competent care. They function as the benchmark for evaluating a social worker's performance, with key objectives including:

- **Setting Professional Expectations:** They outline the responsibility framework for Clinical Social Work Specialists to develop, manage, evaluate, and enhance their practice.
- **Safeguarding Public Interest:** By mandating competent practice, these standards aim to protect those who receive clinical social work services from a Clinical Social Work Specialist.
- **Supporting Professional Growth:** They offer a foundation for continuous learning and development within the Clinical Social Work Specialists field.
- **Clarifying Social Work Practices:** The standards help communicate the profession's goals and methodologies to colleagues, service users, and the broader community, thereby promoting understanding and collaboration.
- **Advancing the Profession:** Enhancing the profession's credibility and value enables more effective advocacy for necessary social changes.

Ethical decision-making within this framework requires thoughtful consideration of various perspectives, including those of clients, the working environment, and societal narratives. This process involves introspection into one's values, emotions, and positioning, as well as consultation to navigate ethical challenges and personal influences on decision-making.

NSCSW encourages its members to engage with Clinical Specialist Standards of Practice and accompanying guidelines for ethical considerations or dilemmas. Resources like the Ethical Decision-Making Tool on the NSCSW website, alongside seeking supervision and NSCSW consultation, are recommended to support members in resolving ethical concerns effectively.

## Values

Social work practiced in any field is generally committed to seven core values which give rise to general and specific ethical responsibilities as outlined in the NSCSW Code of Ethics (2024).

The values are:

1. Respecting the Dignity and Worth of All People
2. Promoting Social Justice
3. Pursuing Truth and Reconciliation
4. Valuing Human Relationships
5. Preserving Integrity in Professional Practice
6. Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality
7. Providing Competent Professional Services

The practice standards in this document are based in the NSCSW Code of Ethics, and are categorised under six components of practice common to all areas. These components of practice are:

1. Values and ethics
2. Privacy and confidentiality
3. Professionalism
4. Culturally responsive and inclusive practice
5. Applying knowledge of human behavior and social relationships to practice.
6. Professional development and supervision.





## Standards

### *Standard #1: Values and ethics*

Clinical Social Work Specialists promote the self-determination and autonomy of all people by demonstrating respect for the right of every person to participate in making informed decisions in all matters affecting them based on informed consent, consistent with their capacity while considering the rights of others.

- 1.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall establish a professional working relationship with the person presents with mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis issue(s) as well as encourages (where appropriate) engaging their families and significant others.
  - 1.1.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall listen respectfully to the person, their families and significant others.
  - 1.1.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall provide for an emotionally supportive therapeutic relationship.
  - 1.1.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist values the lived experience of people with mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness and crisis issues and their consequences for the person and significant others, such as carers and family.
  - 1.1.4 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall give due regard to the person's age and cultural background, sensitive to ethnicity, race, socioeconomic standing and gender as variables that might affect the working relationship.
  - 1.1.5 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall work in partnership with the person, their families and significant others, and ensure mutuality in assessment and planning clinical intervention. Partnership and mutuality are values that extend to working with professional colleagues.
  - 1.1.6 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall communicate mutuality in the relationship by using inclusive language and avoiding terms that emphasise differences in experience, power and personhood between the person and the worker.
  - 1.1.7 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall gather and provide information in a way that respects the person's experience, beliefs, and feelings.
  - 1.1.8 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall welcome and invite feedback from the person and where appropriate their families and significant others.



- 1.1.9 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall on all aspects of work, encourage maximum levels of the person's and where appropriate the person, their families and significant others participation in decision-making, emphasising self-determination over day-to-day activities.
- 1.1.10 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall accommodate the needs, language and understanding relevant to working with different age groups: children, young people, adults and older people.
- 1.1.11 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall when working with families and groups, recognise and seek to accommodate the different experiences and perspectives of different family members and other relevant people.
- 1.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall act on the social justice issues related to people with mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness and crisis issue(s).
  - 1.2.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall recognise the complexity of human experience and consider bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment and interventions beyond the limits of illness, diagnosis and treatment.
  - 1.2.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall challenge stigma and discrimination in their practice.
  - 1.2.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall facilitate access to necessary treatment and support services.
  - 1.2.4 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall promote the right to participation in decision making and choice in services.
  - 1.2.5 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall advocate for organisations to be equitable, accessible, and responsive to the needs and goals of people family members and significant others, who live with mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness and crisis issue(s) and their significant others.
  - 1.2.6 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall ensure all civil and human rights are recognised.
- 1.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall integrate the concept of recovery into practice, promoting choice and self-determination within legal requirements and duty of care.
  - 1.3.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support people to take responsibility for their own recovery and well-being and to define their goals and wishes, irrespective of their legal status (for example, a person voluntarily participating in therapeutic intervention or a person receiving involuntary care).

- 1.3.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall work collaboratively with service users and identify the contribution of all people's experience, expertise and strengths during all phases of contact, with particular regard to the persons experiencing mental health and wellness, addictions, trauma, grief, loss, illness and crisis issues.
- 1.3.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall in situations where involuntary care is unavoidable, advocate to minimise the use of coercion, seclusion, and restraint.

## *Standard #2: Privacy and confidentiality*

Clinical Social Work Specialists uphold the interests of persons receiving services and of members of the public in safeguarding the trust and confidence placed in the confidential relationship.

Clinical Social Work Specialists demonstrate respect for the trust and confidence placed in them by service users, communities, and other professionals by protecting the privacy of service users' information and respecting the service user's right to control when or whether this information will be shared with third parties.

Clinical Social Work Specialists recognize the importance of people's right to privacy and to confidentiality of information and safeguard personal, family and community information shared in the context of a professional relationship. Social workers maintain one written record of professional interventions and opinions, with due care to the obligations and standards of NSCSW.

- 2.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall protect the privacy of the service user's personal information and treat information gained in the course of the social worker/service user relationship as confidential information and use it for professional purposes only.
  - 2.1.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall be diligent to ensure that professional interventions and information regarding service users are documented impartially and accurately and with an appreciation that the record may be viewed by the service user or revealed to or disclosed during court proceedings.
  - 2.1.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall ensure that service users have reasonable access to official social work records concerning them in accordance with Personal Health Information Act (PHIA).
  - 2.1.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall take due care to protect the confidences of others when providing service users with access to records. This may involve masking (or redacting) third party information in the record.



- 2.1.4 If service users are not satisfied with their records, the Clinical Social Work Specialist shall advise them regarding complaint mechanisms through their organization and the NSCSW complaints process.
- 2.1.5 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall protect service users' records, save, upload, and shall store them securely and retain them on Canadian data centres or servers for any required statutory period.
- 2.1.6 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall protect the confidentiality of service users' written and electronic records. Clinical Social Work Specialist take reasonable steps to ensure that service users' records are stored in a secure location and that service users' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.
- 2.1.7 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall transfer or dispose of service users' records in a manner that protects service users' confidentiality and is consistent with PHIA and NSCSW Standards of Practice. Social workers also ensure that paper or electronic records are properly transferred or disposed of.
- 2.1.8 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall take reasonable precautions to protect service user confidentiality in the event of the Clinical Social Work Specialist's termination of practice, incapacity, or death.
- 2.2 Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain documentation that reflect an accurate account of services.
- 2.2.1 Progress notes, reports, and summaries of services shall be regularly recorded in the client's file and be consistent with all applicable local, provincial, and federal statutory, regulatory, or policy requirements and NSCSW guidelines.
- 2.3 Clinical Social Work Specialist shall ensure privacy and confidentiality in the provision of electronic professional services; maintain privacy and confidentiality; and communicate implications when using technology, telecommunication, and telehealth/web-based platforms in the provision of services.
- 2.3.1 Clinical Social Work Specialists using technology, telecommunication and telehealth/web-based platforms (herein, technology application) in providing professional services shall ensure that (1) the service user has access to the application; (2) the service user's identity is protected; (3) the service user is able to use the technology application; (4) the technology application meets the service user's needs; and (5) the service user understands the purpose and operation of the technology application.
- 2.3.2 Clinical Social Work Specialist shall inform service users about risks associated with disclosure of confidential information on the Internet, social media sites, text-messaging sites, and videoconferencing sites, and the potential consequences.



- 2.3.3 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall use proper safeguards, including encryption, when sharing confidential information using digital or other electronic technology. Social workers shall protect stored confidential service user information using proper safeguards, including secure firewalls, encryption software, and password protection.
- 2.3.4 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall adhere to statutes and regulations regarding the secure use of digital and other electronic technology both within their jurisdictions and within the jurisdiction where the service user is located.
- 2.3.5 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall obtain service user consent when using electronic search engines to gather information about the service user, except for emergency circumstances when such search may provide information to help protect the service user or other parties who may be at risk.
- 2.3.6 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall inform service users that service users are not permitted to disclose or post digital or other electronic communications from social workers or other recipients of services without proper consent.
- 2.3.7 Clinical Social Work Specialists providing electronic professional services to family, couple, and group service users shall inform parties that they cannot guarantee that all participants will honour confidentiality agreements.
- 2.3.8 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall protect the confidentiality of all information obtained by, or stored using, digital and other electronic technology except when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a service user or other identifiable person, or to comply with statutes, regulations, and court orders.
- 2.3.9 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall inform service users that third-party services that feature text messaging or other direct electronic messaging may provide limited security and protection of confidential information. Clinical Social Work Specialists inform service users as soon as possible about secure ways to contact them.
- 2.3.10 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall take steps to ensure that confidential digital communications are protected; use proper safeguards, including encryption, when using digital communications such as email communications, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, and text communications.
- 2.3.11 Clinical Social Work Specialists shall develop and disclose policies and procedures for notifying service users as soon as possible of any breach of confidential information.

### *Standard # 3 Professionalism*

Clinical Social Work Specialists foster trust through honesty, reliability, impartiality, and diligence in their professional practice. Social workers maintain a high level of professional conduct by acting honestly and responsibly and promoting the values of the profession. Clinical Social Work Specialists strive for impartiality in their professional practice, and refrain from imposing their personal values, views, and preferences on service users. An essential element of integrity in professional practice is ethical accountability based on this Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and other relevant guidelines. Where conflicts exist with respect to these sources of ethical guidance, social workers are encouraged to seek advice, including consultation with their regulatory body.

- 3.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall manage their personal workload.
  - 3.1.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop a clear understanding of the range of professional and administrative tasks required in their practice.
  - 3.1.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall ensure they understand the role of clinical social work within the organisation and are able to communicate this understanding to the people with whom they engage and that this understanding is reflected in the materials used to promote practice.
  - 3.1.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall not list an area of service unless they have completed a self-assessment of their competencies related to those services (see guidelines)
  - 3.1.4 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall understand, respect, and collaborate with other disciplines in the delivery of services.
  - 3.1.5 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall recognise the management structure of the agency or program and understands the lines of professional and administrative accountability.
  - 3.1.6 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain organisational or program procedures for effective completion of administrative and professional tasks.
  - 3.1.7 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain NSCSW standards as well as agency or program requirements for record keeping, data collection and accountability of resources.
  - 3.1.8 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall apply sound management practices to ensure the provision of effective clinical services.
- 3.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall manage and deliver social work services with integrity, respect and efficiency.





- 3.2.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop and monitor all organisational policy and procedures to ensure that services are provided in a way that complies with the principles of respect for and inclusion of all people and their significant others who receive services from the agency.
- 3.2.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop formal and informal arrangements to include service users and where appropriate, families, significant others and/or caregivers in service planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- 3.2.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall promote professionally productive relationships among all staff within the private practice.
- 3.2.4 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall promote an understanding of and collaboration between all disciplines working in private practice. This will involve a clear understanding of, and respect for, the domain of other disciplines.
- 3.2.5 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall, within the organisational structures of service provision, establish a management perspective that is reflective of social work values and philosophy.
- 3.2.6 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall manage and mentor staff in a respectful and compassionate manner and according to social work values.
- 3.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall work as a professional in private practice, a member of a service delivery unit, and/or a multidisciplinary team.
- 3.3.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall demonstrate respect for the profession of social work, and for other disciplines.
- 3.3.2 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall understand the scope of the clinical social work including skills, knowledge, and values in the delivery of clinical services.
- 3.3.3 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall articulate a specific statement of social work purpose, roles and activities within the organisation and when collaborating with other organisations or private professionals.
- 3.3.4 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall be familiar with the knowledge, values, and practice bases of Clinical Social Work Specialist in relation to other mental health disciplines.
- 3.3.5 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support the activities of other mental health professionals in the private practice and when collaborating with other organisations or private professionals.

3.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall promote the importance of the scope of clinical social work in developing a comprehensive service approach to understanding mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness and crisis issues, and providing services.

3.4.1 The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall apply a range of skills in problem solving, education, and conflict resolution to the management of day-to-day professional social work activity and when collaborating with other organisations or private practice professionals.

### *Standard #4: Culturally attentive Practice*

Clinical Social Work Specialists shall demonstrate understanding of culture and its function in human behaviour and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures. Social workers shall demonstrate knowledge that guides practice with service users of various cultures and be able to demonstrate skills in the provision of culturally informed services that empower marginalized individuals and groups. Social workers must act against oppression, racism, discrimination, and inequities, and acknowledge personal privilege. Clinical Social Work Specialists should demonstrate awareness of culturally attentive practices by engaging in critical self-reflection (understanding their own bias and engaging in self-correction), recognizing service users as experts of their own culture, committing to lifelong learning, and holding institutions accountable for advancing cultural humility.

Clinical Social Work Specialists endeavor to understand, acknowledge, and recognize colonial perspectives that shape organizations, structures, and approaches to practice. Social workers uphold the guiding principles of truth and reconciliation. Clinical Social Work Specialists act with moral courage when working within a colonial structure.

4.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall understand the way mental health and well-being are conceptualised in the person's culture of origin in the person's presentation and be aware of:

- 4.1.1. The extent to which the person accepts the concepts of mental health and well-being in terms of their culture of origin;
- 4.1.2. sources of possible conflicting views and practices between the culture of origin and Canadian mainstream mental health and how differences may be accommodated or resolved; and
- 4.1.3. culturally appropriate ways in which the person can be effectively assisted, including collaboration with or referral to a multicultural mental health service.

4.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall understand the ways mental illness and mental health are conceptualised in culture of origin in the person's presentation, and be aware of:



- 4.2.1. the extent to which the person accepts the concepts of mental illness and mental health in different cultures;
- 4.2.2. sources of possible conflicting views and practices between the culture of origin and Canadian mainstream mental health and how differences may be accommodated or resolved; and
- 4.2.3. culturally appropriate ways in which the person can be effectively assisted, including collaboration with or referral to a specific culturally-oriented mental health service.

### *Standard #5 Applying knowledge to practice*

Clinical Social Work Specialists recognize the importance of human relationships and are guided by a theory or theories of human behaviour that situate the individual within a *person in social context* and ensure that well-being of others is at the center of all areas of practice. The social worker and service user relationship is at the center of social work practice and is the foundation for supporting change and healing. Clinical Social Work Specialists strive to cultivate a working relationship with service users that is based on recognition of the uniqueness of the service user, reciprocity of the relationship, and respect. Social workers ensure that the service to others is above self-interest. Clinical Social Work Specialists acknowledge their duty to have interventions informed by the situational context of the person of the person receiving service and centered on their needs. Clinical Social Work Specialists are aware of the complexities and power differential in the working relationship when providing involuntary services to individuals and families and strive to demonstrate respect without stereotypes or generalizations.

The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall demonstrate the skills required to implement knowledge into practice, while being mindful of the social work commitment to human rights.

- 5.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall complete a comprehensive bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment and case formulation addressing the physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural aspects of the person and their situation in consultation with the person:
  - 5.1.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall explore the client's understanding of their difficulties and strengths, taking account for their physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and cultural needs.
  - 5.1.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist where appropriate shall gather information from a range of sources to build up a comprehensive understanding of the person's situational problems and strengths.
  - 5.1.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist where appropriate shall undertake assessments of clinical functioning as part of providing a comprehensive assessment service. This includes the application of specific assessment schedules, as appropriate, to develop a detailed knowledge of specific aspects of the problems and strengths.



- 5.1.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist where appropriate shall undertake other assessments in specific clinical and related areas, for which additional specific training may be required to attain competence. **A clinical social worker must complete a self-assessment before they provide specified assessments (See guidelines).** These may be social work based or related to other disciplines or multidisciplinary practice.
- Examples are the use of outcome measures, assessment of psychiatric disability, vocational capacities, age-related matters concerning children, adolescents, or older people, forensic issues, or the application of standardised assessment schedules requiring skilled analysis of data.*
- 5.1.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall identify and assess relevant indicators to minimise risk to the person or to others. Risk assessment includes the risk of self-harming behaviour, the person's vulnerability to domestic violence and other safety issues in the home and living environment, including child safety, and the potential for the person's capacity to harm others.
- 5.1.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall establish or confirm the likely mental health condition and the influence and priority of factors affecting the person's condition (or, in the absence of a formal diagnosis, *forms an assessment utilizing the DSM-5 until this can be confirmed and discusses the priority factors affecting the person's condition*).
- 5.1.7. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall apply knowledge and theory to the information gathered to develop a comprehensive statement linking the person's functioning and their strengths and problems with those in their social context.
- 5.1.8. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall review assessment statements with the person to develop a mutual understanding and agreement about the assessment as well as identifying and using the appropriate interventions as part of the intervention or service plan. Part of this process involves setting measurable goals as agreed with the person.
- 5.1.9. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall regularly review the assessment and the intervention or service plan with the person to retain the focus on shared understanding of problems and strengths.
- 5.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop and implement principles of research-based, therapeutic interventions with the person.
- 5.2.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall identify the research for the therapeutic intervention, including psychosocial intervention.
- 5.2.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall form a therapeutic relationship with the person.
- 5.2.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall contract with the person to establish a basis for the intervention.

- 5.2.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall provide the person with information about the purpose, nature, risks, and likely outcomes of the intervention.
- 5.2.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist will work within a research-based framework for therapy and intervention. Timelines can be suggested; however, the timeline is subject to change depending on the client's progress towards their goals.
- 5.2.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall monitor and evaluate the implementation of the intervention with their families and significant others.
- 5.2.7. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall undertake additional formal and informal professional development as necessary, including at an advanced level, in specialised therapeutic interventions.
- 5.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall advocate with and for persons in relation to rights and resources in consultation with the persons involved in the situation:
  - 5.3.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall establish the need for advocacy to address identified rights or problems.
  - 5.3.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall explore the range of alternative actions available to address the identified need and supports action chosen.
  - 5.3.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall monitor the activity of the intervention team to ensure that all decision making at every stage is respectful and inclusive of the needs and wishes of both the person, their families, and significant others.
  - 5.3.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support and encourage self-advocacy through assisting with preparation, providing resources and giving feedback on performance.
  - 5.3.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall link individuals, carers and family members with support and advocacy groups as a resource as appropriate.
  - 5.3.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist where appropriate shall challenge organisations or systems of service provision that are disempowering or discriminatory of people, their families and significant others with mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness, and crisis issues.
  - 5.3.7. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall exercise courage and use high level communication skills to ensure the person's best interests are represented.
  - 5.3.8. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall evaluate the outcome of advocacy.
  - 5.3.9. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall advocate with and for people within specialist complex contexts such as the forensic provisions of mental health legislation.
- 5.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall undertake case management (or a similar function) in consultation with the person.
  - 5.4.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop an assessment of the service users psychological and social circumstances and needs and, where applicable,



other members of the service team, other service providers, and family and friends, in consultation and with the approval of client.

- 5.4.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop an intervention or service plan that takes account of short-term and long-term goals and identify services that will support those goals.
- 5.4.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall implement the intervention or service plan.
- 5.4.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall where appropriate consult with the person's family, significant others, members of the support team and other service providers as appropriate for the implementation of the service plan.
- 5.4.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall advocate to obtain resources needed to help clients achieve their goals to achieve goals.
- 5.4.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall review, revise and monitor the plan regularly.
- 5.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall collaborate with other services.
  - 5.5.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist as indicated by the assessment shall contact stakeholders from all sectors relevant to mental health, including housing, income security and employment, as well as health care practitioners.
  - 5.5.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop a working knowledge of relevant services in the community and maintain formal and informal contact with service providers and management within these services.
  - 5.5.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall provide information about the social worker's organisation and encourage appropriate liaison between this organisation and the range of community services.
  - 5.5.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support communication networks and co-operation among all stakeholders of services in the community relevant to people with a mental illness and their families and significant others.
  - 5.5.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist as indicated by service needs shall bring individuals and groups together to share ideas on issues of common concern and potential solutions.
- 5.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist may engage in activities of social action.
  - 5.6.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall analyze the social, political, and cultural context within which action is required.
  - 5.6.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall establish and take part in consultation, in consultation with individuals and community groups,
  - 5.6.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall action to resolve specific issues affecting mental health and wellbeing.



- 5.6.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support the advocacy and education activities of community groups seeking to raise awareness of stigma and discrimination experienced by individuals and groups with mental health issues.
- 5.6.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall, as indicated by client needs, share information regarding political and legal processes available for pursuing different forms of social action.
- 5.6.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist as indicated by service user needs shall support the referral of individuals to advocacy groups to enhance opportunities for collective action.
- 5.6.7. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support individuals and groups in reviewing alternatives for action to resolve injustice, and in planning action.
- 5.6.8. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall support individuals and groups in reviewing action strategies and evaluating outcomes.
- 5.7. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall work at the interface of mental health and other social and human services systems.
  - 5.7.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall analyse the relationship between mental health and related social and human service issues with the individual.
  - 5.7.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall provide consultation and liaison to service providers in relation to people with a mental health and well-being where the interaction of mental health issues with other social and human service issues is an important concern for practice.
  - 5.7.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall educate service providers and policy makers in social and human services about the needs of people with a mental health who may require access to those services.
  - 5.7.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall advocate with a range of social and human services to ensure that the needs of people with a mental illness are understood and accommodated by such services.
  - 5.7.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall solve problems with people through mental health and well-being, addiction, trauma, grief/loss/illness and crisis issues and service providers regarding specific difficulties encountered by individuals and groups in accessing services.
  - 5.7.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop policy and protocols for service delivery in areas of interface between mental health and other social and human services.

## *Standard #6 Professional Development & Supervision*

The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall demonstrate commitment to ongoing learning through continuing professional development and supervision. The indicators or actions associated with

the preceding standards should be the subject of thoughtful analysis or critical reflection, by the professional, of the strengths and challenges of their practice experience.

- 6.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain a critical reflective approach to clinical social work practice with the aim of improving currency of knowledge and skills.
  - 6.1.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall identify personal strengths in skill development and knowledge.
  - 6.1.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall identify areas for personal development in knowledge and skill base for practice.
  - 6.1.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall identify recurring problems and achievements of the service or program.
  - 6.1.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall explore areas of key professional activity as described and developed in the research literature.
  - 6.1.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall share critical reflections on practice within the professional supervision process and in formal and informal discussions with colleagues.
- 6.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall reflect on professional activity in relation to the research literature.

### *Standard #7 Private practice environment*

In addition to the general provisions of the Code of Ethics and Guidelines; Clinical Social Work Specialist are responsible to strive to provide effective services, avoid conflicts of interest and conduct business practices that are transparent, and accountable.

- 7.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain a professional environment that ensures the accessibility of practice and meeting spaces.
  - 7.1.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain adequate malpractice, defamation, and liability insurance consistent with NSCSW policy.
  - 7.1.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall strive to meet the objectives of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act.
  - 7.1.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall be accessible to their service users and provide clinical services to service users during regularly scheduled appointment times or sessions. In addition, the Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop emergency plans or be available to the service user for emergency coverage during vacations, holidays, illnesses, and at other times when the office may be closed.
  - 7.1.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall make arrangements or plans and procedures for emergency coverage in partnership with competent mental health professionals or reputable institutions, which should be discussed with the service user upon intake.



- 7.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain integrity in taking referrals.
- 7.2.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall not solicit their colleagues or other persons at their place of work to receive service from their private practice, unless there is a request for social workers to do so. (For example, in hard to serve areas, employers may need employees who also have a private practice to provide follow-up services). The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall accurately document any requests and business agreements.
- 7.2.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist may accept service users from their workplace when the workplace does not provide a similar service, or in accordance with established workplace guidelines regarding such referrals. In these situations, social workers will seek consultation with their workplace and accurately document the decision and consultation.
- 7.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain integrity in administrating fees.
- 7.3.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist who enters into a fee for services contract with a service user shall disclose at the outset of the relationship the fee schedule for social work services, including their expectations and practices with respect to cancellations, occasions when the service user does not show for appointments, and unpaid bills.
- 7.3.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall only charge a fee that was disclosed to and agreed upon by the service user.
- 7.3.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall charge only for the reasonable hours of service user services, research, consultation, and administrative work.
- 7.3.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall exercise careful judgement before accepting goods or services from service users as payment for professional services. Bartering arrangements, particularly involving services, create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in social workers' relationships with service users. Social workers may participate in bartering when it can be demonstrated that such arrangements are an accepted practice for professionals in the local community, considered to be essential for the provision of services, negotiated without coercion, and entered into for the client's benefit and with the service user's informed consent. Social workers who accept goods or services from service users as payment for professional services assume the full burden of demonstrating that this arrangement will not be detrimental to the service user and the profession.
- 7.3.5. The Clinical Social Work Specialist may charge a rate of interest on delinquent accounts as is allowed by law. When such interest is being charged the Clinical Social Work Specialist shall state the rate of interest on all invoices or bills.
- 7.3.6. The Clinical Social Work Specialist may pursue civil remedies to ensure payment for services, where the social worker has advised the service user of this possibility at the outset of the contract.

- 7.4. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall maintain professional offices and procedures.
- 7.4.1. The Clinical Social Work Specialist shall develop and implement policies that describe their office procedures, such as the client's rights, including the right to privacy and confidentiality; notices and authorizations; procedures for release of information; fee agreements; procedures for payment; cancellation policy; and coverage of services during emergency situations or when the clinical social worker is not available. These policies shall be made available to and reviewed with each service user at the beginning intervention.
- 7.4.2. The Clinical Social Work Specialist in private practice shall maintain integrity in their relationships with other workplaces in which they are employed.
- 7.4.3. The Clinical Social Work Specialist in private practice shall ensure that private practice demands do not interfere with or take time from services delivered in other settings in which they are employed.
- 7.5. The clinical social work specialist in private practice shall maintain integrity in their relationships with other workplaces in which they are employed.
- 7.5.1 The clinical social work specialist in private practice shall ensure that private practice demands do not interfere with or take time from services delivered in other settings in which they are employed.

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