

General Standards of Practice for the Social Work Profession

Adopted by the Ordre's Board of Directors on March 29, 2019



Ordre des travailleurs sociaux
et des thérapeutes conjugaux
et familiaux du Québec

L'Humain avant tout

3	Introduction
4	Foreword
6	Standard 1. Social Intervention Process
7	Initial contact
8	Assessment of social functioning
9	Planning of social intervention
10	Implementation of social intervention
11	Evaluation of social intervention process
12	Termination
13	Standard 2. Professional posture and relationships
14	General points
15	Competence
16	Professional relationships
17	Respect of diversity
18	Communication and information processing
19	Ethics and engagement
20	Note

Introduction

This document replaces *Les normes de pratique professionnelle des travailleurs sociaux*, which was first published in 1986 and revised in 1991, then in 1993. It presents the general standards of practice for the social work profession.¹ It constitutes a collection of standards within the meaning of “generally recognized standards” as mentioned in Section 7 of the *Code of ethics of the members of the Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec* (hereafter the “Ordre”). In this sense, these standards are mandatory, specifying the Ordre’s expectations of social workers with regard to the social intervention process and professional posture to be exercised. These standards, which are more general in nature, do not replace the more specific standards, such as those for record keeping and consulting offices, which social workers must also respect.

¹ In this document, the term “social worker”, in the singular or plural, is used in its generic sense.

Foreword

Social workers subscribe to the values and principles contained in their Code of ethics, including:

- Respect for the dignity of every person;
- Respect for the rights of persons, couples, families, groups and communities;
- Respect for the principles of individual autonomy and personal self-determination;
- The right for a person in danger to be provided with assistance and protection, as the person's needs require;
- Promotion of the principles of social justice;
- Belief in the human capacity to evolve and develop;
- Recognition of the necessity of perceiving and understanding the human being as a component of systems that are interdependent and potential catalysts of change;
- Promotion of the well-being of persons, couples, families, groups and communities.

Social workers uphold these values and principles in all of their professional activities and recognize that their profession is based on social justice and human rights. They also take into consideration the definitions, agreements and declarations of national and international social work organizations to guide their practice.

Scope of practice and reserved activities

The scope of practice for social workers is defined as follows by the *Professional Code*:²

Assess social functioning, determine an intervention plan and see to its implementation, and support and restore social functioning in relation to a person's milieu with a view to fostering the optimal development of the person in interaction with his environment.

As stipulated in the *Professional Code*, social workers are also involved in disseminating information, promoting health and preventing suicide, illness, accidents and social problems among individuals and within families and communities to the extent that such activities are related to their professional activities.³ When practising activities reserved under the *Professional Code*⁴ that carry a risk of harm related to their performance, require competencies and knowledge to practice them, social workers do so in accordance with practice handbooks, guidelines or other reference documents of the Ordre.

In their practice, social workers incorporate, in keeping with the hallmark of the profession, a critical thought process on the social aspects that influence people's situations and make credible, informed and professional judgements about the nature of relationships between people and their life contexts. They intervene from the perspective of seeking satisfactory relationships between people and their living situations, thereby promoting well-being, social and civic participation, and social development. They consider social functioning from a social development perspective rather than a normative focus.

² *Professional Code*, section 37 d)

³ *Professional Code*, section 39.4

⁴ *Professional Code*, section 37.1. 1.1.1

Standard 01

Social intervention process

Through their conduct, social workers showcase their mastery of the social work assessment and intervention process. To that end, they respect the elements of the various stages of the intervention process with the client's⁵ consent.

⁵ Here, "client" is defined under the OTSTCFQ Code of ethics as "a person, couple, family, group, community or body to whom a member provides or undertakes to provide professional services."

1. Initial contact

- 1.1. Social workers take the necessary and relevant means to acquaint themselves with the request for social work service or any other request pertaining to the situation requiring social work expertise submitted to them for which they follow up on diligently.
- 1.2. Social workers apply the means and provisions to establish a relationship of trust and collaboration with the persons concerned by the request or situation presented. As needed, they consult the relevant persons or documents to obtain complementary information. They contact the client involved in the request or situation, explain the request and determine a process. They agree on a follow-up with the client, and with other persons involved, as applicable.

2. Assessment of social functioning

- 2.1. Social workers assess the situation presented in relation to their scope of practice, i.e. social functioning. The social work assessment process is then transcribed into a detailed or summary report, usually distinct from chronological or progress notes.
- 2.2. Depending on the situation at hand, social workers collect relevant objective and subjective information about clients and their environment, in particular: their situation, expectations, needs, aspirations in addition to their perception of the situation and personal and environmental factors (immediate and societal environment). Particular attention is paid to social determinants, social roles and people's strengths.
- 2.3. Social workers determine their understanding of the situation presented by conducting an analysis. This analysis explains the inter-relationship between personal and environmental factors. It pays particular attention to social determinants, social roles and the strengths of individuals in their environment.
- 2.4. Social workers draw a conclusion about the situation by formulating a professional opinion, which is communicated to the client. This opinion deals with the urgency, severity and gravity of the situation.
- 2.5. Social workers draft the orientations, strategies or intervention objectives as well as the necessary recommendations based on their professional opinion.

3. Planning of social intervention

Social intervention planning is based on the assessment of social functioning previously undertaken. Social workers plan the social intervention, in collaboration with the client, and, if applicable, with other persons involved in the situation by considering the following:

- 3.1. The personal, social, economic and cultural characteristics of clients, their situation, needs, values, expectations, aspirations, strengths and those of their environment.
- 3.2. The point of view of the client and other persons involved in the situation.
- 3.3. All factors that could impact the intervention and the priority of objectives to be pursued in this respect.
- 3.4. Relevant elements of the context, such as the organization's mission and the appropriate internal and community resources.
- 3.5. Social workers target realistic objectives with regard to the intervention context, and the client's environment, needs and aspirations. With the client and other persons involved, as applicable, social workers discuss the possible or desirable options in relation to the methods of intervention and the means to achieve the agreed-upon objectives.
- 3.6. Social workers establish timelines with the client for achieving objectives in order to provide time for review. The intervention plan should be reviewed at least once a year or more frequently depending on the situation's evolution and legal considerations.
- 3.7. Social workers clarify and specify the context in which interventions will take place. They make sure to provide all necessary and relevant information about their assignment, role, obligations and responsibilities. They discuss the possible scope and limits of proposed social interventions.

4. Implementation of social intervention

- 4.1. Social workers base their interventions on the targeted changes desired and agreed upon by the client and, as applicable, with other persons involved. These targets incorporate social determinants of health.
- 4.2. Social workers implement their interventions jointly and transparently with the client and, as applicable, with other persons involved. Implemented interventions are part of the scope of practice of the social work profession.
- 4.3. Social workers regularly and continuously assess the relevance and necessity of the interventions carried out in accordance with the context of the intervention.

5. Evaluation of social intervention process

- 5.1. Social workers determine with the client and, as applicable, with other persons concerned, the degree to which the objectives of the intervention plan have been met and assess the progress and functioning of the intervention process.
- 5.2. Social workers seek to increase clients' awareness and appropriation of the results, their assimilation of the means deployed and ability to transfer what they have learned to similar situations.
- 5.3. Social workers evaluate the entire social intervention process through the observation of indicators pertaining to the targeted objectives. These indicators accord, whenever possible, particular importance to the quality of life and well-being indexes for individuals and their environment.

6. Termination

- 6.1. Social workers use their professional judgement to determine the end of the intervention.
- 6.2. Social workers prepare and help terminate the professional relationship established on the basis of the client's needs, the situation presented or the context of practice.
- 6.3. When required, social workers guide clients towards the relevant or necessary resources based on their needs, abilities and aspirations. As needed, they ensure personalized support in this respect.

Standard 02

Professional posture
and relationships

Social workers engage in appropriate professional relationships and adopt a position rooted in a solid professional identity.

1. General points

- 1.1. Social workers know and respect the laws, regulations, standards and the rights of persons related to their professional obligations and field of intervention.
- 1.2. Social workers communicate verbally and in writing with respect and clarity, in accordance with the values, principles and hallmark of the profession.
- 1.3. Social workers guide individuals in the development of their power to act, in particular, persons who are vulnerable, marginalized, oppressed, deprived or with special needs.
- 1.4. Social workers use all tools, evaluation or assessment grids and tests with discretion and competence, whether or not these are standardized. They make sure to understand the meaning, purpose, scope and consequences before using them.

2. Competence

- 2.1. Social workers provide quality services and limit their professional practice to fields for which they have acquired the necessary competence.
- 2.2. Social workers who do not possess the competencies for providing a service must take the necessary means to acquire them beforehand. They can also be assisted by a colleague who has this expertise or refer the client to an adequate resource.
- 2.3. Social workers adjust their practice on the basis of the relevant knowledge related to their field of intervention.
- 2.4. Social workers base their interventions on social work best practices related to their field of intervention.
- 2.5. Through continuing education, social workers develop and maintain their professional competencies throughout their career.

3. Professional relationships

- 3.1. Social workers provide their clients with an attentive, caring presence, without bias.
- 3.2. Social workers use an approach focussed on their clients' needs and situation as well as on their life contexts.
- 3.3. Social workers make sure to establish a relationship of trust with the client while respecting an appropriate professional distance.
- 3.4. Social workers avoid inappropriate dual or multiple relationships.
- 3.5. Social workers foster their clients' collaboration and participation in services even in involuntary contexts.

4. Respect of diversity

- 4.1. Social workers denounce and act against any form of discrimination or oppression with regard to their clients in connection with the practice of the profession.
- 4.2. Social workers acquire the necessary knowledge and adjust their practice on the basis of the social, cultural or religious situations specific to their clients with whom they work.
- 4.3. If possible, social workers intervene in the client's language, and as needed, use the services of an interpreter.
- 4.4. Social workers acquire the necessary knowledge and adjust their professional practice to the situations of First Nations and Inuit communities.
- 4.5. Social workers acquire the knowledge and adjust their interventions and communications with regard to gender situations.

5. Communication and information processing

- 5.1. In their verbal and written communications, social workers transcribe the point of view of clients and their environment as well as the relevant contextual elements.
- 5.2. Social workers tailor their verbal and written communications to target audiences so that they are understood by those concerned.
- 5.3. Social workers ensure that records are kept in accordance with the Ordre's regulations and standards.
- 5.4. Social workers respect the rules and obligations pertaining to confidentiality, professional secrecy and consent, unless otherwise provided by the law.
- 5.5. Social workers inform clients transparently of the limits to professional secrecy and confidentiality.
- 5.6. Social workers communicate thoroughly and diligently in a spirit of continuity of services, respect for rights of access to services and interprofessional collaboration.
- 5.7. Social workers behave in a flawless and dignified manner on social networks. At all times, they respect individuals' rights to privacy, dignity and confidentiality.
- 5.8. Social workers make judicious and prudent use of technology and social media in accordance with the Ordre's standards in this regard.
- 5.9. Social workers provide, as soon as possible, all information necessary to enable individuals using their services to fully grasp the scale, scope, consequences and limits of the entrusted assignment. They also inform them of the possible consequences and alternatives.

6. Ethics and engagement

- 6.1. Social workers place professional judgement at the heart of their practice. They make nuanced judgements about complex ethical dilemmas and issues.
- 6.2. Where relevant, social workers implement, on an individual or collective basis, an ethical deliberation process recognized in social work.
- 6.3. Social workers notify their employers of the primacy of loyalty to their professional obligations in the presence of instructions or practices that are contrary to ethics, standards of practice or the rights of clients.
- 6.4. Social workers denounce policies, procedures, practices and service arrangements that they consider are not in the best interests of their clients or believe are unfair, oppressive, discriminatory or culturally inappropriate.
- 6.5. Social workers communicate their clients' needs and their opinions with regard to responses to be given to decision-makers responsible for the services in order to improve these services.
- 6.6. Social workers defend the rights and support the improvement of social, economic and political conditions of the population, in particular, for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed or exploited individuals, groups and communities.
- 6.7. Experienced social workers contribute, to the extent possible and based on their competencies, to the development of the next generation of social workers (students, interns and young professionals) through teaching, supervision, mentoring or other forms of professional and clinical coaching.
- 6.8. Social workers contribute to fair and equitable access to public services, in particular, by informing all persons of the existence of such services and how to use them.
- 6.9. Social workers in management, coordination, supervision and service planning roles conduct their activities in such a way as to contribute to the development of social work and to the access to quality social services for the population.
- 6.10. Social workers in teaching and research functions conduct their activities in such a way as to contribute to the enhancement of knowledge, evolution of social work practice and advancement of society.

Note

This document was adopted by the Ordre's Board of Directors on March 29, 2019 and becomes effective at the same time as the new *Code of ethics of the members of the Ordre*.



**Ordre des travailleurs sociaux
et des thérapeutes conjugaux
et familiaux du Québec**

255 Crémazie Blvd. East,
Suite 800
Montréal (Qc) H2M 1L5

Tel. 514 731-3925
TF 1 888 731-9420

info@otstcfq.org
www.otstcfq.org