Professional Ethics and Social Networking

Presented by
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New Challenges in Ethical Practice

Technology
&
Social networking
Technology and The Code

Code of Ethics

NASW

• Administration / Supervision
• Aging
• Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs
• Child Welfare
• Children, Adolescents & Young Adults
• Health
• Mental Health
• Social and Economic Justice & Peace
• Private Practice
• School Social Work
• Social Work and the Courts

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Case Scenario

A social worker receives an e-mail from a client who wishes to reschedule an appointment. The social worker responds. The social worker then begins receiving group e-mails from the client with affirmations, jokes etc. The social worker forwards the e-mail to another colleague and comments about her discomfort with receiving the e-mails. The e-mail gets forwarded to the colleague but also the others in the original group e-mail. The client is now accusing the social worker of breaching confidentiality.
What We Do Know

The *NASW Code of Ethics* addresses technology in Standard 1.07(m): “Social workers should take precautions to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of information transmitted to other parties through the use of computers…and other electronic or computer technology. Disclosure of identifying information should be avoided whenever possible.”
What We Do Know cont...

In addition, there is the language strongly discouraging dual relationships and requiring social workers to “be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment.” Social workers are the ones responsible for “setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries,” not the clients. (Standard 1.06).
NASW Standards for Technology
What We Do Know

The provision in the technology standards that address technological competency states, Social workers shall be responsible for becoming proficient in the technological skills and tools required for competent and ethical practice and for seeking appropriate training and consultation to stay current with emerging technologies.
What We Do Know cont…

And a provision regarding online dynamics is included:

Social workers shall strive to become and remain knowledgeable about the dynamics of online relationships, the advantages and drawbacks of non-face-to-face interactions, and the ways in which technology-based social work practice can be safely and appropriately conducted.
Current Issues Poll

What new issue is most prevalent in social work?

- A) Social networking
- B) Employer conflicts
- C) Online/telephone therapy
Social Networking
What is social networking?

Definition

Wikipedia

- A social network is a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes", which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependence, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.

Tech Terms.com

- Social networking websites allow users to be part of a virtual community. The two most popular sites are currently Facebook and MySpace. These websites provide users with simple tools to create a custom profile with text and pictures. A typical profile includes basic information about the user, at least one photo, and possibly a blog or other comments published by the user.
Internet Social Networking

• Thanks to social networking websites, users can share their lives with other people without needing to develop and publish their own home pages. These websites also provide an important linking element between users that allows friends to communicate directly with each other. Because people often have friends from different places and different times in their lives, social networking sites provide an opportunity to keep in touch with old friends and to meet new people as well. Of course, this means that people you don't know may also be able to view your profile page. Therefore, if you join a social networking website, it is a good idea to review the privacy settings for your account. And more importantly, remember to always use discretion in what you publish on your profile.

Courtesy of Tech Terms.com
Popular Sites

• LinkedIn

• MySpace

• Facebook

• Twitter
Why Discuss this topic?

• Responsibility to address new changes in society that affect how we practice

• New ethical challenges create new opportunities to review where we are and to determine where we need to go

• NASW has an obligation to stay abreast of and provide members with the most current information and tools that promotes the highest standards of practice
Implications for Clients

• 1.03 Informed Consent

• 1.06 (a & C) Conflicts of Interest

• 1.07 (m) Privacy & Confidentiality
Implications for Colleagues/Employment

• 2.01(b) Respect

• 2.02 Confidentiality

• 3.09 (a) Commitment to Employers
Implications for the Social Worker as a Professional

• Ethical Standards
  » 4.07 Solicitation

• Legal Implications

• Other Considerations
Key Points

1) Adhere to the ethical standards
2) Adhere to standards of practice
3) Become informed about sites and the implications for joining them
   – Privacy protections and limitations
   – Keep personal and professional separate
4) Anticipate potential concerns and try to avoid them
   – Be sensitive to and issues that may arise with
     • Clients
     • Employers
     • Colleagues
     • Friends
5) If an issue arises seek appropriate consultation including peer, ethics and legal, if necessary

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Questions & Answers