

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK**  
**www.nofsw.org**

**CODE OF ETHICS**  
**PREAMBLE & Statement of Intent**

I. Purpose of organization:

It is the purpose of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW/ Organization) to support and advance the practice and conduct of forensic social work as a professional discipline. In that capacity, a primary function of NOFSW will be to educate its membership, related professions and the public by the development and delivery of courses, forums, panels, lectures and conferences, in all those areas relating to social work and the law. NOFSW is committed to the exchange of ideas, experience and research with all those professionals engaged in both social work and legal/forensic activities. The NOFSW will produce a peer-reviewed Journal, occasional papers, and newsletters along with other publications as it encourages scientific research in the field. The NOFSW will develop standards of practice and conduct for its Members and moral conduct as its Members interact with other forensic colleagues.

II. Purpose of code of Ethics – A Statement of Intent:

In constructing an effective and enduring code of ethics it is the intent of the NOFSW, as a whole, and of each of its individual members, to commit collectively to a specific body of standards of conduct. These standards, so set out in this Code, must, and will, promulgate the NOFSW' sense of identity, and define each member's duties to the group, colleagues, clients, employers and society and each other as professionals. Adherence to the Code will strengthen and support each Member's ethical decision-making, provide guidelines to improve ethical decision-making, and guide the Ethics Committee when addressing ethical complaint issues. Each member may be confronted with conflicting demands and/or actions. Thus the Code serves as a guide to following NOFSW rules in a morally responsible manner. All those committing to this Code of Ethics for NOFSW will, thereby, not only bind themselves to these standards but appreciate their duties to other Members and their profession. The Code defines those conflicting issues likely to arise, those unethical behaviors the NOFSW wishes to prevent and those morally appropriate actions each and all will support and defend.

The best practice for each NOFSW member is sound judgment, i.e. the capacity to understand and appreciate the consequences of thought and deed. Each member, therefore, is deemed to be a responsible agent for the expression and vitality of the values set forth in this document, the NOFSW Canon of Ethics:

## **Section I**

### **Ethical Responsibility to the National Organization of Forensic Social Work**

**Canon 1.** Each member of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work shall possess the required qualifications of education, background and experience to perform the duties of a Forensic Social Work Practitioner.

**Canon 2.** Members of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work shall not misrepresent a member's qualifications, education, background or experience either orally or in writing for any purpose, including purposes of obtaining membership, licensing and/or certification.

**Canon 3.** Each Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall keep abreast of changing laws effecting practice, participate in in-service training programs, attend professional conferences, expand their practice skills through professional publications, consult on forensic matters with professional colleagues, and present educational material to colleagues and other professionals when so requested.

**Canon 4.** Each member shall be responsible for informing other professionals and the public about the work and standards of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work.

**Canon 5.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall clearly distinguish between his/her statements made on behalf of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work and those made as a private citizen.

**Canon 6.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall attempt to clearly identify potential conflicts among laws, rules, policies and treatment goals when serving the client, in consultation with other agencies or with members of society.

**Canon 7.** Each Forensic Social Work Practitioner who pursues scholarly inquiry through research and publication shall insure confidentiality and minimize physical and/or psychological harm to all clients.

**Canon 8.** Members of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work shall only participate in research with subjects who have voluntarily given his/her informed written consent. Care shall be taken to protect the privacy and dignity of research subjects. There shall be no penalty to the client for refusal to participate in any research project.

**Canon 9.** Appropriate credit should be given in publications according to standards set by publishers. Major contributors shall be listed. The primary author should be listed first.

## **Section II**

### **Ethical Responsibilities to Employers and Colleagues**

**Canon 10.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall adhere to commitments voluntarily entered into between the Forensic Social Work Practitioner and the employing agency.

**Canon 11.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall report unethical conduct of employers or colleagues to appropriate agencies and/or professional organizations.

**Canon 12.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall refuse to participate in any unethical conduct or procedure against any client, colleague or agency.

**Canon 13.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall treat clients, colleagues, supervisees, students and trainees with respect and dignity.

**Canon 14.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall conduct evaluations of supervisees, students or trainees in a fair and equitable manner according to agency norms or personnel practices. Such evaluations shall be shared with the subject of said evaluation.

**Canon 15.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall consult with colleagues upon request.

**Canon 16.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not solicit clients from the member's agency for private practice unless such is in accordance with the agency's policies.

### **Section III Ethical Responsibilities to Clients**

**Canon 17.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, religion, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, political belief, marital, or legal status in providing Forensic Social Work services.

**Canon 18.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall clearly identify the source of referral, inform individuals being evaluated or treated of the nature and purpose of the evaluation, and use applicable standards of confidentiality with whom the information will be shared.

**Canon 19.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not provide treatment that could endanger the physical, emotional or psychiatric health of the client.

**Canon 20.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall seek consultation when appropriate.

**Canon 21.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall make referrals to other professionals and agencies when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the client. The client shall be informed of such referral.

**Canon 22.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall avoid potential conflicts of interest by refusing to accept clients when there is a possible conflict between personal, family and/or professional responsibilities.

**Canon 23.** When terminating treatment against the client's wishes, care shall be taken to adequately explain the basis for the Forensic Social Work Practitioner's decision and to insure the opportunity for continuity of services by appropriate referral to other professionals or agencies.

**Canon 24.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall protect the confidentiality of all records and documents subject to law. Disclosures of information shall be made only with the client's informed, written consent.

**Canon 25.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall set reasonable and customary fees which are in accordance with rates for services performed of a similar nature by other professionals.

**Canon 26.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall make services available to selected indigent clients.

**Canon 27.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall receive remuneration for services performed.

**Canon 28.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not engage in any illegal activities, fraud or deceit.

**Canon 29.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not accept, demand, give or receive anything of value for making or receiving a referral from a colleague.

**Canon 30.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not allow his/her personal problems, mental illness, or drug or alcohol dependency to interfere in the delivery of services to clients. The Forensic Social Work Practitioner has the responsibility to seek appropriate treatment.

**Canon 31.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not engage in any sexual contact with clients, students, or any person under the authority of the Forensic Social Work Practitioner.

**Canon 32.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall report any documented or suspected child abuse or neglect, abuse of patients or any other dependent persons to appropriate local or federal agencies in accordance with relevant local and national laws.

**Canon 33.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall notify both the appropriate legal authorities and identified potential victim(s) when serious threats to do imminent bodily harm are made by clients.

**Canon 34.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall obtain written consent of clients when video taping or recording interviews for professional or educational purposes.

**Canon 35.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall be mindful of special duties to clients under legal age and shall insure that only the necessary information to maximize the client's progress in treatment be given to parents, guardians or appropriate agencies.

**Section IV**  
**Ethical Responsibility to Society**

**Canon 36.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner has an obligation to impact proposed legislation affecting the practice of Forensic Social Work.

**Canon 37.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall promote quality services and high standards for Forensic Social Work care equally to all people.

**Canon 38.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not perjure him/herself.

**Canon 39.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not delegate duties or responsibilities to any person not qualified to perform those duties or to accept those responsibilities.

**Canon 40.** The Forensic Social Work Practitioner shall not use professional knowledge and skills in any enterprise detrimental to the public well being.

*Revised 11 16 11*