

Code of Ethics

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1. Introduction

The welfare and community worker is a person who, through professional training and field education, has the requisite values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills to work autonomously, or with a team, in a social welfare agency or program intended to promote, relieve or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, social groups or larger communities.

The welfare and community worker as a professional practitioner in the field of welfare and community work is concerned to promote the worth and well being of all individuals regardless of racial origin, sex, age or social status or other individual differences. The professional behaviour and practice of the welfare and community worker are aimed at maximizing the human potential and worth of all persons.

Conduct opposed to the full recognition of human dignity and well being for all persons within the welfare worker's professional practice shall be considered improper and unacceptable to the welfare and community work profession.

Welfare and community workers are concerned with issues of social justice and equity for clients including access to quality services and the opportunity for maximum client participation in service delivery.

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2. Principles

- 2.1 Every human being, regardless of racial origin, age, sex, beliefs, and socio-economic status, has a right to maximise his/her potential providing it does not infringe upon the rights of others.
- 2.2 Every society has an obligation to provide for and deal equitably with all its members and to make extra provision for those persons who by reasons of disability or misfortune are disadvantaged.
- 2.3 The welfare and community worker in professional practice has an obligation to utilise all available skills and knowledge to promote the well being of individuals, groups and communities.
- 2.4 The welfare and community worker has a professional obligation to give clients all knowledge, information and skills, which will assist clients, and client groups realise their maximum human potential.
- 2.5 The welfare and community worker as a practitioner within complex social structures has an obligation to safeguard the human value of all persons encountered in practice.

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3. Responsibilities to Clients and Client Groups

The welfare and community worker is placed in a unique relationship to other persons because of employment and profession. Obligations arise from that relationship - to safeguard the dignity of the client, to maintain the integrity of the practitioner and to recognise the value and worth of all persons involved in the welfare work practice.

- 3.1 Confidentiality - The welfare and community worker shall regard all information concerning clients disclosed in the course of practice as confidential, except where:
 - a. with the client's permission referrals are to be made and other professional consultation is sought;
 - b. failure to disclose information would breach the terms of the welfare worker's employment (such exceptions must be notified to the client)
- 3.2 Accountability - In exercising certain powers and using information, the welfare and community worker has an accountability to both the employing agency and to clients. However, special accountability to clients in preserving their dignity and autonomy is acknowledged.
- 3.3 Respect - The welfare and community worker has an obligation to treat clients with respect, to promote maximum self worth and dignity, and to safeguard and promote the capacity for free choice by the client.

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4. Responsibilities to Colleagues

As a professional person the welfare and community worker can be expected to:

- 4.1 respect the practitioner skills and conceptual abilities of colleagues;
- 4.2 provide loyalty and support to colleagues where this does not contradict the principles of this code of ethics;
- 4.3 share knowledge, skills and insights with colleagues;
- 4.4 bring to the attention of colleagues unprofessional or unethical conduct, and if unresolved, to refer the matter to the appropriate professional bodies;
- 4.5 refrain from any personal behaviour which may damage the profession.

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5. Responsibilities to Employers and Employing Organisations

The welfare and community worker is expected to have clarified prior to employment that agency policies and practices are likely to allow the applications of the principles contained in this code of ethics.

As an employee of an organisation the welfare and community worker is expected to:

- 5.1 carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined as terms of employment;
- 5.2 assist in promoting the stated aims of the employing organisation in terms of policy, procedure and practice;
- 5.3 distinguish in public statements or behaviour whether acting as an authorised spokesperson of the employer or in a private capacity;
- 5.4 use professionally approved channels to express criticism of employment practices which are detrimental to the profession;
- 5.5 be accountable to the employing organisations for the full discharge of duties - except where such contradicts this code of ethics.

6. Responsibilities to the Profession

- 6.1 maintain proper standards of practice, and uphold principles and ethics of the code at all times;
- 6.2 maintain the standards of knowledge, skill and learning appropriate to professional development;
- 6.3 promote understanding of the role and skills of professional welfare and community work

7. Responsibilities of the Profession

The welfare and community work profession through the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers Inc. will contribute to the knowledge, attitudes and skills of practitioners and positively promote social well being in the community.

By the application of sanctions, the Institute will move to protect individuals and communities against incompetent and unethical practices.

On advice from a State Branch of the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers Inc., a review of alleged incompetent and unethical practices will be conducted by the Membership Assessment Panel which may recommend to the National Executive sanctions including removing eligibility for or membership of the Institute.