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SW 230 01: Intro to Social Work

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Chapter 2: Code of Ethics

Identify the Purpose: The purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics is to hold social workers to a high standard of professionalism. Social workers face tough challenges each day, and the code of ethics helps guide them when difficult problems occur. The Code of Ethics keeps social workers accountable. The code identifies core values on which social work's mission is based. The code summarizes broad ethical principles that reflect the professionals core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that should be used in social work practice. The code is also designed to help social workers identify relevant considerations when professional obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise. The code provides ethical standards to which the public can hold the social work profession accountable. The code socializes practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards. Lastly, the code articulates standards that the social work profession itself can use to assess whether social workers have engaged in unethical conduct. I will go more into depth with the purposes of the NASW in the next two sections of this discussion.

Ethical Principles: The ethical principles are based on the six core values of social work. The six core values are service, social justice, dignity and worth of a person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Service is the first core value I will discuss. The primary goal of social workers is to help people in need and address social problems. Social workers elevate services to others before themselves. They draw on their knowledge, values, and

skills to help people in need. Next is social justice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. They focus on issues primarily about poverty, discrimination, and other forms of social justice. Dignity and worth of a person is another core value. Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion. Social workers are mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers seek to enhance client's capacity and opportunity to address and change their own needs. Another core value is the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are essential for change. They engage people as partners in the helping process. Integrity is the next core value. Social workers should always be trustworthy. Social workers act responsibly and should promote all ethical practices to each workplace they are connected to. Competence is the last core value of social work. Social workers practice in their areas to develop and enhance their professional expertise. They are always striving to increase their professional knowledge and apply them in practice.

Ethical Standards: The ethical standards of social work are six critical criteria that all social workers are held responsible for. They are to clients, to colleagues, in practice settings, as professionals, to the social work profession, and to broader society. To clients is the first ethical standard I will discuss. Social worker's primary responsibility is to promote the clients' well-being since their interest is most important. Some examples are self-determination, informed consent, and privacy and confidentiality. The second ethical standard is to colleagues. Social workers should respect all other colleagues and not try and work on each other clients unless asked to be involved. In practice settings is the third ethical standard. Social workers should have the necessary knowledge and skills to supervise employees or educate students properly. Social workers should make sure client records are accurate and reflect the services provided. As

professionals is the fourth ethical standard. Social workers should become and remain efficient in their professional practice and performance. Social workers should keep current with emerging knowledge and attend trainings and seminars to advance their social work practice. The second to last ethical standard is to the social work profession. Social workers should show integrity to the profession by keeping and advancing high standards of practice. They should contribute their time and knowledge to their profession. The last ethical standard is to broader society. Social workers should promote society's well-being to local and global levels, their communities, and environments. Social workers should take part in social and political action. They should ensure all people have equal access to all resources, basic human needs, and services. An excellent example of social workers taking action in social and political action is voting for leaders in the United States to best help and represent them.