

Code of Professional Conduct

Ministry of Social Services

The Ministry's mission statement is to deliver programs and services that help people in need achieve a better quality of life. The Ministry achieves that by:

1. Providing citizen-centred services and programs that set the foundation to meet our clients' basic needs;
2. Supporting citizen independence through self-reliance and prevention; and
3. Ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of our people and our organization.

As representatives of the Saskatchewan Public Service and employees of the Ministry of Social Services we:

- Dedicate ourselves to service excellence;
- Demonstrate innovation, collaboration and transparency;
- Practice effective and accountable use of resources; and
- Promote engagement and leadership at all levels.

As we conduct our business, we demonstrate the following Core Values:

1. To show respect and integrity we speak truthfully; communicate clearly and consistently; value all opinions; listen to others and keep commitments.
2. To serve citizens we understand the needs of those we service; continuously improve, consult and engage; reduce barriers to access; and exceed expectations.
3. To practice excellence and innovation we invest in employee development; create a supportive environment to encourage new ideas; take responsible risks; strive to be the best; celebrate success; demonstrate accountability; and consider safety in all we do.
4. To act as One Team we work collaboratively; speak with one voice; support one another; share knowledge, information and resources; and ensure we are inclusive.

Purpose:

Given the Ministry's dedication to protect Saskatchewan's most vulnerable residents and support their inclusion in the province's prosperity, Ministry employees are expected to conduct themselves as professionals. The purpose of this Professional Code of Conduct (Code) is to establish and communicate an expectation of acceptable behaviour and provide guidance on professional ethics for all employees of the Ministry of Social Services. It is expected that this Code will guide employees in performing their duties on a day to day basis. This Code is supplemented by existing Divisional directives, Ministry policies, Public Service Commission policies, and Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Ministry of Social Services employees have a personal responsibility for their professional and ethical conduct. They also are accountable to ensure their behaviours align with the Vision, Values and Commitment to Excellence of the Saskatchewan Government and the Ministry of Social Services. The work of Ministry employees is distributed between different divisions and diverse work environments; therefore, some aspects of this Code will apply more specifically to one division or another. In the case that appropriate conduct is unclear, employees must seek the advice and direction of their supervisor.

To ensure public confidence in the integrity of the Ministry of Social Services, all Ministry employees shall respect and adhere to the Code.

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Definitions

Client:	A person who is receiving services in any Ministry program.
Conflict of Interest:	A situation in which a public employee, either for himself/herself or some other person(s), attempts to promote a private or personal interest which results or appears to result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an interference with the objective exercise of public service duties; or • a gain or an advantage by virtue of his/her position in the public service.
Core Values:	The core values are: respect and integrity, serving citizens, excellence and innovation and one team.
Employee:	A person employed by the Ministry of Social Services. This includes in-scope and out-of-scope employees and those employees who are on any form of leave from the work environment, as well as contract employees with the Ministry.
Employer:	Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Social Services.
Family:	Any member of an employee’s or client’s family including but not limited to a spouse, common-law spouse, partner, boyfriend, girlfriend, son, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, father, father-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, cousin, any relative permanently residing in the employee’s or client’s household or with whom the employee or client resides, or any person who the employee or client considers equivalent to a member of his or her family.

Harassment: This policy utilizes the definition of harassment as set out in *The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2003*. “Harassment means any inappropriate conduct, comment, display, action or gesture by a person:

- (i) that either:
 - (A) is based on race, creed, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, physical size or weight, age, nationality, ancestry or place of origin; or
 - (B) subject to subsections (3) and (4), adversely affects the worker’s psychological or physical well being and that the person knows or ought reasonably to know would cause a worker to be humiliated or intimidated; and
- (ii) that constitutes a threat to the health or safety of the worker.

(Note: Harassment includes any inappropriate conduct, comment, display, action or gesture by a person that is based on any grounds identified in the SGEU or CUPE collective bargaining agreements.)

Personal Relationship: A relationship that is other than a professional or casual acquaintance between:

- an employee and a client;
- an employee and the family of a client;
- a client and the family of an employee;

And includes:

- a relationship of sexual, romantic or emotional manner;
- a relationship that could result in real or perceived favouritism, conflict of interest or breach of security; or
- a relationship that might bring the Ministry into disrepute, or compromise workplace safety personal or professional integrity.

Supervisor: The person to whom you report to directly.

Work Environment: Includes all on site, off site, or online locations, where work related activities and interactions occur whether on duty or off duty, in person, in writing or using social media.

1. Employer and Employee Responsibilities:

1.1. Employees are responsible to:

- Complete initial orientation and review the Code on an annual basis with their supervisor;
- Follow all the principles and expectations mentioned in this Code;
- Inform their supervisor of any known violation of this Code.

Employees who breach this Code may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

1.2. The employer is responsible to:

- Ensure all new Ministry of Social Services employees receive the Code of Professional Conduct through initial orientation;
- Ensure that a copy of the Code is provided to all existing employees;
- Ensure that all Ministry of Social Services employees understand the expectations of the Code;
- Take appropriate actions when a violation of the Code has occurred;
- Review this Code on an annual basis with the employee, provide the employee an opportunity to sign off on the Code, and sign off as the supervisor to demonstrate accountability for the review.

2. Principles:

Principles and value statements described in the Saskatchewan Public Service Commitment to Excellence are the core values of this Code:

Respect and Integrity:

1. Ensure and promote a professional work environment free from discrimination, harassment bullying and abuse;
2. If a conflict arises between the private interest and the official duties of an employee, the conflict will be resolved in favour of the public interest and in alignment with policy and authorities;
3. Use employee entitlements, benefits and privileges strictly for the intended purposes;
4. Take appropriate action when an employee acts contrary to the Code;
5. Create a work environment where the public, employees and clients are safe and will be treated with respect, dignity and courtesy.

Serving Citizens:

6. Ensure public confidence in the Ministry of Social Services;
7. Contribute to the good order, safety and security of the work environment;
8. Reduce all possible barriers to serve clients professionally, effectively and efficiently;

9. Make decisions in the best interests of the client;
10. Continuously strive for service improvement.

Excellence and Innovation:

11. Fulfill duties and obligations in a timely, diligent and appropriate manner;
12. Practice workplace safety and inform supervisor about any gaps or concerns in programs or policies that influence the health or safety of an employee, employer, work environment or public;
13. Look for innovative ways to improve workflow.

One Team:

14. Promote a One Team approach by cooperative work with other employees and other stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the Ministry of Social Services;
15. Respect cultural and religious beliefs and practices of all employees and clients;
16. Perform duties in a manner that minimizes risk to any employee, client or any other person(s) either directly or indirectly;
17. As a role model, present self with professionalism, integrity, impartiality and without prejudice in words and actions.

The core values shall be demonstrated, both on and off duty.

3. Employee Expectations:

3.1. Responsible Discharge of Duties:

Employees shall:

1. Not disclose or use confidential information according to the Oath and Declaration of Office, unless permitted by law and/or policy or required as a part of an employee's duties. If the situation is unclear, contact your supervisor for clarification;
2. Inform their supervisor if they experience or witness discrimination, harassment, bullying, or abuse of clients or other employees;
3. Not participate in activities that prevent employee from performance of duties or negatively influence work performance;
4. Not engage in any criminal activity nor associate, while off duty, with people known to be involved in criminal activity;
5. Immediately notify their supervisor, if an employee is charged with or knowingly under investigation for a criminal offence;
6. Inform their supervisor if they become the subject of criminal or possible criminal proceedings and cooperate with the investigation.
7. Provide accurate oral and/or written statements or entry in any official document or record pertaining to their official duties as an employee of the Ministry of Social Services;

8. Protect and, except for required work purposes, not remove any documents including, but not limited to, client files, reports, and others documents published, distributed or circulated by the employer;
9. Only engage in acceptable use of Information Technology and Social Media as outlined in government policy;
10. Accurately complete time sheets;
11. Avoid and prevent waste, loss or damage to any government property;
12. Report to their supervisor any violation of client rights or observations of physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse of clients;
13. Not perform employee duties under the influence of alcohol or drug intoxication.

3.2. Standards of Dress:

1. All Ministry employees should project a professional image;
2. Clothing should be appropriate to the duties and generally established standards and should be kept neat, clean and tidy;
3. Employees should wear a uniform where required;
4. Employees should wear/carry employee identification as required by policy;
5. A “business casual” standard is expected of employees working in offices or meeting with clients, stakeholders, community members, or colleagues outside the office. The principle behind this definition is that as professionals working for government, Ministry employees should always be dressed in a manner that is suitable to meeting the requirements of their positions (e.g., attendance at court, meetings with supervisor, manager or director, members of the public, and/or representatives from other organizations or Ministries);
6. “Business casual” clothing should be appropriate and in good taste; examples of inappropriate choices are provided below:
 - Stained, torn, or patched clothing
 - Gym wear including sweats and yoga pants
 - Shorts
 - T-shirts with controversial or offensive messages or logos
 - Attire that is unnecessarily revealing
 - Dirty, damaged, or worn footwear, or flip flops;
7. Ministry employees are also encouraged to choose appropriate and safe footwear;
8. While Casual Fridays allow a reprieve from the more formal attire requirements of the week, employees should also consider their schedule for that day (meetings, client contact, etc.) and adjust accordingly. Employees are expected to use their best judgment to determine what is appropriate and if in doubt, consult their supervisor;
9. Supervisors are expected to immediately address inappropriate dress of an employee.

4. Personal Relationships with Clients:

Employees shall:

1. Immediately inform their supervisor of a pre-existing personal relationship with a client;
2. Report in writing to their supervisor about any personal relationships with clients, and/or their families either on or off duty;
3. Ask to be removed from the 'work assignment' if a client is a personal friend or relative;
4. Report in writing to their supervisor when sexual advances or inappropriate requests are made to them by a client, or family member of client;
5. Report in writing to their supervisor when a client has been in the employee's home or there is an intent to invite a client into the employee's home;
6. Respect clients and their families both at work and after work hours;
7. Where questionable or inappropriate employee-client relationships are reported, the supervisor will review the information and provide the employee with appropriate guidance and document the information for review and audit purposes.

5. Conflict of Interest

Employees shall:

1. Avoid any activities which would benefit the employee or some other person(s) and would lead to the perception of conflict of interest;
2. Arrange their personal matters and avoid activities to prevent a conflict of or the perception of a conflict of interest;
3. Seek immediate assistance from their supervisor on ethical, legal or moral conduct. The supervisor will review the circumstances and report back to that employee.

Authorities

The intention of this Code is not to replace, but rather to supplement all other already existing Divisional directives, Ministry policies, Public Service Commission policies, and Collective Bargaining Agreements, as well as all federal and provincial laws.

The following guided the development of this Code of Professional Conduct:

- *The Saskatchewan Employment Act,*
- *The Health Information Protection Act,*
- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,*
- *Public Service Act,*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations,*
- *Government of Saskatchewan, Oath or Declaration of Office,*
- *Government of Saskatchewan, Information Technology Policy,*
- *Government of Saskatchewan, Anti-harassment Policy,*
- *Government of Saskatchewan, Conflict of Interest Policy,*
- *Government of Saskatchewan, Statement of Organizational Culture, Commitment to Excellence and Core Values,*
- *Government of Saskatchewan, Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Citizen Engagement.*

My Commitment to Upholding the Code of Professional Conduct

By signing this document I am confirming that I have read and agree to follow the Ministry of Social Services' Code of Professional Conduct and I understand the consequences of not adhering to it.

I understand that if I choose not to sign this document, I am still obligated to comply with it.

Employee Signature

(Please Print Name)

Date

By signing this document I am confirming that I have reviewed this Code of Professional Conduct with the employee identified above, as is my duty under the Code as the employer representative.

(Supervisor Signature)

(Please Print Name)

Date