

# SCOPE OF PRACTICE

THE NEW BRUNSWICK  
ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

*"Ensuring quality professional social work  
services to the population of New Brunswick."*



L'ASSOCIATION DES TRAVAILLEURS  
SOCIAUX DU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

*"Assurer à la population du Nouveau-Brunswick  
des services de travail social de qualité professionnelle."*

## **New Brunswick Association of Social Workers Social Work Scope of Practice**

### **Preamble**

The creation of a Scope of Practice document for the profession of social work in New Brunswick has long been a goal of the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (NBASW). Recent changes in the social environment as well as in the social work profession itself have confirmed the great value such a document can offer in promoting the profession as well as clarifying the fundamental values of social work and the many diverse roles held by social workers.

In order to develop this Scope of Practice document the NBASW formed an ad hoc committee made up of social workers practicing in diverse fields. The committee members included: Barbara Whitenect (Chairperson), Bruce MacPherson, Barbara Wilkins, Morel Caissie, Annette Bourque, and Chantal Bourassa. The committee was advised by NBASW Registrar Annie Couturier, and Executive Director Miguel LeBlanc and the document was drafted by Rachel Mills.

Prior to drafting the Scope of Practice document the committee chose to complete an environmental scan with the intent to review Scope of Practice documents produced by social work organizations in other provinces and countries as well as Scope of Practice documents produced by other professions. The committee learned that many organizations have not yet produced Scope of Practice documents, while others are currently in the developmental stages. The Scope of Practice documents that were retrieved were used as models and helped the committee in establishing what information should be included in this Scope of Practice document. As a result of this environmental scan and after significant discussion, the committee determined that the NBASW Scope of Practice document would serve as a promotional resource only and not as a regulatory tool.

After multiple revisions of the working document, the NBASW Scope of Practice document was presented and approved by the Board of Directors. The completed document was presented to NBASW members in June 2011 at the Annual General Meeting held in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The document was created with the intention of being a living document. As a result of the ever-changing environment in which social workers practice it is imperative that this Scope of Practice document be flexible in order to accommodate changes in the social context. It is therefore the recommendation of the Scope of Practice ad hoc committee that this document undergo a formal, comprehensive review at least every seven years.



## Introduction

The New Brunswick Association of Social Workers was founded in 1965 as a voluntary association and in 1988 became a regulatory body with the passing of the *New Brunswick Association of Social Workers Act* under the Department of Health and Community Services. The role of the Association is twofold, serving both as professional association and regulatory body for the profession of social work in New Brunswick. In its regulatory capacity, the Association is responsible for ensuring the protection of the public by requiring: that all persons practicing social work in the province are registered with the Association; that high standards of qualification, knowledge and skill are established and enforced; and by investigating complaints against its members. In its role of professional association, the NBASW works to promote the profession of social work in New Brunswick through education of its members and the public, as well as through advocacy and social action initiatives.

This document builds upon the *New Brunswick Association of Social Workers Act, 1988*, the *New Brunswick Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, 2007*, which includes the *Core Social Work Values and Principles*<sup>1</sup>, and the *Canadian Association of Social Workers Social Work Scope of Practice* in that it describes the primary values, ethics and practice knowledge unique to the social work profession.

Social work is a value-based profession whose primary focus is the importance of relationships and social connections. The profession believes in the inherent worth and dignity of all people, celebrates the value of human diversity and strives to help create a socially just world. The goal of this document is to clarify the scope of social work practice as well as promote the profession. It is intended for use in conjunction with the abovementioned documents.

While the term client is adopted in this document, the NBASW recognizes that other terms are also used when referring to the individuals, families, groups and communities with whom social workers work. The language used may depend on area of practice and/or organizational policy.

## Audience

This Scope of Practice document is designed to serve as a reference for Registered Social Workers in the province of New Brunswick, as well as social work students, schools of social work and potential employers of social workers in New Brunswick. This document will provide a concise overview of the scope of social work practice including a discussion of social work's unique approach which places social workers in the position of being the best suited professionals to fill a variety of roles and responsibilities within diverse government departments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

## Purpose

This provincial Scope of Practice document is intended to position the profession of social work within the larger social context. The profession's value base and unique understanding of, and approach to resolving social problems, differentiates social work from the other health and helping professions. Social work is founded upon humanitarian and egalitarian ideals, and is dedicated to helping individuals, families, groups and communities improve or enhance their social wellbeing. Social work is equally devoted to the attainment of social justice for all people through the creation of societal conditions that support and enhance social functioning. In pursuing these goals, social work adopts a person-in-environment approach to prevention and education, as well as problem identification, intervention and resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix



## Foundations of the Social Work Profession

Social work's person-in-environment approach is unique in that it focuses on the interaction between the person and their environment. The multiple relationships and connections that exist between people and the families, communities, organizations, social structures and natural world with which they interact are seen as interrelated and inseparable. These relationships are mutually influencing, meaning that the person both influences their environment and is in turn influenced by their environment. The focus of social work practice is on improving and enhancing these relationships and social connections.

By adopting this more fully encompassing understanding of the person, social workers are better able to identify the root causes of issues and determine appropriate areas for prevention and intervention. This calls for work at both the personal and structural level. Social workers are instrumental in their approach to working with clients; addressing and challenging the broader structural issues which may impede individuals, groups and communities from obtaining necessary resources and realizing their full potential. This focus reflects social work's suitability for working specifically with vulnerable populations, a tradition which the profession continues to value and embrace.

In accordance with professional ethics and values, social workers are committed to promoting egalitarian relationships as a means to improve and enhance social connections and further mutual understanding. This is accomplished by working with and for clients to enhance their abilities while remaining respectful of clients' right to self-determination. Social work examines the complexity of the situation and empowers clients to select an appropriate course of action to enhance the wellbeing of the person, community and/or society. The World Health Organization (W.H.O.) recognizes social well-being as an integral component of a person's overall state of health, complementary to, but different from, physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Together, these core concepts make up the foundation of social work practice and inform practice regardless of specific area of employment.

## Domains of Social Work Practice

Although the specific roles and responsibilities of social workers in New Brunswick vary according to field of practice and position being filled, their shared foundation and unique value base make social workers the most appropriately equipped professionals to provide services in a host of work settings. Social work roles range from work with individuals, groups and communities to policy and administration. All Canadian-educated social workers possess a generalist foundation of social work skills, abilities and knowledge upon which further learning and specialization is built. As its name implies, generalist social work encompasses work with diverse groups of people who may be facing a wide variety of challenges. Social workers possess a strong knowledge base consisting of information gleaned from a range of scientific theories which allows them to effectively identify and evaluate all potential options. This eclectic foundation creates flexible, adaptive and creative practitioners. This training makes social workers the ideal candidates for work within multidisciplinary teams and organizations. Their breadth of knowledge coupled with their belief in respect, self-determination, openness toward the perspectives of others and nonjudgmental attitudes allow social workers to excel in roles requiring team building, collaboration and leadership. In evaluating the appropriateness of any course of action, social workers make use of critical thinking skills in assessing the merits and potential areas for improvement associated with each option. Social workers also use reflective practice, which requires the analysis and evaluation of decisions as a means of continued learning, growth and professional development. These generalist skills provide the base upon which all further social work knowledge is built



## Looking Forward

Since its inception, the social work profession has been dedicated to working toward the improvement and enhancement of individual and societal wellbeing in its many forms. As societal conditions have changed and new ideas and techniques have been developed and shared, social work has evolved in order to best meet the needs of clients and society at large. While the profession celebrates these developments, it is equally proud of the continued applicability of its unique perspective of the person and society. The positive effects of social work's distinct approach continue to be seen and felt throughout our communities. Looking forward, the NBASW is confident in the ability of the profession to continue to build on these foundations and in so doing, work toward the betterment of our communities, province, country and world.



## References

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# Core Social Work Values and Principles<sup>2</sup>

Social workers in the province of New Brunswick abide by a provincial Code of Ethics, which governs their professional practice and helps shape the common goals and vision held by the social work profession. The core values presented below represent the commitment made by all New Brunswick social workers to the people of this province. These values are the foundation of the social work profession and have therefore been included in this Scope of Practice document. All social workers in the province are held accountable to these values, which ensure the respectful, nonjudgmental treatment of all people who receive social work services. By upholding these values social workers ensure quality professional social work services to the population of New Brunswick and affirm their commitment to the creation of a socially just world.

Social workers uphold the following core social work values:

**Value 1: Respect for Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons**

**Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice**

**Value 3: Service to Humanity**

**Value 4: Integrity of Professional Practice**

**Value 5: Confidentiality in Professional Practice**

**Value 6: Competence in Professional Practice**

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<sup>2</sup> New Brunswick Association of Social Workers. (2007). *New Brunswick Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics*. Fredericton, NB: Author.

