

# PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

## Jackson State University

### Professional Standards for Social Work Students

Because of the nature of professional social work practice, students in the School of Social Work are expected to adhere to the following standards which are linked to their ability to become effective social work professionals. Students in the School of Social Work are expected to:

1. Maintain an acceptable total institutional GPA (3.0 in the graduate programs and 2.75 in the undergraduate program).
2. Successfully complete prerequisites for social work courses.
3. Demonstrate honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications; doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.\*
4. Demonstrate behavior that is consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and other social work Codes of Ethics, as applicable, the University's Student Handbook and established laws both on and off campus.
5. Demonstrate behavior that is consistent with professional standards of care in agency settings.
6. Demonstrate responsibility in classroom obligations, i.e., consistent and timely attendance in class and field, complete assignments within time frames given, and appropriate conduct in the classroom.
7. Demonstrate respectful attitudes, appropriate behavior, and effective interpersonal skills in interactions with peers, faculty, University and agency staff, and clients.
8. Refrain from attending class or agency settings under the influence of alcohol or other mood altering substances, except where medication is deemed necessary by a licensed physician.
9. Exhibit behavior that demonstrates respect for and avoids discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of age, class, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, and/or sexual orientation.
10. Demonstrate clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries. Refrain from sexually harassing others; making verbal or physical threats; becoming involved in sexual relations with clients, supervisors, or faculty; abusing others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways; or participating in dual relationships where conflicts of interest may exist.\*

I hereby agree to abide by the standards outlined in this document. I understand that adherence to these standards may be required for continuation in the School of Social Work at Jackson State University. Disciplinary sanctions for violations of these standards will be considered in light of all the available information on a case-by-case basis.

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Signature of Student

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Date

\*The School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin, *MSSW Handbook*, 2006, pp. 46-47.

**School of Social Work  
College of Public Service  
Jackson State University**

**Policy and Procedures  
for Professional Standards for Social Work Students**

**Goal:**

To ensure that Jackson State University School of Social Work students maintain high standards of professional and ethical behavior consistent with the expectations of the social work profession.

**Rationale:**

The process of becoming a social work professional involves internalizing and complying with the values and ethics of the profession. Problems or complaints related to students' inability to proceed satisfactorily in the professionalization process must be reviewed. This review is necessary to determine if a student will be permitted to continue in the social work education program.

**Behaviors Warranting Review:**

Failure to meet any of the *Professional Standards for Social Work Students* may result in review of academic and professional misconduct.

**Disciplinary Sanctions:**

The following are the disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed for academic and professional misconduct:

- a. warning
- b. reprimand
- c. establish formal conditions for continuance in program including restitution
- d. removal of student from course(s) in progress
- e. disciplinary probation from the program
- f. suspension from the program
- g. expulsion from the program

In addition to violations of professional social work standards, students who violate University policies may also be referred to appropriate University officials for further action.

## **Professional Standards Committee:**

### **Role**

This committee is the governing body organized to make decisions regarding student disciplinary actions within the School of Social Work. The decision is determined by majority vote of the committee. The meeting of this body will only be open to committee members and a support person (a Jackson State University faculty member or professional staff person) invited by the student in question. While the support person does not vote, he or she may be an attorney when any allegations could imply criminal misconduct. This policy does not diminish any rights otherwise granted the student, such as a right to the Academic Grievance Procedure or other processes outlined in the JSU Student Handbook.

### **Membership**

The Committee is composed of the following members:

- A faculty representative and alternate from each program level will be elected at the opening faculty/professional staff meeting;
- Faculty advisor, when available;
- A member of the School of Social Work Advisory Council; and
- The Associate Dean will appoint an additional social work faculty member to serve as chair of the committee, who will only vote in the event of a tie.

### **Procedures:**

When it is alleged or appears that a student's behavior conflicts with the *Professional Standards for Social Work Students*, the following procedures will be followed:

#### **1. DETERMINATION BY THE INVESTIGATION THAT NO DISCIPLINARY SANCTION IS WARRANTED**

If as a result of a discussion with the student the investigating professional determines that misconduct did not occur, the matter will be considered resolved without further action. However, the date and content of the meeting with the student will be documented and retained in the student's file.

#### **2. CONFERENCE WITH STUDENT**

When the classroom instructor, faculty advisor, practicum liaison, or other professional staff concludes that an alleged violation exists, the investigating professional shall promptly discuss the matter with the student. The purpose of this discussion is to permit the investigating professional to review with the student the basis for his/her belief that the student engaged in misconduct, and to afford the student the opportunity to respond. If the student does not

respond to the request to discuss the matter, the investigating professional documents the concern and notifies the appropriate Program Director in writing with copies to the Associate Dean and the student.

If the problem arises in field, the practicum liaison should notify the Director of Field Education and the appropriate Program Director in writing. The investigating professional, the Program Director and Director of Field Education (when appropriate), will assess the nature of the concerns and decide if it is necessary to conduct a more comprehensive review. This review will involve the student meeting with the investigating professional, the Program Director, and the Director of Field Education. If the student does not participate in the review, recommendations for sanctions are determined by the investigating professional, the appropriate Program Director and the Director of Field Education. The concerns and recommendations are documented and forwarded to the Associate Dean with a copy forwarded to the student.

### **3. PROCESS FOLLOWING DETERMINATION THAT MISCONDUCT OCCURRED**

- a. If, as a result of the discussion with the student, the investigating professional determines that misconduct did occur, she/he shall prepare a written report that should contain the following:
  1. A description of the misconduct;
  2. Notice of the student's rights to further discuss allegations with the Program Director; and
  3. Notice of the student's right to a hearing before the Professional Standards Committee if concerns warrant a formal investigation.
- b. The written report shall be delivered personally to the student or mailed with a return receipt to his or her current address. A copy of the written report should be given to the appropriate Program Director, Director of Field Education (when applicable), and Associate Dean.
- c. The appropriate Program Director will gather sufficient information about the misconduct and determine if the Professional Standards Committee should be notified. If the concerns require further action, the Professional Standards Committee will be notified in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint of allegation(s) against the student.
- d. The Professional Standards Committee will notify the student within five working days of receiving the allegation. The student will be informed of the day, time, and place of the hearing.
- e. A student who is notified of the hearing has the right to bring a Jackson State University faculty or professional staff member for support. The

student may bring an attorney when the allegations imply any criminal misconduct.

- f. The Chair of the Professional Standards Committee will notify the student in writing of the committee's decision with copies to the appropriate Program Director, Associate Dean, and Director of Field Education (when applicable).

#### **4. Appeal Process:**

- a. A student wishing to appeal the committee's decision will submit the request, in writing, to the Associate Dean within five (5) working days of the committee's decision.
- b. The Associate Dean will review all of the information collected and may meet with the student before making a decision within ten (10) working days.
- c. The Associate Dean's decision is final, although it may be set aside after appeal to the Dean of the College of Public Service.
- d. Further appeals may be made to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and to the President of Jackson State University.

#### **5. Additional Safeguards:**

A student will not be dismissed, suspended, or suffer expulsion without being afforded an opportunity to be heard and without the concurrence of the Vice President of Student Life or Dean of Students and the ultimate approval of the Dean of the College of Public Service, the Vice President of Academic Affairs or Jackson State University's President. If an interim suspension is deemed appropriate during an investigation, this policy shall not be construed to conflict with other JSU policies governing dismissals, suspensions, or expulsions.