

# CODE OF ETHICS

## HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

## Working with clients

We expect our workers<sup>1</sup> to meet a standard of ethical behaviour, formalised through our Client Code of Ethics. In the case of community work, ethical behaviour is essential because practitioners often work with the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of people in our society. This practitioner-client relationship is defined as the relationship between a community worker and an individual, group, or community receiving services from that worker.

Our Client Code of Ethics sets the foundation for exemplary community work and is the benchmark for all our practitioners. We define a community work practitioner as a person who holds a relevant qualification and has the values, knowledge and skills to work independently or with others in an agency or program intended to facilitate or ensure social inclusion. The community worker is therefore expected to acknowledge and respect the worth of all individuals, regardless of race, religion, culture, age, gender, sexual and gender diversity, and other individual differences.

Conduct opposed to the full recognition of human dignity and individual rights within the community worker's professional practice will be considered improper and unacceptable.

### Principles underlying the Client Code of Ethics

1. Every human being, regardless of race, religion, culture, gender, age, sexual and gender diversity, or other individual differences has a right to maximise his or her potential providing it does not infringe upon the rights of others.
2. Social inclusion is a human right. Every individual has an active role to play in society and has the expectation of full social, educational and economic participation. An inclusive society is based on the fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity. Every society has an obligation to provide for (and deal equitably with) all its members and to make extra provision for those who are excluded or disadvantaged.
3. Every person is legally protected against discrimination based on age, sex, culture, race and disability and their universal human rights are inviolable.
4. We recognise Australia's first people and their right to self-determination.

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<sup>1</sup> Worker is defined as: Director, employee, volunteer, consultant, contractor, subcontractor, outworker, apprentice, trainee and student.

## Responsibility to clients

The community worker:

- Will discuss and determine with the client or client group the exact nature of the relationship, the role of the community worker and the expectations of the client.
- Will regard all information concerning clients as confidential except:
  - Referrals are made with the permission of the client;
  - Other professional consultation, opinion or advice is sought, with the permission of the client;
  - failure to disclose information would breach the terms of the community worker's employment contract (the client will be notified in these instances); or
  - failure to disclose information would contravene mandatory reporting requirements or other legal obligations.
- Has an obligation to treat clients with dignity and to safeguard, promote and acknowledge the capacity for self-determination.
- In exercising certain powers and using information, is accountable to the client to ensure that:
  - he or she is fully informed of their rights;
  - he or she has choices; and
  - he or she can access information about himself or herself.
- Will continue to improve his or her own skills and knowledge for the benefit of the client.
- Will establish and maintain professional boundaries with clients at all times and not form personal relationships that compromise the primary practitioner-client relationship.

## Responsibility to employers

The community worker is expected to:

- Carry out the duties and responsibilities of the role (as outlined in the terms of employment or engagement) by adhering to the stated aims, policies and procedures of the employing body.
- Achieve the aims of the employing organisation without denying clients their rights.
- Advise the employer immediately when an individual or the organisation contravenes the Client Code of Ethics.
- Maintain a professional relationship with clients at all times.
- and disclose any out-of-hours contact or social media contact
- Act responsibly in the expenditure of Government and organisational funding.

## Responsibility to colleagues

The community worker is expected to:

- Share professional knowledge and insights with colleagues.
- Respect the skills, knowledge and experience of colleagues, including volunteers.
- Use his or her skills and knowledge to enhance the practical work and experience of students.
- Discuss any unethical behaviour that may have been observed in a colleague directly with their colleague, unless to do so would pose a risk to a client or the practitioner.
- Acknowledge and observe the legal rights and protections of colleagues, including (but not restricted to) confidentiality and privacy, workplace health and safety, and anti-discrimination legislation.

## Protecting the reputation of the profession

The community worker will:

- Maintain the standards required for exemplary and contemporary practice by committing to ongoing education and training.
- Address any behaviour in a colleague or an employer that is:
  - incompatible with this Code;
  - impinges on the rights of clients and their families; or
  - contravenes the law.

This must be done in a timely manner and through an appropriate channel.

- Seek advice when unsure of a course of action and make informed decisions.
- Participate in the complaints process if a client (or other person) lodges a complaint about a worker or the organisation.
- Do not make comment on any part of the organisation's operations (including individual members of the organisation) to media (including social media).
- Respect the rights and legal protections of others.
- Act responsibly in the expenditure of Government and organisational funding.
- Disclose any improper relationship between a colleague and a client.
- Meet the expectations of this Code of Ethics at all times.

## Breach of Code of Ethics

When a breach of this Code of Ethics is alleged, Accordwest will investigate, make decisions and act in accord with the *Underperformance & Misconduct Policy & Procedures* and other relevant Accordwest policies.

## Related Policies

Workers are expected to comply with all Accordwest policies and procedures, including (but not limited to):

- Conflict of Interest Policy & Procedures
- Fraud Control & Corruption Prevention Policy & Procedures
- Gifts & Benefits Policy & Procedures
- Grievance Resolution Policy & Procedures
- Media & Social Media Policy & Procedures
- Underperformance and Misconduct Policy & Procedures
- Whistle-blower Policy & Procedures



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**Office hours**  
9am-5pm Monday to Friday

If you are deaf, or have difficulty speaking or hearing English,  
we are committed to helping you to access our services.

Accordwest acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and  
traditional custodians of the land we live, learn and work.



Agencies for South West Accommodation (ASWA) Inc. trading as Accordwest  
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