21 NCAC 63 .0504 RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

(a) Social workers shall not misuse their professional relationships sexually, financially, or for any other personal advantage. They shall maintain this standard of conduct toward all who are professionally associated with them such as clients, colleagues, supervisees, employees, students, and research participants.

(b) Social workers shall inform clients of the extent and nature of services available to them as well as the limits, rights, opportunities, and obligations associated with service that might affect the client's decision to enter into or continue the relationship.

(c) Social workers shall obtain consent to participate in social work intervention from all clients or their legally authorized representative except when judicial orders require intervention to ensure the client's and community's safety and protection.

(d) Social workers shall terminate a professional relationship with a client when it is determined by the social worker, the client, or any entity with legal authority over client's care that the client is not likely to benefit from continued services or the services are no longer needed. The social worker who anticipates the termination or interruption of services shall give prior notice to the client as soon as possible. The social worker shall provide referrals as needed or upon the request of the client. A social worker shall not terminate a professional relationship for the purpose of beginning a personal or business relationship with a client.

(e) Social workers shall respect the integrity, protect the welfare, and maximize self-determination of clients they serve, in accordance with the level and type of care that a competent social worker would provide under the circumstances. They shall avoid entering treatment relationships in which their professional judgment will be compromised by the prior association with or knowledge of a client. Examples include treatment of one's family members, friends, associates, employees, or others whose welfare could be jeopardized by such a dual relationship.

(f) Social workers shall not initiate, and shall avoid personal relationships or dual roles with current clients, or with any former clients whose feelings toward the social worker may be derived from or influenced by the former professional relationship. When a social worker may not avoid a personal relationship with a client or former client, the social worker shall take appropriate precautions, such as documented discussion with the client or former client about the relationship, consultation, or supervision to ensure that the social worker's objectivity and professional judgment are not impaired. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers shall set boundaries that take into consideration the client's age, race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, national origin, and medical diagnoses.

(g) Social workers shall not engage in sexual activities with clients or former clients. A social worker shall not engage in or request electronic, verbal, or physical sexual contact with a client or former client under any circumstances. For the purposes of this Rule, "sexual contact" means behavior relating to sexual activities including intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing.

(h) Social workers shall act in accordance with G.S. 90B and these Rules in regard to relationships with clients or former clients. A client's or former client's initiation of a personal, sexual, or business relationship shall not be a defense by the social worker for failing to act in accordance with G.S. 90B and these Rules.

History Note: *Authority G.S. 90B-6; 90B-11;*
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