

2015

# Evolving Ethical Standards in the Digital Age

Frederic G. Reamer

*Rhode Island College*, [freamer@ric.edu](mailto:freamer@ric.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/facultypublications>

 Part of the [Health Services Research Commons](#), [Policy History, Theory, and Methods Commons](#), [Psychology Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

## Citation

Reamer, Frederic G., "Evolving Ethical Standards in the Digital Age" (2015). *Faculty Publications*. 389.  
<https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/facultypublications/389>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ RIC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RIC. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@ric.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@ric.edu).



## Evolving Ethical Standards in the Digital Age

Frederic G. Reamer

School of Social Work, Rhode Island College, Providence, Rhode Island, United States of America

### ABSTRACT

Ethical standards in social work have matured significantly since the formal inauguration of the profession in the late 19th century. This article traces the global evolution of ethical standards in social work, focusing especially on current challenges in the digital age. The author discusses changes over time in social workers' understanding of ethical issues and development of conceptual frameworks and protocols for managing them. Social workers' increasing use of digital technology poses novel and unprecedented ethical challenges pertaining to privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries, conflicts of interest, documentation, client abandonment, and professionalism, among others. The article outlines emerging ethical standards designed to help social workers manage ethical challenges in the digital age.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 4 September 2015  
Accepted 24 December 2015

### KEYWORDS

Digital Technology; Ethics;  
Technology; Values

The global evolution of ethical standards in social work is one of the most remarkable developments in the profession's history. Since social work's formal inauguration in the late 19th century, the profession has moved from a relatively simplistic understanding of professional ethics to a mature grasp of a wide range of challenging ethical dilemmas, many of which social work's earliest practitioners could not have imagined. Some of the ethical issues of concern to 19th and early 20th century social workers continue to challenge contemporary practitioners, especially dilemmas related to clients' right to privacy, client self-determination, professional paternalism, and the allocation of limited resources. But many current and emerging ethical dilemmas, especially those related to social workers' use of digital technology, were not possible during the profession's earliest years.

Clearly, ethical dilemmas and standards in social work do not stand still. They have always been, and continue to be, a work in progress due to shifts over time in individuals' and societal challenges, models and methods of social work practice, social workers' increasingly rich understanding of ethical issues, technological developments, and broader trends in the professional ethics field. To keep pace with trends in professional ethics and ensure continuing development of ethics-related guidelines, social workers must be familiar with the evolution of ethical standards in the profession, the ebb and flow of ethical issues during the course of social work's history, and novel ethical challenges that warrant explicit and sustained attention.

## A Brief Travelogue: The Evolution of Social Work Ethics

Social workers' thinking about values and ethics has evolved during five major periods (Reamer, 2013a). The first stage began in the late 19th century, when social work was formally introduced as a profession. During this period social work was much more concerned about the morality of the client than about the morality or ethics of the profession or its practitioners. Over time, particularly during the early 20th century, social workers' attitudes began to shift from concern about the morality, or immorality, of the poor to the need for significant social reform designed to ameliorate a wide range of structural social problems, for example, those related to poverty, unemployment, homelessness, health care, sanitation, and education.

During the second stage, concern about the morality of the client began to recede. During the next several decades, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, a group of social workers engaged in ambitious attempts to develop consensus about the profession's core values (Biestek, 1957; Gordon, 1962; Keith-Lucas, 1977; Levy, 1976; McDermott, 1975; Pumphrey, 1959; Teicher, 1967; Timms, 1983; Younghusband, 1967). It was during this period that relatively brief social work codes of ethics began to emerge in several nations, including Australia, Canada, England, and the United States (US). In addition to exploring the core values of social work, some of the literature during this period also reflected practitioners' efforts to examine and clarify the relationship between their own personal values and the profession's values (e.g., Hardiman, 1975; Varley, 1968). Not surprisingly, given the widespread social challenges and turbulence in the 1960s and 1970s, social workers engaged in complex debates about values concerning the core constructs of social justice and basic human rights (including women's rights, prisoners' rights, psychiatric patients' rights, and welfare rights, among others).

In the next stage, social work underwent another significant transition in its concern about values and ethical issues (Banks, 2012; Barsky, 2009; Beckett & Maynard, 2005; Dolgoff, Harrington, & Loewenberg, 2012; Gray & Webb, 2010; Hugman, 2013; McAuliffe, 2014; Reamer, 2012a). During the mid and late 1970s a number of professions (psychology, psychiatry, social work, medicine, law, business, journalism, engineering, nursing, criminal justice, and others) began to explore ethical issues in depth (Callahan & Bok, 1980). During this period the new academic field of applied and professional ethics (also known as practical ethics) emerged. Led especially by developments in the bioethics field, various professions engaged in ambitious attempts to identify key ethical dilemmas, formulate ethical decision-making protocols, and develop guidelines for ethics consultation. During this period the US National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Encyclopedia of Social Work* included, for the first time, an article directly exploring the relevance of philosophical and ethical concepts to social work ethics (Reamer, 1987). Unlike social work's earlier literature, publications on social work ethics in the 1980s began to explore the relevance of moral philosophy and ethical theory (e.g., theories of metaethics, normative ethics, deontology, and utilitarianism) to ethical dilemmas faced by practitioners.

More recently, social workers have explored the risk-management implications of ethical issues in the profession, especially in the US. This stage is characterised by the significant expansion of ethical standards to guide practitioners' conduct and by increased knowledge concerning ethics-related negligence and professional malpractice. More

specifically, this period includes the development of more detailed codes of ethics for the profession, the emergence of a significant body of literature focusing on ethics-related malpractice and liability risks, and practical risk-management strategies designed to protect clients and prevent ethics complaints and ethics-related lawsuits (Barker & Branson, 2000; Houston-Vega, Nuehring, & Daguio, 1997; Reamer, 2006, 2015a).

During these various periods in the evolution of social work ethics, global efforts became much more ambitious. Internationally many professional social work associations have developed comprehensive codes of ethics (Banks, 2012; Congress, 2013; Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). These codes typically carry no legal or formal regulatory authority, although the associations may insist on compliance with the code as a condition of membership. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) publicises ethics codes from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom. IFSW first developed its *Statement of Ethical Principles* in 1994, in cooperation with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

Also, in some nations, social work ethics codes have been developed or adopted by governmental licensing boards or regulatory bodies that authorise social work practice. Some governmental licensing boards and regulatory bodies develop their own ethical standards, some formally adopt portions of codes developed by prominent voluntary social work associations, and some formally adopt entire codes developed by voluntary social work associations. For example, in the US state of Rhode Island, the *Rules and Regulations for Licensing Clinical Social Workers and Independent Clinical Social Workers* states that “All persons licensed under the provisions of the Act and these rules and regulations shall adhere to the current standards of practice and to the National Association of Social Workers’ *Code of Ethics* ...” (Rhode Island Department of Health, 1996, Section 2.1.2). These ethical standards become legally enforceable once they are incorporated into licensing statutes or regulations. Some nations with large numbers of social workers, such as Australia, do not yet regulate the profession.

The most recent, and current, stage in the evolution of social work ethics concerns the ethical implications of social workers’ use of digital technology to provide information to the public, communicate with clients, and deliver services. The profession is just beginning to identify pertinent ethical issues and explore them in depth. Digital technology has created unprecedented options for the delivery of social work services. Increasing numbers of social workers are relying fully or partially on various forms of digital and other technological options to educate the public and serve people who are struggling with a wide range of challenges. Social work is no longer limited to office-based, in-person meetings with clients. For example, large numbers of clinical social workers now use video counselling, email chat, social networking websites, text messaging, avatar-based websites, self-guided web-based interventions, smartphone apps, and other technology to provide services to clients, some of whom they never meet in person (Bryant, Garnham, Tedmanson, & Diamondi, 2015; Chester & Glass, 2006; Gupta & Agrawal, 2012; Kanani & Regehr, 2003; Lamendola, 2010; Menon & Miller-Cribbs, 2002; Reamer, 2012a, 2013a; Zur, 2012). Some social workers are using digital technology informally as a supplement to traditional face-to-face service delivery. Other practitioners have created formal “distance” clinical practices that depend entirely on digital technology.

In addition, social workers' routine use of digital technology—especially social media and text messaging—in their daily lives has created new ways to interact and communicate with clients and provide information to the general public. These common forms of modern communication also raise ethical issues, even when social workers do not use digital technology—such as online therapy or video counselling—to provide services *per se*. Further, some social workers receive formal supervision remotely from supervisors they never meet in person. Also, social workers can earn all or significant portions of their professional degrees online (Reamer, 2013c). All of these developments raise new and unprecedented ethical issues for the social work profession.

### **Ethical Challenges in the Digital Age**

In light of these compelling developments, it is essential that social workers explore the ethical implications of their use of digital technology to inform the public and communicate with and serve clients in relatively new ways. Social workers' use of digital technology poses novel challenges associated with traditional ethics concepts related to privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries, conflicts of interest, documentation, client abandonment, and professionalism, among others. It is clear that this technology is, and will continue to be, a significant component of the contemporary social work landscape. There is considerable debate among social workers about the appropriateness of practitioners' use of digital technology. In light of these diverse perspectives, it is important for practitioners to be aware of pertinent ethical challenges and develop rigorous ethical guidelines to enhance protection of clients and minimise the likelihood of ethics-related litigation and licensing board complaints.

Globally, a number of professional associations, licensing boards, and other regulatory bodies are now immersed in efforts to identify ethical issues and develop reasonable, practical guidelines for practitioners. Recent research and developments related to practitioners' use of technology suggest that the most prominent ethical challenges concern several core, traditional social work ethics concepts pertaining to the delivery of clinical services using digital technology: informed consent; privacy and confidentiality; boundaries, dual relationships, and conflicts of interest; practitioner competence; records and documentation; and collegial relationships (ASWB, 2015; Berg, Appelbaum, Lidz, & Parker, 2001; Campbell & Gordon, 2003; Grimm, Ziccardi, & Major, 2009; Hu, Chen, & Hou, 2010; Mattison, 2012; Midkiff & Wyatt, 2008; Morgan & Polowy, 2011; Reamer, 2013b, 2015b; Recupero & Rainey, 2005; Sidell, 2011; Zur, 2007).

### **Informed Consent**

Social workers respect clients' right to consent to services (Berg et al., 2001; Reamer, 2013b). The advent of distance counselling and other remote social services delivered electronically has enhanced social workers' ethical duty to ensure that clients fully understand the nature of these services and their potential benefits and risks. Obtaining clients' truly informed consent can be especially difficult when social workers never meet some clients in person or have the opportunity to speak with clients about informed consent. Special challenges arise when minors contact social workers and request distance or remote services, particularly when social workers offer services funded by contracts or grants and do

not require payment from minor clients' parents or insurance companies; laws around the world vary considerably regarding minors' right to obtain services from social workers without parental knowledge or consent (Madden, 2003; Reamer, 2015a).

Although laws and regulations vary in interpretations and applications of informed consent standards, in general professionals agree that a client must be mentally capable of providing consent. Clearly, some clients (e.g., young children and individuals who suffer from serious mental illness or dementia) are unable to comprehend the consent procedure. However, other clients may be only temporarily unable to consent, such as individuals who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time consent is sought or who experience transient psychotic symptoms. In general, social workers are expected to assess clients' ability to reason and make informed choices about their receipt of distance and remote services, comprehend relevant facts and retain this information, appreciate current circumstances, and communicate wishes. Such assessment can be especially challenging when social workers interact with clients only electronically, do not meet with them in person, and have difficulty confirming their identity and age (Reamer, 2013b, 2015b; Recupero & Rainey, 2005).

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Social workers have always understood their obligation to protect client privacy and confidentiality and to be familiar with exceptions (e.g., when mandatory reporting laws concerning abuse and neglect require disclosure of information without client consent or when laws or court orders require disclosure without client consent during legal proceedings). However, the rapid emergence of digital technology and other electronic media used by social workers to deliver services has added a new layer of challenging privacy and confidentiality issues. Fortunately, sophisticated encryption technology can protect client confidentiality very effectively; many professionals believe that encryption offers significantly more protection than do traditional paper documents (Hu et al., 2010). Social workers who offer video counselling services must recognise that they have much less control over confidentiality than when they provide traditional office-based services. For example, a client receiving video counselling services may invite a family member or acquaintance to sit in on a session—outside of camera range—without the social worker's knowledge or consent. Encryption of social work services provided online is more challenging with some forms of technology than others. With regard to Skype, for example, NASW attorneys reviewed relevant research and legal guidelines and concluded that “assuring that clients' confidential communications via Skype will be adequately protected is a difficult and uncertain task” (Morgan & Polowy, 2011, p. 1). Social workers cannot assume that Internet sites and electronic tools they use are necessarily encrypted.

### **Boundaries, Dual Relationships, and Conflicts of Interest**

Throughout the profession's history, social workers have understood their duty to avoid conflicts of interest that may harm clients (Brownlee, 1996; Campbell & Gordon, 2003; Daley & Doughty, 2006; Reamer, 2012b; Zur, 2007). Social workers' use of digital technology has introduced new and complicated boundary issues. Many social workers receive requests from current and former clients asking to be social networking “friends” or

contacts. Electronic contact with clients and former clients on social networking sites can lead to boundary confusion and compromise clients' privacy and confidentiality. Electronic message exchanges between social workers and clients that occur outside of normal business hours, especially if the social worker uses a personal social networking site or email address, may confuse practitioner–client boundaries.

Also, clients who are able to access social workers' social networking sites may learn a great deal of personal information about their social worker (such as information about the social worker's personal and family relationships, social and religious activities, and political views); this may introduce complex boundary challenges in the professional–client relationship. In addition, social workers who choose not to accept a client's "friend" request on a social networking site may inadvertently cause the client to feel a deep sense of rejection. Clients' postings on their own social networking sites may also lead to inadvertent or harmful disclosure of private and confidential details, for example, sensitive information shared by others in group therapy sessions. Further, newer forms of distance counselling may introduce conflicts of interest that were previously unknown in social work. For example, some video counselling sites are offered free to social workers; the websites' sponsors pay for its development and maintenance. In return, sponsors post electronic links on the counselling screen that take users to their websites that include information about their products and services. Clients may believe that their social workers endorse these products and services or benefit from sales.

### **Practitioner Competence**

Social workers have always recognised the importance of competent practice, whether they are clinicians, caseworkers, community organisers, advocates, administrators, policy makers, or researchers. The relatively recent emergence of digital clinical tools and other technologically-driven options has added a new set of essential competencies for social workers who choose to incorporate them in their work. Use of this technology requires a great deal of technical mastery in addition to awareness of, and compliance with, rapidly developing standards of care and ethical guidelines.

### **Records and Documentation**

Maintaining high-quality records is essential in social work, especially when social workers provide clinical and casework services. Records are necessary for thorough client assessment; planning and delivering services; being accountable to clients, insurers, agencies, other providers, courts, and utilisation review organisations; ensuring continuity and coordination of services; providing quality supervision; and evaluating services (Sidell, 2011). Social workers' use of online and other electronic services poses significant documentation challenges. Social workers must develop strict protocols to ensure that professionally-relevant email, text, social networking (e.g., Facebook), and telephone exchanges are documented properly in case records. These are new expectations that are not reflected in social work's long-standing training and literature on documentation (Sidell, 2011). For example, social workers must develop documentation procedures that meet social work's standards of care and comply with laws and regulations concerning the protection of electronically-stored information.

## Collegial Relationships

Social workers have long understood their ethical duty to treat colleagues with respect. Traditionally, collegial interactions among social workers have occurred in person, in the context of agency-based meetings, and by telephone. However, increasingly collegial interactions are occurring online and in other remote forms, thus requiring new protocols and guidelines governing these interactions.

## Emerging Ethical Standards in the Digital Age

Social work associations and organisations around the globe are beginning to develop new ethical standards pertaining to practitioners' use of digital technology. The most ambitious effort to date was undertaken recently by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), an organisation comprised of the social work regulatory agencies in all 50 US states, the District of Columbia, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and all Canadian provinces. ASWB develops model licensing and regulatory acts, develops licensing examinations, facilitates continuing education, and maintains a centralised repository of social work disciplinary data. In 2013 the ASWB board of directors appointed an international task force (chaired by this author) to develop model regulatory standards for technology and social work practice. ASWB embarked on development of new technology standards in response to demand from regulatory bodies around the world for guidance concerning social workers' evolving use of technology in practice. The ASWB task force included representatives from prominent social work practice, regulation, and education organisations. Task force members hailed from Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Wales, and the United States. The first organising virtual meeting of the ASWB task force was held in July, 2013, followed by additional virtual meetings through to August, 2014. Following a public comment period and revisions, the ASWB board of directors adopted the final version of these state-of-the-art standards in January, 2015 (ASWB International Technology Task Force, 2015).

The ASWB technology task force recognised that social work practice and related governmental regulatory standards vary significantly internationally. Further, the group understood that ethical standards and norms vary among diverse cultural groups served by social workers. The task force sought to develop standards for social workers who use digital or other electronic technology to provide information to the public, deliver services to clients, communicate with and about clients, manage confidential information and case records, and store and access information about clients. The group developed standards addressing seven key concepts that are central to social work ethics: practitioner competence; informed consent; privacy and confidentiality; boundaries, dual relationships, and conflicts of interest; records and documentation; collegial relationships; and social work practice across jurisdictional boundaries.

The ASWB standards state that social workers who choose to provide electronic social work services (which include the use of the Internet, social media, online chat, text, email, smartphones, landline telephones, and video technology) must engage in appropriate education, study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in the use of this technology to provide social work services. Social workers must be aware of unique communication challenges associated with electronic social work services

(e.g., the absence of visual cues and limitations associated with the use of online written communication). Practitioners are expected to establish reasonable strategies to address these issues (e.g., using interpretive gestures and emotions, enhancing clients' ability to communicate online or with other technology). Social workers are expected to assess whether clients' needs can be met using electronic social work services and, when necessary, refer clients to another professional.

In addition, social workers must keep current with evolving licensing laws and regulations regarding provision of electronic services across jurisdictional lines. Some jurisdictions' laws prohibit social workers from providing distance services that are received in other jurisdictions in which the social workers do not hold a license. Practitioners must also develop protocols for collegial consultation when they provide distance services. In general, clinical social workers must keep current with research developments and evolving practice standards related to distance services.

Technology creates new expectations regarding social workers' efforts to obtain clients' informed consent. Under the ASWB standards, social workers are expected to develop policies and inform clients about the nature of available services, potential benefits and risks, alternative ways of receiving assistance, fees, involvement of and sharing information with third parties, and limits of confidentiality. Examples of potential benefits are immediate access to services, convenient scheduling, privacy, and reduced or eliminated transportation barriers. Examples of potential risks are the lack of visual and auditory cues, delayed responses, the need for crisis services, confidentiality breaches, and technological failures. In addition, social workers are expected to develop and disclose to clients policies regarding the use of Internet-based search engines to gather information about clients.

Electronic communication with and about clients has introduced novel privacy and confidentiality challenges. To practice ethically, clinical social workers who use digital and other technology to provide distance services must develop privacy and confidentiality protocols that include several key elements. Clinicians must review and adhere to relevant laws and regulations pertaining to the confidentiality of health records and exceptions to clients' right to confidentiality to protect clients and third parties from harm. They must use sound judgement about conducting online searches to gather information about clients (e.g., limiting Google or Facebook searches to emergency circumstances) without clients' knowledge or consent; some clients may feel overexposed and violated by clinicians' attempts to conduct online searches for information about them. Also, social workers must develop confidentiality agreements when conducting group treatment online. In addition, practitioners must know how to respond to subpoenas and court orders to release what lawyers refer to as electronically-stored information (ESI); legal and ethical standards are evolving regarding third parties' right to electronically-stored information during legal proceedings and social workers' ability to protect this information (Grimm et al., 2009). Under the ASWB standards, social workers should inform clients about risks associated with disclosure of confidential information on the Internet, social media sites, text-messaging sites, and videoconferencing sites, and the potential consequences. Practitioners are expected to use proper safeguards, including encryption, when storing and sharing confidential information using digital or other electronic technology.

Electronic communication has introduced new challenges related to social worker-client boundaries. To practice ethically, social workers who use digital and other

technology to provide distance services must develop protocols concerning boundaries, dual relationships, and conflicts of interest that include several key elements. Social workers must avoid electronic communications with current and former clients on social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) that create boundary confusion. Also, practitioners should avoid providing clinical services to people with whom they have had ongoing personal relationships on social networking sites. Practitioners must be careful to avoid inappropriate disclosure of personal information in digital communications (e.g., email messages, text messages, and social network postings) and should establish clear guidelines concerning interactions with clients online and via other digital and electronic means at various times of day and night, weekends, and holidays. The 24/7/365 access that digital communications make possible creates ambiguous boundaries that may be challenging to social workers who otherwise have been able to maintain clear boundaries when services are provided in person during traditional working hours. Clinical social workers must also think carefully about maintaining digital and electronic relationships with former clients; easy access via electronic means can introduce ethical and clinical challenges related to boundaries and dependency. According to the ASWB standards, social workers should communicate with clients using digital and other electronic technology only for professional or treatment-related purposes and only with client consent. Practitioners are expected to take reasonable steps to prevent client access to social workers' personal social networking sites to avoid electronically based boundary confusion and inappropriate dual relationships.

Social workers who use digital and other technology to provide distance services must develop records and documentation protocols that include several key elements. They must develop guidelines that ensure proper encryption; reasonable and appropriate access by clients and colleagues to records and documents (e.g., when a social worker is incapacitated and a colleague provides coverage); documentation of video counselling sessions, email, text messages, and cybertherapy communications; compliance with laws, regulations, and agency policies concerning record and document retention; and proper disposal and destruction of documents and records. The ASWB standards require social workers to develop policies regarding sharing, retention, and storage of digital and other electronic communications and records and inform clients of these policies. Also, practitioners are expected to inform clients about the mechanisms they use to secure and back up records (e.g., hard drives, external drives, and third-party servers), and the length of time records will be stored before being destroyed.

Technology has created new ways for social workers to interact with each other. According to the ASWB standards, social workers must avoid cyberbullying and take reasonable steps to correct or remove any inaccurate or offensive information they have posted or transmitted about a colleague using digital or other electronic technology. Also, social workers are expected to take appropriate action if they believe that a colleague who provides electronic social work services is behaving unethically, is not using safeguards such as firewalls or encryption, or is allowing unauthorised access to digitally or electronically stored information. Further, social workers should avoid gratuitous and unwarranted Google searches about colleagues for unprofessional purposes; respect colleagues' online work products (e.g., avoiding plagiarism, unauthorised uploads); and respond appropriately and to colleagues' unethical conduct (e.g., inappropriate postings, cyberbullying).

Technology has enabled social workers to deliver services to clients across jurisdictional boundaries. Social workers must comply with the laws and regulations that govern electronic social work services within the jurisdictions in which the social worker is located and in which the client is located. In a growing number of jurisdictions around the world, social workers who provide services to clients electronically must be licensed within the jurisdiction in which the client is located, even if the social worker is licensed in another jurisdiction.

## Conclusion

Social work's earliest pioneers sought to create a profession that would serve the world's most vulnerable citizens. Over time, the profession has developed a rich array of conceptual frameworks and protocols that have helped to serve people and communities that struggle. Beginning especially in the 1970s—nearly three-fourths of a century after social work's formal inauguration—the profession embarked on what has turned out to be an in-depth and sustained effort to identify compelling ethical challenges and cultivate principled ways to manage them. Ethical analysis, decision-making protocols, and ethical standards have flourished in recent years. The newest ethical challenges facing the profession arise out of social workers' increasing use of digital technology to provide information to the public, communicate with clients, and serve clients. Nascent efforts are underway to identify compelling ethical issues associated with social workers' use of technology and develop reasonable practice and ethical standards. This is the newest frontier in social work's noble efforts to keep pace with the times and develop ethically-informed innovations to meet the needs of vulnerable people and communities.

## References

- ASWB International Technology Task Force. (2015). *Model regulatory standards for technology and social work practice*. Culpeper, VA: Association of Social Work Boards.
- Banks, S. (2012). *Ethics and values in social work* (4th ed.). Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barker, R. L., & Branson, D. M. (2000). *Forensic social work* (2nd ed.). New York: Haworth Press.
- Barsky, A. E. (2009). *Ethics and values in social work: An integrated approach for a comprehensive curriculum*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beckett, C., & Maynard, A. (2005). *Values and ethics in social work: An introduction*. London: Sage.
- Berg, J. W., Appelbaum, P. S., Lidz, C. W., & Parker, L. S. (2001). *Informed consent: Legal theory and clinical practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Biestek, F. (1957). *The casework relationship*. Chicago: Loyola University Press.
- Brownlee, K. (1996). The ethics of nonsexual dual relationships: A dilemma for the rural mental health professional. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 32, 497–503.
- Bryant, L., Garnham, D., Tedmanson, D., & Diamondi, S. (2015). Tele-social work and mental health in rural and remote communities in Australia. *International Social Work*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284880032\\_Tele-social\\_work\\_and\\_mental\\_health\\_in\\_rural\\_and\\_remote\\_communities\\_in\\_Australia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284880032_Tele-social_work_and_mental_health_in_rural_and_remote_communities_in_Australia)
- Callahan, D., & Bok, S. (Eds.). (1980). *Ethics teaching in higher education*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Campbell, C. D., & Gordon, M. C. (2003). Acknowledging the inevitable: Understanding multiple relationships in rural practice. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 34, 430–434.
- Chester, A., & Glass, C. A. (2006). Online counselling: A descriptive analysis of therapy services on the internet. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34, 145–160.

- Congress, E. (2013). Codes of ethics. In C. Franklin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social work*. Washington, DC and New York: Oxford University Press and National Association of Social Workers Press and Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://0-socialwork.oxfordre.com.helin.uri.edu/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-64?rskey=DRZfw1&result=1>
- Congress, E., & McAuliffe, D. (2006). Social work ethics: Professional codes in Australia and the United States. *International Social Work*, 49, 151–164.
- Daley, M., & Doughty, M. (2006). Ethics complaints in social work practice: A rural–urban comparison. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 3(1). Retrieved from <http://www.socialworker.com/jswve/content/view/28/44/>
- Dolgoff, R., Harrington, D., & Loewenberg, F. (2012). *Ethical decisions for social work practice* (9th ed.). Belmont, CA.: Brooks/Cole.
- Gordon, W. E. (1962). A critique of the working definition. *Social Work*, 7(4), 3–13.
- Gray, M., & Webb, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Ethics and value perspectives in social work*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grimm, P. W., Ziccardi, M. V., & Major, A. W. (2009). Back to the future: Lorraine v. Markel American Insurance Co. and new findings on the admissibility of electronically stored information. *Akron Law Review*, 42, 357–418.
- Gupta, A., & Agrawal, A. (2012). Internet counselling and psychological services. *Social Science International*, 28, 105–122.
- Hardiman, D. G. (1975). Not with my daughter, you don't! *Social Work*, 20(4), 278–285.
- Houston-Vega, M. K., Nuehring, E. M., & Daguio, E. R. (1997). *Prudent practice: A guide for managing malpractice risk*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Hu, J., Chen, H., & Hou, T. (2010). A hybrid public key infrastructure solution (HPKI) for HIPAA privacy/security regulations. *Computer Standards and Interfaces*, 32, 274–280.
- Hugman, R. (2013). *Culture, values, and ethics in social work: Embracing diversity*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Kanani, K., & Regehr, C. (2003). Clinical, ethical, and legal issues in e-therapy. *Families in Society*, 84, 155–162.
- Keith-Lucas, A. (1977). Ethics in social work. In J. B. Turner (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social work* (17th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 350–355). Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers.
- Lamendola, W. (2010). Social work and social presence in an online world. *Journal of Technology in the Human Services*, 28, 108–119.
- Levy, C. (1976). *Social work ethics*. New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Madden, R. G. (2003). *Essential law for social workers*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mattison, M. (2012). Social work practice in the digital age: Therapeutic e-mail as a direct practice methodology. *Social Work*, 57(3), 249–258.
- McAuliffe, D. (2014) *Interprofessional ethics: Collaboration in the social, health and human services*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- McDermott, F. E. (Ed.). (1975). *Self-determination in social work*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Menon, G. M., & Miller-Cribbs, J. (2002). Online social work practice: Issues and guidelines for the profession. *Advances in Social Work*, 3, 104–116.
- Midkiff, D., & Wyatt, W.J. (2008). Ethical issues in the provision of online mental health services (etherapy). *Technology in Human Services*, 26(2/4), 310–332.
- Morgan, S., & Polowy, C. (2011). Social workers and Skype: Part I. *NASW Legal Defense Fund, Legal Issue of the Month*. Retrieved from [www.socialworken.org/ldf/legal%5Fissue](http://www.socialworken.org/ldf/legal%5Fissue)
- Pumphrey, M. (1959). *The teaching of values and ethics in social work education*. New York: Council on Social Work Education.
- Reamer, F. G. (1987). Values and ethics. In A. Minahan (Ed.-in-Chief), *Encyclopedia of social work* (18th ed., Vol. 2, pp. 801–809). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.
- Reamer, F. G. (2006). *Ethical standards in social work: A review of the NASW Code of Ethics* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Reamer, F. G. (2012a). The digital and electronic revolution in social work: Rethinking the meaning of ethical practice. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 7(1), 2–19.

- Reamer, F. G. (2012b). *Boundary issues and dual relationships in the human services*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reamer, F. G. (2013a). *Social work values and ethics* (4th ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reamer, F. G. (2013b). Social work in a digital age: Ethical and risk management challenges. *Social Work*, 58(2), 163–172.
- Reamer, F. G. (2013c). Distance and online social work education: Novel ethical challenges. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 33(4/5), 369–384.
- Reamer, F. G. (2015a). *Risk management in social work: Preventing professional malpractice, liability, and disciplinary action*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reamer, F. G. (2015b). Clinical social work in a digital environment: Ethical and risk-management challenges. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43, 120–132.
- Recupero, P., & Rainey, S. E. (2005). Forensic aspects of e-therapy. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 11, 405–410.
- Rhode Island Department of Health. (1996). *Rules and regulations for licensing clinical social workers and independent clinical social workers*. Rhode Island: Author. Retrieved from <http://sos.ri.gov/documents/archives/regdocs/released/pdf/DOH/5084.pdf>
- Sidell, N. L. (2011). *Social work documentation: A guide to strengthening your case recording*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Teicher, M. (1967). *Values in social work: A reexamination*. New York: National Association of Social Workers.
- Timms, N. (1983). *Social work values: An enquiry*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Varley, B. (1968). Social work values: Changes in value commitments from admission to MSW graduation. *Journal of Education for Social Work*, 4, 67–85.
- Younghusband, E. (1967). *Social work and social values*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Zur, O. (2007). *Boundaries in psychotherapy: Ethical and clinical explorations*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Zur, O. (2012). TelePsychology or TeleMentalHealth in the digital age: The future is here. *California Psychologist*, 45, 13–15.