

Developmental Services Worker Standards of Practice 2011

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INTRODUCTION

The Developmental Services Worker (DSW) Standards of Practice describe the values, priorities, and practices of staff in the developmental services sector. These Standards of Practice state a minimal level of performance and are available to guide professional staff in their execution of daily duties.

The ultimate purpose of the Standards of Practice is to promote excellence in the DSW profession.

Explanatory Note

This section will explain three of the key terms utilized throughout this document.

Meaning of Developmental Services Worker (DSW)

A Developmental Services Worker is an individual who has graduated with a Developmental Services Worker Diploma in the province of Ontario, or equivalent. Equivalency would include a post secondary degree or diploma in a related area plus direct work experience in developmental services. Upon the establishment of a Professional Organization of Developmental Services Workers, this body will assume the responsibility of determining the specific requirements for equivalency.

Meaning of the term "Service Recipient"

The term service recipient is very broadly defined and would include all individuals who have developmental disabilities. In addition, they might also have other concurrent disorders. Some of the labels which might have been assigned to these individuals include:

- Intellectual disability
- Developmental disability
- Intellectual handicap
- Developmental handicap
- Autism
- Dual Diagnosis
- "Mental retardation" (Please note that this is acknowledged to be a highly offensive term which is no longer used in the DSW Profession. However, the DSW might work with individuals who have been assigned this archaic label, particularly in medical or psychological assessment reports. Thus, the term is included in the list for purposes of completeness.)

The term “service recipient” does not encompass others who are involved with that person and thus benefit from the DSW’s services such as family members or community members.

Scope of Practice

DSWs provide services to individuals in non profit organizations, schools, commercial organizations, family homes, their own homes, and the community. Services can be characterized as activities which improve or maintain the self-defined quality of life of that individual including, but not limited to: facilitating community participation such as education, employment or recreation; teaching; optimizing physical and mental health; supporting expression of the spiritual and creative self; and advocating on behalf of the individual or the broader group of service recipients.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Standard 1: Provision of Services to Service Recipients

1.1 DSWs adhere to the following principles during service provision:

- 1.1.1 DSWs use a person-centred approach in the provision of services
- 1.1.2 DSWs respect and facilitate self-determination
- 1.1.3 DSWs ensure that an individual is provided with complete information in a format which s/he understands when making decisions
- 1.1.4 DSWs and service recipients work together to set and evaluate goals
- 1.1.5 DSWs utilize all possible methodologies to support individuals to communicate effectively
- 1.1.6 DSWs ensure that each service recipient's human rights are maintained
- 1.1.7 DSWs provide competent professional services to all individuals, irrespective of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, or ability

Standard 2: Competence

2.1 DSWs have a unique body of knowledge. This in-depth knowledge includes:

- 2.1.1 Human development
- 2.1.2 Facilitation of person-directed planning
- 2.1.3 Promotion of physical and mental health
- 2.1.4 Facilitation of community participation
- 2.1.5 Effective instructional strategies
- 2.1.6 Positive behavioural supports
- 2.1.7 Alternative communication strategies
- 2.1.8 Teaching advocacy skills
- 2.1.9 Facilitation of independence
- 2.1.10 Collaboration with their colleagues and organizations both within and outside their sector
- 2.1.11 Development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships

2.2 DSWs engage in professional practice.

- 2.2.1 DSWs competently apply professional knowledge and experience to promote the quality of life of the people they support
- 2.2.2 DSWs recognize limitations to their skills and seek consultation and/or supervision when needed

2.3 DSWs are committed to ongoing professional learning.

- 2.3.1 DSWs recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is essential to the provision of effective services
- 2.3.2 DSWs engage in ongoing professional learning to remain current with emerging knowledge and practice
- 2.3.3 DSWs are committed to sharing knowledge with colleagues to promote professional development in the field as a whole

2.4 DSWs have a specific scope of practice.

- 2.4.1 DSWs are responsible for being aware of the extent and parameters of their competence and scope of practice
- 2.4.2 When the service recipient's needs fall outside their usual scope of practice, DSWs follow proscribed procedures to ensure that this individual receives services or supports from the appropriate resources

Standard 3: Integrity

3.1 Because they support individuals with developmental disabilities, DSWs are in a position of power with respect to these individuals. DSWs ensure that the service recipients whom they support are protected from abuse of this power.

- 3.1.1 DSWs avoid professional relationships that involve a conflict of interest that could impair professional judgement and/or competence.¹
- 3.1.2 DSWs do not engage in sexual relations with a service recipient, whether this is an individual with whom they currently work or with whom they formerly worked.²
- 3.1.3 DSWs do not work professionally with an individual with whom they have had a previous sexual relationship.
- 3.1.4 DSWs do not engage in any professional conduct which places the service recipient at unacceptable risk.

3.2 DSWs do not engage in professional activities while under the influence of any substance which impairs their abilities to perform their jobs with competence.

¹ "Conflict of Interest" is defined as a situation in which an individual has an interest that might compromise their reliability or integrity. This includes personal, financial, or professional issues.

² Sexual relations include sexual intercourse, touching of a sexual nature, behaviour of a sexual nature, or remarks of a sexual nature that are not properly part of the clinical services provided by a professional.

- 3.3 DSWs do not misrepresent their education, training, professional qualifications or experience.
- 3.4 DSWs do not misuse information obtained from or about service recipients.
 - 3.4.1 DSWs do not use information about a service recipient for their own financial gain
 - 3.4.2 DSWs do not use information about a service recipient to harm, control, or otherwise negatively impact on that individual
- 3.5 DSWs are aware of their personal values, attitudes, and needs and they exercise professional competence to ensure that these do not negatively impact on service provision.
- 3.6 DSWs strive to enhance the skills and capabilities of service recipients in order to maximize their control over their own lives

Standard 4: Confidentiality

- 4.1 DSWs maintain the privacy of individuals they support.
 - 4.1.1 DSWs will hold in strictest confidence all information obtained from or about a service recipient and maintained in any format
 - 4.1.2 DSWs will ensure that all records are maintained in locked or password protected conditions
 - 4.1.3 DSWs do not share information with others about a service recipient without obtaining informed consent to release of information by the individual or a legally appointed substitute decision maker (see Standard 5)
 - 4.1.4 DSWs inform service recipients of any exceptions to confidentiality at the beginning of a professional relationship
 - 4.1.5 DSWs uphold the right of a service recipient to access his/her own record with specific restrictions:
 - i. An individual is not allowed to remove his/her records from the agency site
 - ii. An individual is not allowed to view information about other individuals that may be within his/her own record
 - iii. Information from the service recipient's file may be withheld from that individual if a professional deems that this information could be harmful to the individual
 - iv. A service recipient may be provided with an abridged version of his/her record which summarizes the information in the files as per the previous point

- 4.2 DSWs may release information about a service recipient without consent under specific circumstances.
- 4.2.1 When disclosure is required or allowed by law, DSWs may break confidentiality
- i. When this information involves the abuse or suspected abuse of a child under the age of 18, DSWs may break confidentiality as per the Child and Family Services Act ³
 - ii. When this information involves the service recipient's intention to harm himself or herself, DSWs may break confidentiality, i.e. duty to protect
 - iii. When this information involves the service recipient's intention to harm another, DSWs may break confidentiality, i.e. duty to warn
 - iv. When the DSW is reporting to the police the alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse of a person with a developmental disability as per Regulation 299/10 of the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with a Developmental Disability Act, 2008.
 - v. When required by law to disclose information, DSWs do not disclose more information than is necessary
- 4.2.2 DSWs are required to divulge information about a service recipient when ordered to do so by a court.
- i. The concept of "privilege" does not apply in the DSW profession ⁴
 - ii. When ordered by a court to disclose information about a service recipient, DSWs do not disclose more information than is necessary.
- 4.3 DSWs may share information about a service recipient within their agencies without consent.
- 4.3.1 DSWs may discuss this information with colleagues without consent for the purposes of improved services for the individual
- 4.3.2 DSWs may discuss this information with a supervisor without consent for the purposes of improved services for the individual or professional development

³ The Child and Family Services Act was published by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in 1990, amended in 2009.

⁴ "Privilege" in this context is the concept that specific professional groups are immune from the requirement to divulge information about a client in a court of law. In Canada, the only professional group with "privilege" are attorneys.

- 4.3.3 DSWs may disclose this information to senior agency staff without consent for the purposes of improving services within the agency or meeting mandatory agency reporting requirements
- 4.3.4 DSWs may disclose this information to staff in other service departments within the agency without consent for the purposes of improved services for the individual

Standard 5: Consent

5.1 DSWs uphold the legal rights of a service recipient to give voluntary and informed consent to release of information in any format or to receipt of services.

- 5.1.1 DSWs ensure that the service recipient is giving voluntary consent, i.e. that the individual is not under duress or coercion
- 5.1.2 DSWs ensure that the service recipient is giving informed consent
 - i. DSWs inform the individual regarding why information is being disclosed, what specific information is being disclosed, and to whom information is being disclosed
 - ii. DSWs explain to the individual the full nature of the services to be provided
 - iii. DSWs provide information to the individual regarding the consequences, positive and/or negative, of giving consent
 - iv. DSWs provide information to the individual regarding the consequences, both positive and/or negative, of not giving consent
 - v. DSWs provide information to the individual in a format that the s/he understands
- 5.2 DSWs obtain consent to release information from a service recipient for information in any format including written information, photographs, audio tapes, video tapes, and direct observations
- 5.3 DSWs ensure that every service recipient who is legally competent is recognized as entitled to provide his/her consent on matters related to provision of services or release of information
- 5.4 DSWs ensure that a service recipient who is legally declared incompetent is represented by a legally authorized substitute decision maker
- 5.5 DSWs obtain consent in writing from a service recipient, whenever possible

- 5.5.1 DSWs ensure that verbal consent is obtained and documented if written consent is not possible
- 5.5.2 DSWs obtain a separate consent form for each specific instance of releasing information or receiving services

Standard 6: Fees

6.1 DSWs exercise professional behaviour and follow legal requirements when setting or collecting fees from service recipients or designates.

- 6.1.1 DSWs inform individuals in advance of service provision of all costs that will be charged to them including fees, reimbursements, and penalties
- 6.1.2 DSWs inform individuals in advance of service provision of the process used to collect unpaid fees.
- 6.1.3 A written agreement is developed before service provision that is signed by relevant parties, i.e. a service contract, which includes fees, additional costs, payment schedule, process to collect unpaid fees, and a thorough description of the services to be provided

6.2 DSWs do not accept financial benefits for making or receiving a referral