

SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD

Notes of the 21st Meeting of the Taskforce on Review of Code of Practice

Date: 14 August 2018
Time: 9:15 a.m.
Venue: Room HJ417, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Present: Dr. CHENG Yuk-tin, Carl (co-opted member)
Dr. LAM Chiu-wan (co-opted member)
Dr. LEUNG Chuen-suen
Mr. LUN Chi-wai
Apology: Mr. WONG Ka-ming (Acting Convenor)
Secretary: Mr. LEE Wing-po, Eric, Registrar
Ms. FAN Lai-yee, Veronica, Assistant Registrar

Confirmation of notes of last meeting and agenda

1. Members endorsed the notes of meeting.

Matters Arising

2. Members made comments on Appendix B1 and B2:

Related to Clients: Use of Information and Principles of Confidentiality (Appendix B1)

- (a) In point 6.3, the Taskforce considered whether to replace “legally authorized body” by “law enforcement agencies”. In the ensuing discussion, it was agreed that the crux should be to advise what social workers should do upon receipt of court order to disclose confidential or privileged information without the client’s consent and such disclosure may cause harm to the client, and types of the agency handing out the order would be irrelevant. The proposed revision was marked in Annex 1.
- (b) A member shared that the frontline social workers had different views on whether cases should be reported to the police if it was known that parents were drug addict or with mental health problem but were likely be able to take care of his/her children of minority. Members noted that no conclusion could be made at this juncture because it should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Section 4 Ethical Practice and Decision Making (Appendix B2)

- (c) The Taskforce discussed points 4.5 to 4.11 which had not been covered at the last meeting.
- (d) In point 4.5, in general, members noted that this code does not prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. It was suggested to move the second sentence to point 4.6.

- (e) Members had different views on the “possibility of conflicts among the Code’s values, principles, and standards in the respective context”. A member suggested not mentioning the word “conflicts” whilst another member expressed that conflicts were possible in this Code and there were no rules governing which value or principle should outweigh another. It was agreed to use “ethical dilemmas” to replace “conflicts”, and same replacement in point 4.6.
- (f) In point 4.7, it was suggested highlighting the importance of the clause “ethical decision making is a unique process” by moving it to point 4.5 whilst the rest of the paragraph should be moved to point 4.6. A member expressed that the word “unique” might need further refinement.
- (g) In point 4.8, minor amendments were proposed and the last sentence should be deleted. The Board office was asked to check if this part had been covered in the standard and rules. (Post meeting note: it was not covered in the standard and rules.)
- (h) It was suggested to remove point 4.9.
- (i) In point 4.10, the first sentence should be revised as “This code cannot guarantee ethical behaviour which should result from social workers’ commitment to ethical practice, individually and collectively as a moral community”. The last sentence should be put under a separate point.
- (j) Some minor revisions were made to point 4.11.
- (k) The revisions were marked in Annex 2.

Discussion on revising the Code of Practice

3. Summary of revisions

- (a) The meeting took note of the summary of revisions. The Secretary briefed that during the process of revisions, some contents in the existing Guidelines of COP were missing out and it was necessary to have an overall review and to decide whether the missing parts should be retained or not. Mr. Lun undertook to have a review on the documents and report at the next meeting.

4. Related to Profession

A member opined that the current Guideline (point 39.3) was insufficient if we only advised the RSW to bring the malpractice of another RSW to the Board’s attention. In operation, the Board could not take any action if it only received a report from RSW about the malpractice of another RSW as a complaint in specified form was required by the Ordinance. He invited the Taskforce to discuss whether we should revise the Code to request the RSW to lodge a complaint. Other members expressed that the RSW had the right to decide whether to lodge

a complaint after taking into consideration of the situations. The power of the Board was limited under the current Ordinance as it did not serve the function of investigator or prosecutor in handling complaint cases. After discussion, majority of members agreed that it was not necessary to revise the concerned guideline.

5. Section 6: Definition and Interpretation

- (a) Due to time being run off, this part would be deferred to the next meeting and Dr. Leung undertook to prepare a draft for discussion.

Date of next meeting

- 6. The next meeting would be held at 9:15am on 5 September and 3 October 2018 at HJ417, PolyU.
- 7. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

22 August 2018