

Standards Regarding
Telehealth Services,
the Use of Technology
and Social Work Practice

NBASW Ethics, Standards & Guidelines Training
2022-2023 Registration Season



NBASW Ethics, Standards & Guidelines Training

- One NBASW Ethics, Standards & Guidelines Training is required for practicing and non-practicing members each registration year.
- Watching the webinar counts as a Group A activity.
- Time taken to complete optional supplementary activities can also be counted as Group A activities.
- Track activities on annual CPE Log.

Presentation Outline

Glossary

Background and Context

Benefits of Technology

Ethics and the Potential Risks of Technology

Ethics and the Potential Risks of Social Media

Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice (Ethical Obligations)

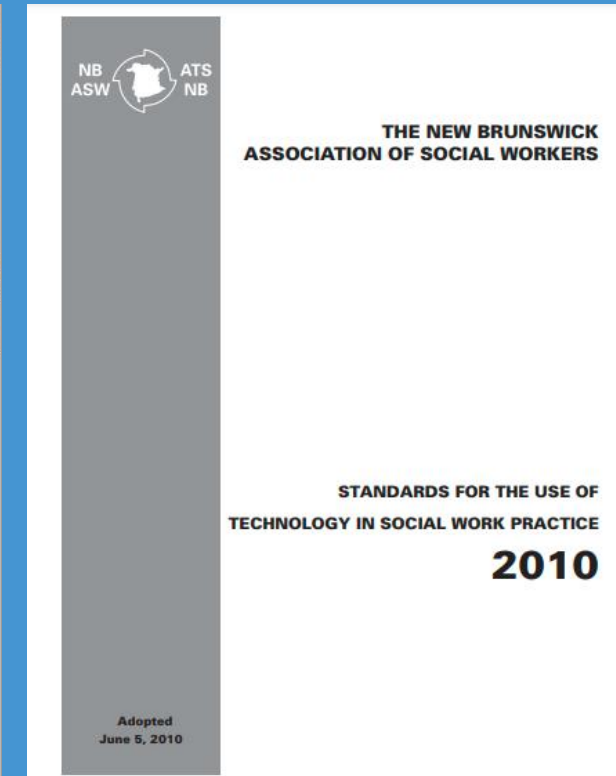
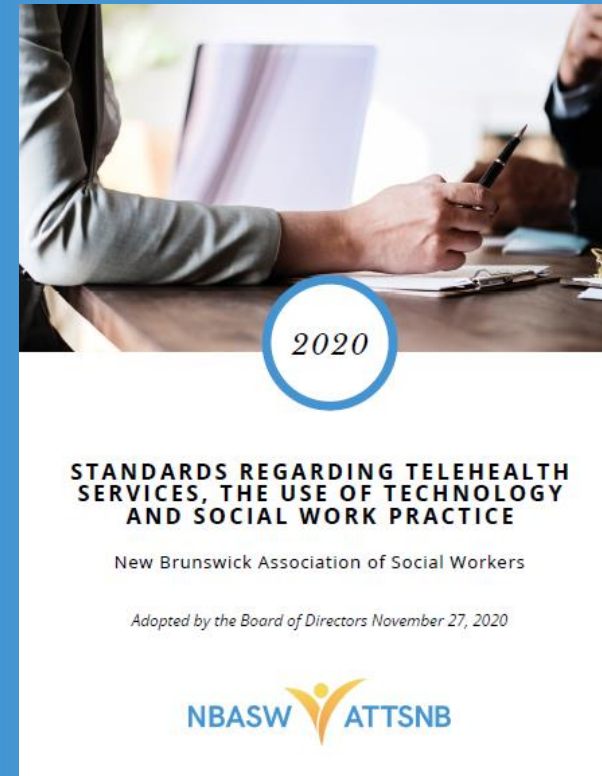
Risk Management Strategies

Background & Context

The NBASW's existing technology standards did not meet the needs of members.

The new Standards were developed to:

- Guide social workers through their use of technology.
- Optimize telehealth service delivery.
- Explore ethical challenges & considerations.
- Heighten best practices.



NBASW Code of Ethics (2007)

Ethical obligations:

- To clients
- In professional relationships
- To colleagues
- In the workplace
- In private practice
- In research
- To the profession
- To society

Fundamental values:

- Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons
- Pursuit of Social Justice
- Service to Humanity
- Integrity in Professional Practice
- Confidentiality in Professional Practice
- Competence in Professional Practice

Technology Today

The COVID-19 pandemic influenced:

- The use of alternative service delivery methods (virtual care options);
- An acceleration in health-technology development; and
- An understanding of technology as being essential to healthcare, going forward.

Technology is now an essential part of social work practice!



Technology

- Any electronic device or program used to communicate, gather, store, analyze, or share information.

Electronic Social Work Services

- The use of computers and other electronic means to provide information, deliver services, communicate, manage confidential information/case records, store client information, and arrange payment for professional services.

Telecommunication

- Any form of communication that takes place via telephone, cable, telegraph, broadcasting, or internet.

Telehealth Services

- An aspect of electronic social work services in which social workers provide direct services to clients via technology.

Communication Technology



Technology for sending texts and emails



Videoconferencing platforms



Social media



Websites



All other means of online communication

Telehealth Services

- Choose a secure platform
- Use a password and access code for clients
- Maintain high-security standards

Keep in mind, no platform is completely immune to hacking!

RSWs are eligible for free Zoom for Healthcare accounts through the Department of Health until March 2023 (review date). Contact connectedcare@gnb.ca for more information or to sign up!

zoom
for Healthcare

New Brunswick
Nouveau Brunswick
C A N A D A



Benefits of Technology & Telehealth Services

- Enhances access and continuity of services
- Removes barriers to accessing services.
- Can be effective means of service delivery.
- Facilitates communication and work.
- May cut time and expenses.

Technology must always be used carefully and in the client's best interest!



Virtual appointments are not appropriate in every case!



Potential Drawbacks

- Issues with internet connectivity.
- Technology failure and service interruption.
- Potential for confidentiality and security issues.
- Difficult to identify the physical well-being of the client.
- May be more difficult to form a therapeutic bond, read non-verbal cues, or engage clients.
- Lack of familiarity/technological literacy.
- Home environment may be a barrier.

Determining the Appropriate Service Delivery Method



Nature of the intervention



Access to technology



Environment



Ability to use technology



Level of technological literacy



Client wishes



Other factors & best interest of the client

At the Onset of Services

Social workers inform clients of:

- Rights & responsibilities.
- Limits of confidentiality.
- Nature of intervention.
- Service delivery options.
- Risks & benefits (social work intervention & service delivery method).
- What information is shared, documented, & included in client records.
- Limits & boundaries of telehealth services & the appropriate use of technology.

Social workers ensure that they:

- Adequately assess client well-being.
- Base service delivery methods on client preferences & professional determinations.
- Have the necessary informed consent.
- Use secure internet connection (not public/free Wi-Fi).
- Practice within the limits of their professional competencies, skills & knowledge (including with tech.)



What happens if a client doesn't want to participate in/continue with virtual appointments?



Do client's need to consent to having virtual appointments?

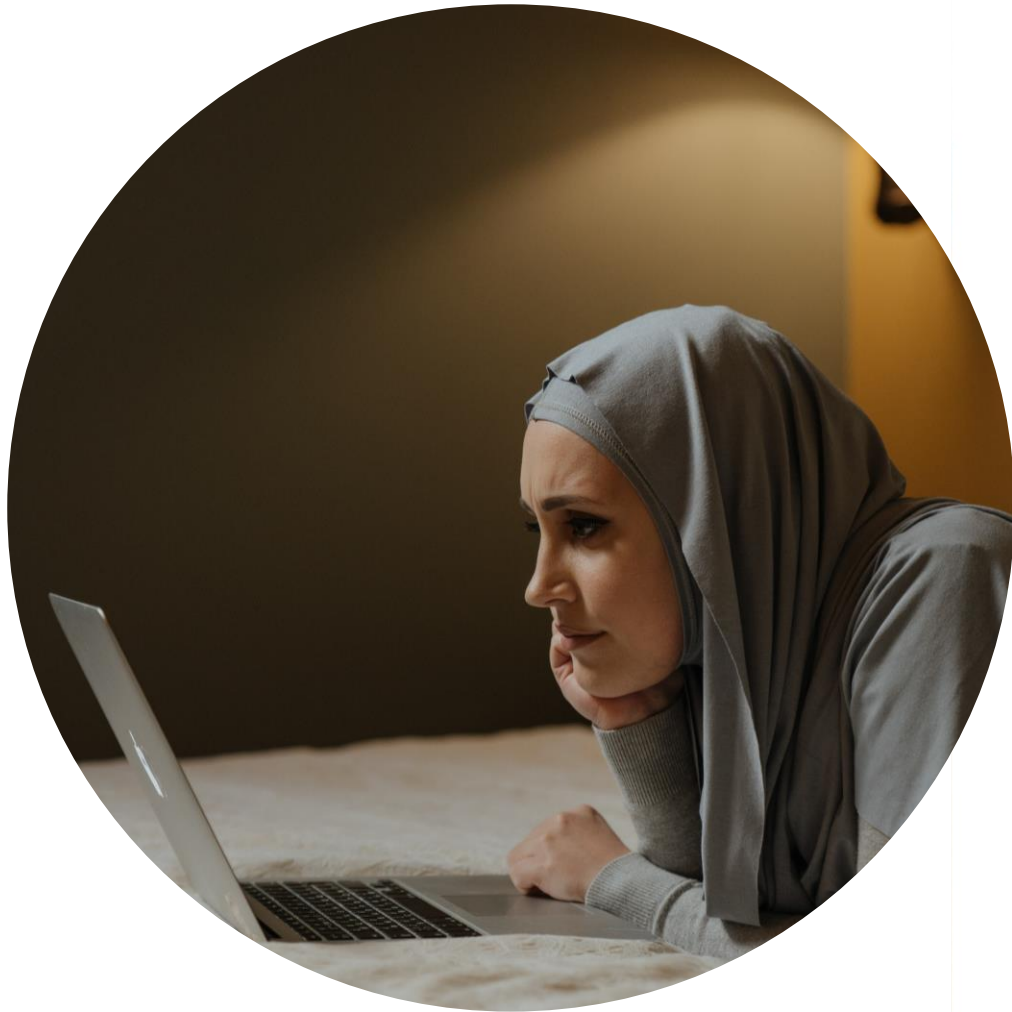
Client Consent

Consent must be obtained before providing services.

Keep up to date on employer policies & guidelines.

Recommendations for when there are no policies in place & it's not possible for the client to sign a consent form in person:

1. Photo or scanned copy of signed form.
2. Form with electronic signature (pdf).
3. Verbal consent (document thoroughly and obtain signature at later date, if possible).



A close-up photograph of a person with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a red shirt with white polka dots. They are holding a white stylus in their right hand and using it to interact with a tablet computer held in their left hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Using Technology

Transparency is essential for members using technology!

- Associated risks and benefits
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Frequency and timeframe
- Clients' identity
- Managing potential crises
- Policies & guidelines on technology use

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an essential part of social work practice.

Confidentiality can be broken at times.

- With client's consent.
- If required by an Act or court order.
- If there's risk of potential harm.
- In defense against allegations of professional misconduct.





Is it ever ok to search
for personal reasons
on the electronic
system at work?



Online Searches

- Social workers are never to use work systems for personal reasons.
- The Code of Ethics (2007) and employer policies must be followed.
- Client confidentiality and professional boundaries must be upheld.

Professional Boundaries



The social worker is responsible for setting appropriate professional boundaries with current and former clients.



Be careful about professional boundaries - social workers and clients may not have clear expectations about what professional boundaries look like!



What do I do if a client sends me a friend request on Facebook?

Social Media

Refrain from any insult, message, or behaviour that would create a negative image of:

- Oneself
- A client
- A colleague
- The employer
- The profession

Social workers are responsible
for things they post on social
networks!



A client is moving to another province and asks you to continue providing services virtually. Can you provide online services to clients living in another province?



Registration Requirements

- Practicing members of the NBASW can provide services to people in New Brunswick.
- Social workers must be registered in the jurisdiction the client is in, at the time of service.
- Social workers are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the registration requirements in each jurisdiction.

Tips to Remember

- Be aware.
- Think before you post/send a message.
- Consider who can see what you share.
- Acknowledge that your social media activity and behaviours reflect personal & the profession.
- Enforce and maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Do not post information containing any identifying information of a current or former client, unless you have their permission.
- Do not post inappropriate or offensive content.
- Follow your employer's social media policy.
- When in doubt, get advice.
- Always act in the best interest of the client.





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