

# Manifesto: Upholding Ethics in Social Work Practice

As an emerging social worker, I am guided by two core values: respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons, and integrity in professional practice. These values are foundational to ethical and effective social work. They are particularly relevant in the context of long-term care, where system failures, as seen in *The nursing home that lost nearly 50 seniors to COVID-19* (CBC News, 2020), can result in devastating outcomes for vulnerable populations.

The value of dignity requires treating every client not as a case number or a burden but as a person with rights, history, and voice. In practice, this means recognizing and affirming the autonomy, emotional needs, and social inclusion of elderly clients. Social work in Canada is rooted in a commitment to social justice, particularly for individuals marginalized by structural systems (Ives, Denov, & Sussman, 2020). In the case of the Herron nursing home, residents were denied basic care and respect, reflecting systemic issues in elder care. My responsibility as a social worker is to advocate for practices and policies that uphold dignity in all circumstances, including times of crisis.

Integrity in professional practice involves honesty, reliability, and ethical consistency. It requires speaking up when care is inadequate, documenting and reporting neglect, and maintaining transparency with clients and their families. Integrity also means demonstrating respect for the trust placed in the profession and taking responsibility for one's professional actions (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005). Upholding this value means ensuring that no client is neglected or dismissed, even when systemic barriers make intervention challenging.

If I were working with the residents or family members from the nursing home, I would apply these values through relationship based social work skills. This would include conducting thorough needs assessments with residents and families, engaging in active listening to ensure their concerns are heard and accurately documented, and using motivational interviewing to build trust and encourage participation in care decisions. I would maintain transparent, timely communication so that families remain fully informed, and I would provide consistent follow-up to address unresolved issues. Where neglect or policy violations are observed, I would document findings in detail, escalate concerns through proper reporting channels, and collaborate with interdisciplinary teams to address systemic issues. Advocacy in this setting would also involve identifying systemic gaps, addressing staffing shortages, recommending targeted training in elder care ethics, and ensuring long-term care facilities operate within established professional standards (Alberta College of Social Workers, 2019).

Social work demands a commitment to ethical practice, especially when serving people whose voices are at risk of being overlooked. My role is to ensure that ethics are not confined to policy documents but are actively demonstrated in the quality of my relationships, the intentionality of my listening, and the persistence of my advocacy. This manifesto is both a professional pledge

and a personal conviction that dignity, accountability, and respect are not optional in my practice.

## References

Alberta College of Social Workers. (2019). *Standards of practice*.

<https://acsw.ab.ca/resource/standards-of-practice/>

Canadian Association of Social Workers. (2005). *Code of ethics*.

[https://www.casw-acts.ca/files/documents/casw\\_code\\_of\\_ethics.pdf](https://www.casw-acts.ca/files/documents/casw_code_of_ethics.pdf)

CBC News. (2020). *The nursing home that lost nearly 50 seniors to COVID-19* [Video]. CBC News: The National. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccMPGKXTUc0>

Ives, N., Denov, M., & Sussman, T. (2020). *Introduction to social work in Canada: Histories, contexts, and practices* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.