Standards for Professional Practice

Standard 1. Ethics and Values
Social workers working with clients with substance use disorders shall adhere to the ethics and values of the social work profession and shall use the NASW Code of Ethics as a guide to ethical decision making, while understanding the unique aspects of social work practice with clients with substance use disorders and the needs of clients and their families.

Interpretation
Social workers shall demonstrate core values of service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. In addition, social workers shall adhere to the professional ethical responsibilities delineated in the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social workers shall have knowledge of and comply with local, state, and federal mandates related to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and access to records in the context of legal and ethical rights of adults, minors, and their parents. Clients, their families, and other professionals shall be informed of the limits of confidentiality when services are initiated. Employers and administrators should be informed of the ethical responsibilities of the social work profession. In the event that conflicts arise among competing expectations, social workers are directed to the NASW Code of Ethics as a tool in their decision making.
Standard 2. Qualifications
Social workers shall meet the provisions for professional practice set by NASW and related state and federal laws while possessing knowledge and understanding basic to the social work profession with regard to professional practice with clients with substance use disorders.

Interpretation
Social workers shall have a degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. An MSW degree is the recommended qualification for a social worker to provide clinical services. Working with clients with substance use disorders is a distinct specialty and scope of practice within the social work profession. Social workers working with clients with substance use disorders shall possess specialized knowledge and understanding of psychological and emotional factors, physiological issues, diagnostic criteria, legal considerations, and co-occurrence of mental health disorders and substance use. This knowledge shall include an understanding of family dynamics, the effects that SUDs have on parenting abilities, and the resulting consequences for children. Social workers shall also be knowledgeable about current evidence-informed approaches and best practices for service provision to clients with substance use disorders. Social workers shall actively seek to remain current with specialized training, as appropriate. Social workers shall be certified and/or licensed by state boards of social work when appropriate.

Social workers shall remain current regarding changes in legislation, mandates, and regulations.