<u>#MacroSW's Feedback on NASW Draft Technology Standards in Social Work Practice</u>

#MacroSW is a collaboration of social workers, organizations, social work schools, and individuals working to promote macro social work practice. Macro social work practice focuses on changing larger systems, such as communities and organizations. It encompasses a broad spectrum of actions and ideas, ranging from community organizing and education to legislative advocacy and policy analysis. As #MacroSW is located in the digital realm, primarily through social media, the technology standards are of especial interest to us.

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Current Chat Partners:

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<u>General Comments</u>

On July 14, 2016, we hosted a live chat about NASW's draft technology standards for social work practice. We had 76 individuals participate and over 1000 tweets with comments about

the standards. We respectfully ask the committee to review the transcripts from this chat as it contains numerous comments and ideas from social work practitioners, educators and students who use technology in their professional lives. Here are the links to the transcripts:

Symplur Transcript from the Chat:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByR_E-iQH7PdOFZ6dWFIZDhEaXc/view?usp=sharing

Storify Transcript from the Chat:
https://storify.com/UBSSW/technology-standards-in-social-work-practice-give-

Also, here is a link to the blog post about chat: Technology Standards in Social Work Practice: Give NASW feedback — #MacroSW Chat 07-14-16

Overall, we are very appreciative of this effort to revise standards that are over a decade old and no longer relevant to many forms of technology commonly used by social workers in their professional lives. It is a challenging task to write effective and informative standards that will help social workers navigate the use of technology in practice with the fast pace of change in digital and social technologies. A definite strength of the committee's work is that the standards strongly reflect the NASW Code of Ethics, with multiple references to the Code throughout the standards.

However, these standards are also very specific, providing detailed directions on how social workers should use technology in an ethical and professional manner. Duplicative information in many sections for informed consent, confidentiality, technology disruptions, just to name a few, make the document feel disjointed especially when these topics are mentioned partially under clinical and macro practice areas.

Many of the standards address the use of technology in practice settings without recognizing the parallel situations such as the "in-person" equivalent or the use of more commonplace technology. We would like to see these standards modified to offer practical, clear, and realistic guidelines that can be adopted and operationalized by both social workers and social service agencies across all practice settings.

Of additional note, as pointed out in particular sections, the social worker is tasked with certain technological expertise beyond awareness. Guidelines as to where social worker can seek technology assistance, which seems only briefly mentioned, such as government sources and electronic health record vendors to mitigate risk.

More data references are needed to better understand the impact of technology on our society in general and social work practice to best illustrate the landscape. Expanding the committee to technology experts within and outside of the social work profession is needed to fully integrate the latest technology practices and think through the possible implications to the social work profession. Having leaders talking amongst ourselves is not helpful; we need to broaden our

perspective. For example, it would great to include experts from organizations, conferences, journals, and online communities (to name a few) that truly engage in conversations about technology in social work practice, including those from diverse backgrounds such as millennial social workers. We could also go to Facebook or Twitter execs and ask for help. They would be very interested to help hundreds of thousands of social workers use their platforms for advocacy and practice.

Finally, some topics need to be written about comprehensively to provide continuity and a big picture view of the technology implications across the micro and macro continuum. Additional main headings in the aforementioned topics can address all the areas in which technology is applied and referred back in in particular sections.

Example: (not inclusive of all topics covered in the standards)

- Ethics and Conduct
- Social Media Policy - Clinical implications/Private practice guidance; Advocacy/policy work implication; Agency/School v. social worker responsibility
- Clinical
- Informed Consent
- Confidentiality - HIPAA
- Boundaries
- Delivery of Social Services
- Communities, Organizations, Administration, and Policy -   Payment and Claims Technology
- Responsibility of Social Worker Proficiency - Handling Disruptions in various scenarios, education, counseling, advocacy
- Research
- Social Work Education

The guidance provided by these technology standards should support aspirational goals related to technology use in our profession (including access, innovation, and consumer protection and voice), and encourage thoughtful and professional judgment related to technology use, while not directly specifying how one should carry out their use of technology in social work practice. To do so, limits innovation and will cause those who already practice outside the scope of these standards (or will in the near future as these standards become dated) to seek identity alignment outside of social work.

Sections

Section 1: Provision of Information to the Public

Page 14, 66 – 70 – Social workers should make reasonable efforts to correct inaccuracies but NASW, ASWB, CSWE or other social work education and credentials body should expediently

help correct inaccuracies around education offered by these organizations or liaison with various state boards as needed.

Page 21, 206-207 – while social workers should be responsible for continually learning about technology used to provide services, NASW, CSWE and ASWB should make a concerted effort to also incorporate the latest technology best practices into social work programs at the bachelor's and master's level and all continuing education offered by these organization, as leaders, drivers of change and setters of educational standards and guidelines for the social work profession.

Page 25, 281 – 292 - while the nature of this guidance is fine clearing stating that social workers should never have added expensive and obligation to use their own technology or phones to provide social services or anything that might compromise boundaries, but this guidance should reflect the latest in technology solutions and digital services that can be best applied as a helpful tool when using technology to perform job functions and on one device. Today technology tools are meant to integrate the personal and professional in a way that creates the best efficiencies for the user while keeping activities organized and in their proper place. Also the focus on "personal mobile phones" alone is not enough and should be expanded to "personal numbers, Skype accounts, Google Hangouts, or other web-based accounts that could be used to communicate with clients. For example, on a social worker's mobile phone, there is the ability to add additional lines or numbers so a social work can still use one device, in which the cost for service could be supported by an employer. In lines 655 – 656 websites and email accounts are referred to and this can be expanded upon.
https://techcrunch.com/2015/03/31/flyp-lets-you-add-multiple-numbers-to-your-smartphone. As a general comment, this guidance indicates the committee does not have an understanding of latest technology practices and tools, which would make it hard to provide guidance to the profession.

Section 2A : Designing and Delivering Services - Part A: Individuals, Families, and Groups
See General Comments

Section 2B: Designing and Delivering Services - Part B: Communities, Organizations, Administration, and Policy

Page 28, 344 – 354 – Digital communications and advocacy is more often done online. As such, "may use" statement should be strengthen to its "encouraged" and "should be used in many instances" to reflect the social work profession is keeping up with digital best practices and is progressive in reaching people where they are in communicating and seeking information, which is online, on social media and through various digital means. It doesn't serve us well as a profession, whose founding is based in advocacy and social justice principles, to appear soft in this regard. Pew Research offers a great deal of data about the increasing use of social media and the online activities that can be referred to.
http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/the-demographics-of-social-media-users/

Page 36 – 37, 515 – 525 – Just as commented on page 21, 206 -207, NASW, CSWE and ASWB should make a concerted effort to also incorporate the latest and best technology practices into social work programs at the bachelor's and master's level and all continuing education offered by these organizations, who are supposed to be the leaders, drivers of change and setting the educational standards for the social work profession.

Page 37, 534 – 537 – While it is possible electronic messages may be misinterpreted, misrepresented, or taken out of context, there should be a few suggestions for how social workers can protect themselves especially for original content created on a website or blog. Copyright, request for permission protocol, Creative Commons and various tools for collecting back links to content can be suggested.

Standard 2.15 – Not sure why this is a standard. Social workers should do this in all settings and situations such as delivering a speech or giving testimony to a political body. Is this not covered under the Code of Ethics value of integrity?

Standard 2.16 – Are social workers who do in-person fund raising not required to do this as well?

Standard 2.17 – This doesn't need to be a standard. Is this not covered in the COE, under the value of the importance of human relationships? Yes, social workers need to consider the client when making decisions about technology. Do we have this as an equivalent standard across other sets of practice standards? I think this standard brings up compelling research questions that have answers in the literature.
Standard 2.18 – This can be found in the COE. I wonder if it would be better to have a document that explains how the COE applies when technology is incorporated into practice rather than having these overly detailed standards. For example, many of the interpretations might be relevant now, but no so in five years. We will have to consistently be updating these standards when they include so much detail.

Standards 2.19 – 2.24 – Again, what are the in-person equivalents to all of these standards? Are not many of these standards addressed by the COE?

Section 3: Gathering, Managing, and Storing Information

Page 42 – 43, 629 – 644 - For social workers to be in a role to advise clients about minimizing risk when using technology such as password, in-person or electronic scenarios for providing information and reviewing virus precautions, it must be stressed in this section to coordinate and consult with technology officers or web masters of their organization for the latest best practices and if they are in private practice they should partner with the right technology organizations and experts to give them the proper guidance. We realize you say "when appropriate" but in almost all cases sourcing this expertise is not optional and should be stressed accordingly in this

guidance.

Page 43 – 44, 650 -659 – this language about boundaries is duplicated from Standard 2.08 section.

Page 44 – 45, 660 – 739 - Standard 3.03: Storing and Maintaining Security of Confidential Information – This section goes into much more detail about being aware of risks and securities issues than what is touched upon in lines 629 – 644, both sections seem duplicative in message and one section of the document should be designated as the "go to" source to advising on this topic.

Section 4: Communication with and about Clients
See General Comments

Section 5: Social Work Education

Standard 5.04: Social Media Policies, Page 71, 1179 - 1189 and Standard 2.09: Social Media Policy, Page 24-25, 268 – 280 – Comment and summary related to social media policy should be consolidated comprehensively in one place and referenced throughout the document as necessary.

Under Standard 5.10: Educator-Student Boundaries, the interpretation of the standard recommend that "to maintain appropriate boundaries with students, social work educators should avoid the use of personal technological devices and accounts for professional (educational) purposes." We agree that all educators should maintain appropriate ethical and professional boundaries with students and colleagues, but social workers should have the choice and autonomy in how they establish and maintain those boundaries. We would like to see the evidence that using a personal smart phone to answer calls or texts from students violates an ethical boundary. In fact, it makes educators more accessible to students. One of us started using text messaging with students many years ago, after working for a semester with a student who had a hearing disability. Texting was easier for the student to ask questions, and allowed us to communicate outside of class without an interpreter.

Glossary of Terms

Page 78, 1299 – 1312 – Use of the words Electronic Communication, Electronic Social Work Services, Electronic Technology specifically the word "electronic" sounds dated and not descriptive of the current way technology and social media is described today. Although electronic and digital seems interchangeable in meaning, we should incorporate the word "digital," "online," and "web based" more fluidly which is more aligned and current with how businesses and large non-profits describe their usage of the Internet, mobile apps and online solutions. Again, this makes it seem the committee is out of touch with current best practices.

Consider the following information:

http://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/embracing-digital-technology