

## Chapter MPSW 20

### CONDUCT

MPSW 20.01 Definition.

MPSW 20.02 Unprofessional conduct.

**Note:** Chapter SFC 20 was created as an emergency rule effective April 26, 1993.  
**Note:** Chapter SFC 20 was renumbered ch. MPSW 20 under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 1., Stats., and corrections made under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 7., Stats., Register October 2002 No. 562. Chapter MPSW 20 was reprinted Register November 2011 No. 671 to correct a Register date clerical error made in the Register December 2005 No. 600 printing.

**MPSW 20.01 Definition.** “Gross negligence” in the practice of social work, or marriage and family therapy, or professional counseling means the performance of professional services that does not comply with an accepted standard of practice that has a significant relationship to the protection of the health, safety or welfare of a patient, client, or the public, and that is performed in a manner indicating that the person performing the services knew or should have known, but acted with indifference to or disregard of, the accepted standard of practice.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1993, No. 455, eff. 12–1–93.

**MPSW 20.02 Unprofessional conduct.** Unprofessional conduct related to the practice under a credential issued under ch. 457, Stats., includes engaging in, attempting to engage in, or aiding or abetting the following conduct:

(1) Performing or offering to perform services for which the credential holder is not qualified by education, training or experience.

(2) Violating a law of any jurisdiction, the circumstances of which substantially relate to the practice under the credential.

(3) Undertaking or continuing performance of professional services after having been adjudged incompetent by any court of law.

(4) Using fraud or deception in the application for a credential.

(5) Using false, fraudulent, misleading or deceptive advertising, or maintaining a professional relationship with one engaging in such advertising.

(6) Engaging in false, fraudulent, deceptive or misleading billing practices.

(7) Reporting distorted, false, or misleading information or making false statements in practice.

(8) Discriminating on the basis of age, race, color, biological sex, gender, gender identity, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation by means of service provided or denied.

(9) Practicing or attempting to practice while the credential holder is impaired due to the utilization of alcohol or other drugs, or as a result of an illness which impairs the credential holder’s ability to appropriately carry out the functions delineated under the credential in a manner consistent with the safety of a client, patient, or the public.

(10) Revealing facts, data, information, records or communication received from a client in a professional capacity, except in any of the following circumstances:

(a) With the informed consent of the client or the client’s authorized representative.

(b) With notification to the client prior to the time the information was elicited of the use and distribution of the information.

(c) If necessary to prevent injury to the client or another person, or to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child, or threat-

ened abuse or neglect of a child, including mandatory reports under state or federal law.

(d) Pursuant to a lawful order of a court of law.

(e) Use of case history material for teaching, therapeutic or research purposes, or in textbooks or other literature, provided that proper precautions are taken to conceal the identity of the client.

(f) When required pursuant to federal or state statute.

(11) Engaging in sexual contact, sexual conduct, or any other behavior which could reasonably be construed as seductive, romantic, harassing, or exploitative, with:

(a) A client.

(b) A former client, regardless of the amount of time that has passed since the termination of professional services.

(c) A person to whom the credentialed person is providing teaching, supervisory, or other instructional services.

(12) Failing to obtain the informed consent of the client or client’s authorized representative prior to providing treatment.

(13) Failing to avoid dual relationships that may impair the credentialed person’s objectivity or create a conflict of interest. Dual relationships prohibited to credentialed persons include the credentialed person treating the credentialed person’s employers, employees, supervisors, supervisees, close friends or relatives, and any other person with whom the credentialed person shares any important continuing relationship.

(13g) Developing a personal relationship with a former client that would impact the credentialed person’s objectivity. This restriction shall apply for two years following the termination of the credential holder–client relationship.

(13r) Taking unfair advantage of any professional relationship, or exploiting clients, students, or supervisees.

(14) Failing to conduct an assessment, evaluation, or diagnosis as a basis for treatment.

(15) Employing or claiming to have available secret techniques or procedures that the credential holder refuses to divulge.

(16) In the conduct of research, failing to obtain the informed consent of a study participant, failing to protect participants from physical or mental discomfort, harm or danger, or failing to detect and remove any undesirable consequences to the participants resulting from research procedures.

(17) Failing to inform the client of financial interests which are not obvious and which might accrue to the credential holder for referral to or for any use of service, product or publication.

(18) Failing to maintain adequate records relating to services provided to a client in the course of a professional relationship. Clinical records shall be maintained for at least 7 years after the last service provided, unless otherwise provided by state or federal law.

(19) Violating any of the provisions of ch. 457, Stats.

(20) Failing to notify the board within 30 days that a credential permitting the practice of any profession previously issued to the credential holder has been revoked, suspended, limited, denied, surrendered under investigation, or subject to any other disciplinary action by the authorities of any jurisdiction.

(21) Failing to make reasonable efforts to notify a client or a client's authorized representative when professional services will be interrupted or terminated by the credential holder.

(22) Gross negligence in practice in a single instance, or negligence in practice in more than one instance.

(23) Having a credential permitting the practice or use of a title related to marriage and family therapy, professional counseling, or social work revoked, suspended, limited, denied, surrendered under investigation, or by any other jurisdiction.

(24) Failing to notify the appropriate section in writing within 48 hours after the entry of a judgment of conviction for a felony or misdemeanor against the credentialed person, including the date, place, and nature of the conviction or finding. Notice shall include a copy of the judgment of conviction and a copy of the complaint or other information which describes the nature of the crime in order that the section may determine whether the circumstances of the crime of which the credential holder was convicted are substantially related to the credential holder's practice.

(25) Employing or promoting any intervention or method that has the purpose of attempting to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, including attempting to change behaviors or expressions of self or to reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender. This does not include counseling that assists a client who is seeking to undergo a gender transition or who is in the process of undergoing a gender transition, or counseling that provides a client with acceptance, support, understanding, or that facilitates a client's coping, social support, and identity exploration or development. Nor does it include counseling in the form of sexual orientation-neutral or gender identity-neutral interventions provided for the purpose of preventing or addressing unlawful conduct or unsafe sexual practices, so long as the counseling is not provided for the purpose of

attempting to change the client's sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Note:** On January 12, 2023, the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules (JCRAR) adopted a motion under s. 227.26 (2) (d), Stats., that suspended s. MPSW 20.02 (25). Pursuant to s. 227.26 (2) (f), Stats., JCRAR took executive action to introduce 2023 LRB-0977/1 and LRB-1122/1 in the Senate and Assembly, in support of the JCRAR suspension.

(26) Knowingly aiding, assisting, or advising in the unlawful practice of marriage and family therapy, professional counseling, or social work.

(27) Failing to comply with mandatory child abuse reporting requirements under state or federal law.

(28) Failing to obtain written, informed consent from the client or client's legal representative prior to the use of electronic taping, recording, or filming procedures, unless the electronic taping, recording, or filming is necessary as part of a legal investigation or proceedings.

(29) Failing to exercise an adequate degree of supervision over subordinates.

(30) Refusing to cooperate in a timely manner with the section's investigation of a complaint lodged against a credentialed person. Credentialed persons taking longer than 30 days to respond shall have the burden of demonstrating that they have acted in a timely manner.

(31) Withholding documentation, or approval for submission, of a supervisee's clinical experience hours required to obtain a credential.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1993, No. 455, eff. 12-1-93; CR 01-026: am. (13), Register December 2001 No. 552, eff. 1-1-02; CR 02-105: am. (intro.) (1), (4), (9), (15), (17), (20), (21) and (23), Register October 2002 No. 562, eff. 11-1-02; CR 05-043: am. (18) Register December 2005 No. 600, eff. 1-1-06; CR 19-166: am. (intro.), (8), (10) (intro) to (e), r. and recr. (11), am. (12), (13), cr. (13g), (13r), am. (14), r. and recr. (16), am. (18), (20), (23), cr. (24) to (31) Register November 2022 No. 803, eff. 12-1-22.