

Manitoba College of Social Workers “Response to MB Vital Statistics Change of Gender Identification”

Manitoba Vital Statistics and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission recently announced, “as of April 27, 2020 individuals can select the following options when applying for a change of sex designation under *The Vital Statistics Act*:

- Male (M)
- Female (F)
- (X)”

(Manitoba Vital Statistics, 2020)

Collecting sexual orientation and gender identity information is considered critical to promoting client-centred care and facilitating clinical decision support. (Maragh, Torain, et al., 2017). Given the link between gender identity and social determinants of health, appropriate gender identification in social services and health care systems is an essential step to improving health equity (Pega & Veale, 2015).

Social workers and their employing agencies are encouraged to engage with clients and community stakeholders to review and revise gender identity options within their organizations. Such actions are in keeping with core social work values and the Manitoba College of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2018) and Standards of Practice (2018) to uphold human rights, act to reduce barriers, expand choices for all persons, acknowledge diversity and advocate for the elimination of discrimination. The College also calls on the Government of Manitoba to engage with the community to explore appropriate gender identification options in all provincial organizations, documentation and records.

In order to qualify for a change in sex designation under the *Vital Statistics Act*, individuals require a supporting letter from a regulated health care professional. The Vital Statistics Agency of Manitoba and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission have identified social workers as eligible to provide supporting letters in accordance with the requirements outlined by Manitoba Vital Statistics, which are available online at https://vitalstats.gov.mb.ca/change_of_sex_designation.html#q5

Social workers are guided by the Manitoba College of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2018) and Standards of Practice (2018) in fulfilling this role and are encouraged to seek consultation and support from professional colleagues with relevant expertise as needed.

Members are encouraged to contact the College at 204-888-9477 or info@mcsww.ca for consultation and guidance regarding social work ethics and practice standards.

Manitoba College of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2018)

Value 1: Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Person

Social work is founded on a long-standing commitment to respect the inherent dignity and individual worth of all persons.

Social Workers recognize and respect the diversity of Canadian society, taking into account the breadth of differences that exist among individuals, families, groups and communities. Social Workers uphold the human rights of individuals and groups as expressed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice

Social Workers believe in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services, and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity and to afford them protection from harm. Social Workers promote social fairness and equitable distribution of resources, and act to reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs. Social Workers oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that stereotype particular persons or groups.

Value 3: Service to Humanity

The social work profession upholds service in the interest of others, consistent with social justice, as a core professional objective. In professional practice, Social Workers balance individual needs, and rights and freedoms with collective interest in the service of humanity. When acting in a professional capacity, Social Workers place professional service before personal goals or advantage and use their power and authority in disciplined and responsible ways that serve society.

Value 4: Integrity in Professional Practice

Social Workers demonstrate respect for the profession's purpose, values and ethical principles relevant to their field of practice. Social Workers maintain a high level of professional conduct by acting honestly and responsibly and promoting the values of the profession. Social Workers strive for impartiality in their professional practice, and refrain from imposing their personal values, views and preferences on clients. It is the responsibility of Social Workers to establish the tenor of their professional relationships with clients and others to whom they have a professional duty, and to maintain professional boundaries. As individuals, Social Workers take care in their actions not to bring the reputation of the profession into disrepute. An essential element of integrity in professional practice is ethical accountability based on this Code of Ethics, the IFSW International Declaration of Ethical Principles of Social Work, and other relevant provincial/territorial standards and guidelines. Where conflicts exist with respect to these sources of ethical guidance, Social Workers are encouraged to seek advice, including consultation with their regulatory body.

Guideline 1 – Ethical Responsibilities to Clients

1.1.1 Social Workers maintain the best interests of clients as a priority, with due regard to the respective interests of others.

1.1.2 Social Workers do not discriminate against any person on the basis of age, abilities, ethnic background, gender, language, marital status, national ancestry, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.

1.2.2 Social Workers acknowledge diversity within and among individuals, communities, and cultures.

Collaboration and Consultation

3.2 Social Workers seek the advice and counsel of colleagues whenever such consultation is in the best interests of clients.

Guideline 4.1 – Professional Practice

4.1.3 Social Workers appropriately challenge and work to improve policies, procedures, practice and service provisions that:

- Are not in the best interests of clients
- Are inequitable
- Are in any way oppressive, disempowering or culturally inappropriate; and
- Demonstrate discrimination

Guideline 8 – Ethical Responsibilities to Society

8.2.1 Social Workers strive to identify, document and advocate for the prevention and elimination of domination or exploitation of, and discrimination against, any person, group or class on the basis of age, abilities, ethnic background, gender, language, marital status, national ancestry, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

[Manitoba College of Social Workers Standards of Practice \(2018\)](#)

Standard 1 – The Professional Relationship

1.1 The best interest of the client will be the primary concern of the Social Workers in providing professional services. Best interests of the client mean that the wishes, desires, motivations and plans of the client are taken by the Social Worker as the primary consideration in any intervention plan developed by the Social Workers. All actions and interventions taken by the Social Worker are subject to the reasonable belief that the client will benefit from the action.

Standard 2 – Professional Competence

2.1 Social Workers are responsible for being aware of the extent and parameters of their competence and shall limit the scope of their practice accordingly. When a client's needs extend beyond the Social Worker's expertise, the Social Worker will inform the client of the option to be referred to another

practitioner. Another option would be for the Social Worker to work collaboratively with a professional who has the expertise needed to meet the client's needs. The decision to recommend specialized treatment services, referrals to other professionals, or to continue the professional relationships to be guided by the best interest of the client principle.

2.4 Social workers will ensure that any professional recommendations or opinions that they provide in the course of their practice are appropriately substantiated by evidence and are supported by a credible body of social work knowledge.

Standard 3 – Integrity of Professional Practice

3.4 Social Workers will not discriminate against any person regardless of ethnicity, language, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical appearance, physical or mental disability, economic status, political affiliation or national origin.

Manitoba College of Social Workers Amended and Re-stated By-Laws (2020)

Values

1-5 In achieving its vision and mission, the work of the College is based on values of respect, for the equality, worth and dignity of all people, social inclusion, and social justice. The College shall strive to foster practices that reflect diversity.

Resources and Links

Canadian Health Infoway (2019). Sex and Gender Working Group. Retrieved from <https://infocentral.infoway-inforoute.ca/en/news-events/infocentral-news/3708-new-sex-gender-working-group>

Manitoba Vital Statistics Act (2020). Retrieved from <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/v060e.php>

Manitoba Vital Statistics (2020). Change of Sex Designation. Retrieved from https://vitalstats.gov.mb.ca/change_of_sex_designation.html#q10

Manitoba College of Social Workers (2018). Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <https://mcsww.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Code-of-Ethics-MAR-2018-WEB.pdf>

Manitoba College of Social Workers (2018). Standards of Practice. Retrieved from <https://mcsww.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Standards-of-Practice-MAR-2018-WEB-Aug-19.pdf>

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (2020). Gender and Gender Expression. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/sexuality/gender.html>

Maragh-Bass, Allysha C., Torain, M., Adler, R., Schneider, E., Ranjit, A., Kodadek, L., Shields, R., German, D., Snyder, C., Peterson, S., Schuur, J., Lau, B. & Haider, A.H. (2015). Risks, benefits, and importance of

collecting sexual orientation and gender identity data in healthcare settings: A multi-method analysis of patient and provider perspectives. *LGBT Health*. 4(2), 141-152.

Pega F & Veale JF. (2015). The case for the World Health Organization 's Commission on Social Determinants of Health to address gender identity. *American Journal of Public Health*. 105(3), 58 – 62.

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (2012). Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Non-conforming People. Retrieved from https://www.wpath.org/media/cms/Documents/SOC%20v7/Standards%20of%20Care_V7%20Full%20Book_English.pdf

Provincial Resources

Diversity Essentials <https://www.diversityessentials.com/>

Gender Dysphoria Assessment and Action for Youth <https://www.gdaay.ca/>

Klinik Community Health – Trans Health Klinik <http://klinik.mb.ca/health-care/transgender-health-klinik/health-care-providers/>

Rainbow Resource Centre <https://rainbowresourcecentre.org/>

Sexuality Education Resource Centre Manitoba <https://serc.mb.ca/>

Two-Spirit Manitoba <https://twospiritmanitoba.ca/>