

# Professional Practice Guidance

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British Columbia College of Social Workers  
Guidance for Registrants: Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Practice  
June 2025 Edition

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## Ethical and Competent Use of AI in Social Work Practice

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an emerging technology that has the potential to play a role in the community and health landscape. The use of AI has demonstrated efficiencies and innovation, and registrants may be considering or already using AI in practice to assist with documentation or other administrative tasks.

It is imperative that the use of AI in client care is done with confidentiality and ethical considerations in mind. The following information has been developed to assist registrants contemplating the use of AI in their practice.

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## Self-Review Questions

Registrants should consider the following questions about the use of AI in their practice:

- **Is using AI-related tools in the client's best interest?**  
*The BCCSW Code of Ethics affirms that "a social worker shall maintain the best interest of the client as the primary professional obligation."*
- **By using AI, am I prioritizing the client's needs? Is a treatment plan or other documentation developed through AI evidence-based?**  
*Technology Standard 1.01 requires registrants to engage in appropriate education and supervision prior to using new technologies.*  
*Technology Standard 1.02 further requires registrants to "review relevant professional literature and participate in continuing education related to electronic social work practice."*
- **Have I ensured that I am not being false, misleading, or inaccurate by signing documentation or a treatment plan developed by AI?**  
*Standard 4.1 requires that "social workers shall ensure that records are accurate and complete and reflect the services provided."*
- **Have I researched the current and relevant legislation that relates to the use of AI?**  
*Technology Standard 1.09 requires registrants to "comply with the regulations governing the use of this technology both in the jurisdiction in which they are regulated and in the jurisdiction in which the client is located."*



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- **Have I ensured that no client demographics have been inputted in the AI tool or platform?**  
*Technology Standard 3.02 requires the use of “proper safeguards, including encryption” and protection of client information stored or transmitted electronically.*
- **Am I aware of where the information I am inputting is going, and where it will be stored?**  
*Technology Standard 5.03 requires social workers to “inform clients about the mechanisms used to secure and back up records” and how long records will be retained.*

**If a registrant answers “no” to any of these questions, they should reconsider using AI in practice and seek further consultation or supervision.**

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### Upholding Ethical and Professional Practice

As the provincial regulator, the College is legislated to develop and enforce professional standards which are applicable to all social workers. Registrants are required to adhere to the **Code of Ethics** and **Standards of Practice**, which set out the minimum standards of professional practice and conduct for the profession.

When integrating AI tools, registrants must uphold the following core principles from the BCCSW’s official standards:

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#### Maintain Competence

*“Social workers shall review relevant professional literature and participate in continuing education related to electronic social work practice.”*

— Technology Standard 1.02

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#### Protect Privacy and Security

*“Social workers shall use proper safeguards, including encryption, when sharing confidential information using digital or other electronic technology.”*

*“Social workers shall protect clients’ stored confidential information through the use of proper safeguards, including secure firewalls, encryption software, and password protection.”*

— Technology Standard 3.02

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#### Obtain Informed Consent

*“Social workers shall obtain the informed consent of the individuals using their services during the initial screening or interview and prior to initiating services.”*

— Technology Standard 2.01

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### Comply with Jurisdictional Requirements

*“Social workers shall comply with the regulations governing the use of this technology both in the jurisdiction in which they are regulated and in the jurisdiction in which the client is located.”*

— Technology Standard 1.09

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### Final Considerations

AI tools must **not** be used to generate clinical documentation, assessments, or treatment plans. These activities require the professional judgment, discretion, and accountability of a regulated social worker, in accordance with BCCSW’s Standards of Practice.

When in doubt, registrants are expected to consult with a supervisor, seek professional consultation, or review the BCCSW Standards before integrating any AI-related tools into their workflow.

### Summary: Use AI Cautiously and Ethically

- ✓ Maintain your professional role
- ✓ Safeguard client privacy
- ✓ Do not delegate clinical reasoning to AI practice support tools/software.
- ✓ Keep accurate, personally accountable records
- ✓ Seek supervision if unsure

### For more information, please refer to:

BCCSW Standards of Practice

- General Standards
- Technology Standards

### Questions about this applying this in practice?

Contact the Practice Team at [professional.practice@bccsw.ca](mailto:professional.practice@bccsw.ca)

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