

Weight Stigma: An Ethical Issue for Social Workers



This series of social media posts was based on a letter Dr. Nancy Ellis-Ordway sent to the NASW in 2018 regarding ethical violations perpetuating weight stigma. The posts were shared over the course of 7 days during the week of World Social Work Day. Apart from this introductory post and a final series summary post, the 5 posts covers weight stigma as an ethical issue professional social workers may face with clients. The posts were also designed to promote the Center for Body Image Research and Policy and the Center's collaboration with clinical practicing social workers.



**WEIGHT STIGMA IS A
PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE.**

**WEIGHT STIGMA IS A
SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE.**

**WEIGHT STIGMA IS AN
ETHICAL ISSUE.**

#NASWCODEOFETHICS



Center for
Body Image
Research
and Policy



@CBIRP

Dangers of weight loss attempts are not considered when referring clients to programs that may harm them.

~Dr. Nancy Ellis-Ordway

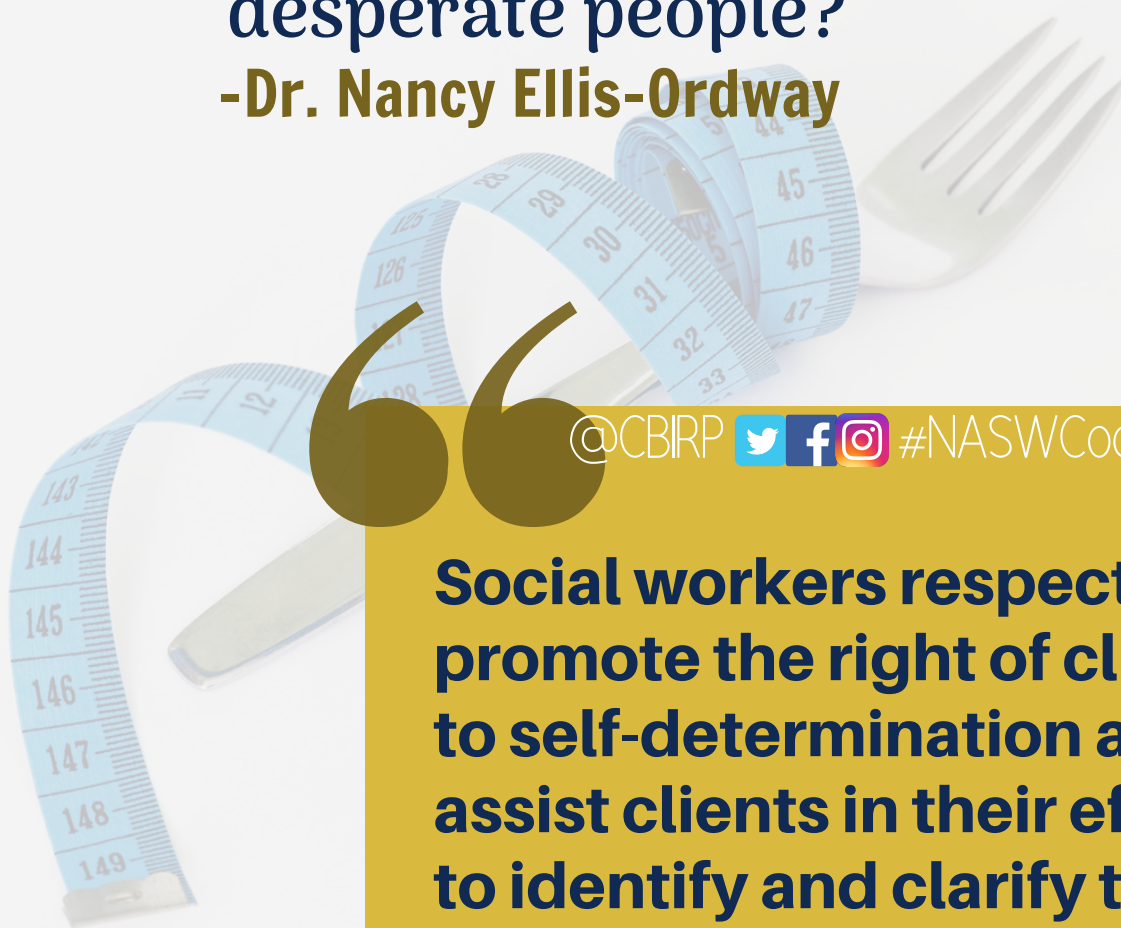
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Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients' interests are primary.

National Association of Social Workers
Code of Ethics 1.01

What if we are violating self-determination of clients by referring them to harmful weight loss programs taking advantage of desperate people?

-Dr. Nancy Ellis-Ordway



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Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals.

National Association of Social Workers
Code of Ethics 1.02 | Self-Determination



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Research
and Policy

We violate clients'
right to informed
consent if the risks
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~Dr. Nancy Ellis-Ordway

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Social workers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services, limits to services because of the requirements of a third-party payer

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL
WORKERS CODE OF ETHICS 1.03A

We are not protecting clients from harm if we contribute to weight stigma and diet culture



@CBIRP    #NASWCodeOfEthics

-Dr. Nancy Ellis-Ordway



When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps (including appropriate education, research, training, consultation, and supervision) to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from harm.

National Association of Social Workers
Code of Ethics 1.04c



When we have the opportunity (as individuals or as an organization) to shape or promote policies or interventions, we must ensure that they are compatible with the realization of equity and social justice for all people.

-DR. NANCY ELLIS-ORDWAY

Social workers should advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and should promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice.

Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.



WEIGHT STIGMA: A SOCIAL JUSTICE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND ETHICAL ISSUE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

~DR. NANCY ELLIS-ORDWAY~

What if we are violating clients' self-determination by referring them to harmful weight loss programs taking advantage of desperate people?

NASW Code of Ethics 1.02

We are not protecting clients from harm if we contribute to weight stigma and diet culture.

NASW Code of Ethics 1.04c

We violate clients' right to informed consent if the risks of weight loss are not clearly described.

NASW Code of Ethics 1.03a

Dangers of weight loss attempts are not considered when referring clients to programs that may harm them.

NASW Code of Ethics 1.01

When we have the opportunity to shape or promote policies or interventions, we must ensure that they are compatible with the realization of equity and social justice for all people.

NASW Code of Ethics 6.01, 6.02, & 6.04c