



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK
Leadership in Research, Career Advancement, and Education

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Dear Dr. Goldfarb,

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) acknowledges receipt of your letter dated May 13, 2026, regarding our 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). As the national accrediting body for social work education, our mission is centered on ensuring that future generations of social workers can competently serve all clients and all communities. CSWE is focused on improving merit, fairness, and excellence in and among all communities.

CSWE is not a health care agency per se; however, many social workers educated in CSWE accredited programs work with patients in dealing with health care issues. As we understand it, Do No Harm is a 501(c)(3) organization focused on health care issues. Likewise, your letter refers to a Presidential Executive Order entitled Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education. This executive order is applicable to federal and/or institutional accreditors. Please be aware that CSWE is not a recognized institutional accreditor or a gate keeper for federal financial aid. Rather, CSWE is a programmatic accreditor. Hence, we do not believe that this Order or any implementing regulations of the Department of Education specifically apply to CSWE.

The EPAS are not fleeting, reflexive documents tied to recent political trends. They are developed through years of rigorous, peer-reviewed research as well as input, direction, and wisdom provided by social work educators from across the country. They are updated every seven years, and they can and will evolve as needed to best serve the needs of students, clients, and communities. They will always be rooted in professional competency, consistent with the profession's ethical obligations, and designed to prepare practitioners to serve everyone effectively. Ensuring that students are trained to the highest professional standard to work with all populations has been part of our standards for decades. A few years ago, we began our work on the 2029 EPAS with an environmental scan reflecting the most relevant literature and research on needs of students and the communities they will serve.

CSWE is committed to assuring that racism plays no part in social work education. We are aware of the debate over what some individuals have deemed "DEI Policy" and of the view of some members of society that the policy may have been used to impose certain forms of racism in education. Let us be clear: CSWE has never imposed a DEI policy deemed illegal at the state or federal level to deny accreditation to any applicant for accreditation or continued accreditation and will not do so in the future. In this regard, we respectfully disagree with your characterization of CSWE standards. CSWE has not and will not ask any program or member to break any laws. In states where said legislation has been enacted, our organization has and will work with programs to ensure they can meet the required educational standards and fully abide by their local laws.



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Although CSWE and Do No Harm share common goals of harm prevention and reduction, promoting healthy communities through merit, excellence, and fairness for all, and standing up for the safety of children, your letter suggests that equipping social workers with an understanding of how human differences, discrimination, trauma, poverty, and environment impact people's lives is itself a source of harm. We disagree with that premise. A social worker cannot effectively treat, advocate for, or support individuals, families, and communities without understanding the context that shapes lived experiences. Diversity is everyone's lived experience. Everyone has overlapping identities tied to educational background, location, economic status, physical condition, race, gender, and more—and these factors shape a person's experiences. Preparing social workers to recognize and respond to this reality is not indoctrination, it is training required for ethical and competent practice. A social worker who cannot recognize how a person's disability impacts access to services, or how service-related trauma affects veterans, or how language barriers impact immigrant families' ability to access care, or how historical and ongoing housing discrimination impacts family stability and well-being, will not be adequately prepared to practice effectively.

The EPAS are apolitical and designed to cultivate intellectual diversity in grappling with human challenges and generating solutions. Social workers are ethically obligated to serve their clients and communities with an equal duty of care, regardless of political affiliation, personal beliefs, identity, or background. Social work students will encounter clients with a variety of ideologies and lived experiences—conservatives, progressives, those who are religious and those who have no religion, veterans, law enforcement officers, families, immigrants, rural populations, and literally everyone else. Their education should prepare them to effectively and respectfully navigate those differences. They are graded on professional competence—not personal beliefs. For 75 years, CSWE has pledged to improve the quality of social work education and thus writes its standards accordingly. CSWE does not dictate a social work program's curriculum or class design. We provide a framework based on competencies that social work students must be able to demonstrate to practice ethically and effectively—competencies that are based on the Code of Ethics that has undergirded the profession for decades. Programs have flexibility in designing unique curricula that meet the needs of their students and communities. Respect for lived experiences and contextual differences is encouraged. We will continue to ensure that social work students learn how to practice and lead with knowledge, skill, fairness, and integrity.

We hope this letter addresses your concerns and look forward to meeting you.

Respectfully yours,

Halaevalu F.O. Vakalahi, PhD
President and CEO