SOCIAL WORK VALUES

and ETHICS

> fourth edition

SOCIAL WORK VALUES AND ETHICS

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE

FREDERIC G. REAMER, SERIES EDITOR

Social work has a unique history, purpose, perspective, and method. The primary purpose of this series is to articulate these distinct qualities and to define and explore the ideas, concepts, and skills that together constitute social work's intellectual foundations and boundaries and its emerging issues and concerns.

To accomplish this goal, the series will publish a cohesive collection of books that address both the core knowledge of the profession and its newly emerging topics. The core is defined by the evolving consensus, as primarily reflected in the Council of Social Work Education's Curriculum Policy Statement, concerning what courses accredited social work education programs must include in their curricula. The series will be characterized by an emphasis on the widely embraced ecological perspective; attention to issues concerning direct and indirect practice; and emphasis on cultural diversity and multiculturalism, social justice, oppression, populations at risk, and social work values and ethics. The series will have a dual focus on practice traditions and emerging issues and concepts.

The complete series list follows the index.

Frederic G. Reamer

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PREFACE

SOCIAL WORKERS' understanding of professional values and ethics has matured considerably in recent years. During the earliest years of the profession's history, social workers' attention was focused primarily on cultivating a set of values upon which the mission of social work could be based. Over time the profession has nurtured and refined a set of values that has given tremendous meaning and purpose to the careers of generations of social workers. Social work's enduring commitment to vulnerable and oppressed populations, and its simultaneous preoccupation with individual well-being and social justice, are rooted in the profession's rich value base.

But the lens through which social workers view values and ethics has changed dramatically over time. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that social workers now look at these issues through several lenses, not just one, and that the angles of these lenses periodically shift in response to cultural developments and trends. Today's social workers face issues involving values and ethics that their predecessors in the profession could not possibly have imagined. What social worker, in the early twentieth century, could have anticipated the magnitude of the debates about the ethical issues for social workers that have emerged from the AIDS crisis or the complex privacy and confidentiality issues facing social workers who use e-mail, Facebook, and other Internet tools to serve clients? What social worker in the 1930s could have forecast the ethics debate about social workers' role in the use of animal or artificial organs to save a dying client's life or ethical problems created by cutting-edge psychopharmacology and electronic monitoring of certain clients?

Especially since the late 1970s, a growing number of social work scholars and practitioners have been studying, exploring, and debating issues involving values and ethics in the profession. Literature on social work values and ethics,