

Making Gains Participant Handout

Core Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce

The *Core Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce* is a supportive resource that identifies the core technical and core behavioural competencies required to perform effectively in the specialized substance abuse field. The competencies apply to seven common job clusters, including: Health Promotion, Support and Outreach, Counselling, Withdrawal Management, Supervision, Administration Support, and Senior Management. They may also apply to allied professionals (e.g., primary health care providers, enforcement officials, Elders, volunteers, and social workers) working with individuals who have substance abuse issues. The competencies are supported by accompanying performance management and interview guides and tools.

What exactly are competencies?

Competencies are specific and measurable skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values needed to effectively perform a particular job.

Two types of core competencies have been defined as follows:

- **Technical competencies** are the knowledge and abilities required when applying specific technical principles and information in a job function or role. They are the "*what*" of a job, usually learned in an educational environment or in the workforce. Counselling is one example of a technical competency.
- **Behavioural competencies** are the abilities, attitudes and values required to perform effectively in a job function or role. They are the "*how*" of performing a job, typically learned and developed through life experiences. They complement technical competencies. Effective communication is one example of a behavioural competency.

Why were they developed?

A 2004 survey of the Canadian addiction treatment workforce revealed a critical need for national standards and competencies for the substance abuse workforce. In close consultation with subject matter experts and competency consultants, CCSA identified core competencies, both technical (2007) and behavioural (2009).

Why are they important?

The Canadian substance abuse workforce now has a set of national evidence-informed competencies that will:

- Enhance professionalism within the field
- Identify knowledge and skill sets for substance abuse and allied professionals
- Support employers with hiring and staff development practices
- Assist educators and trainers in developing strategies for learning
- Provide Canadians with a more consistent quality of service delivery from the substance abuse workforce

How were the competencies developed?

The first phase in this initiative comprised a set of core technical competencies (version 1) published in November 2007. A literature review and comparative analysis of the technical competencies is expected to be completed by early fall 2009. That research, and the completion of the second project of the initiative, will contribute to the next version of the technical competencies.

For the second phase of the initiative, CCSA researched and consulted with subject matter experts across Canada in 2009 to identify a set of 18 behavioural competencies for the substance abuse workforce. This included consultations with over 100 focus group participants, other subject matter experts, and senior managers from a National Advisory Group on Workforce Development (NAGWD).

Together with CCSA and competency consultants, these experts validated the core behavioural competencies, identified appropriate proficiency levels for seven occupational clusters most common in the substance abuse field, and developed performance management and interview guides and tools.

Who is NAGWD?

NAGWD is a group of subject matter experts/senior managers from across Canada whose purpose is to ensure cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional engagement in the process of developing, implementing and evaluating a national strategy for developing the workforce.

What does this resource provide?

As a result of the valuable contributions from the field and experts from across Canada, the Behavioural Competency document provides the following resources:

- Competency definitions
- Occupational cluster descriptions
- Competency profiles
- "How-to" guide on adapting the competency profiles
- Sample behavioural indicators for each competency
- Competency-based interview guide
- Interview tools for seven identified job clusters
- Performance management guide
- Performance management tools for seven identified job clusters

How do I learn more?

Go to www.cnsaap.ca to find out how you can use the competencies and get the tools. For more information, contact competencies@ccsa.ca.

14 Technical Competencies and Definitions

Competency Title	Definition
Case Management	The knowledge and skill required to match clients with the most appropriate available services as determined through the screening, assessment, and treatment planning process, and to effectively manage client movement within and between service(s) through accurate documentation, the appropriate sharing of client information, and collaboration with partner services as required.
Community Development	The knowledge and skill required to facilitate the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being. It is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Effective community development should be sustainable, well-planned, inclusive and equitable, holistic and integrated, initiated and supported by community members, of benefit to the community, and grounded in experience that leads to best practice.
Counselling	The knowledge and skill required to adopt and apply a comprehensive range of evidence-informed counselling styles and techniques aimed at improving the client's overall bio/psycho/social/spiritual health. This includes knowing how to motivate and engage the person or group in a treatment process and how to elicit intentional behaviour change, guided at all times by the highest ethical standards of clinical practice.
Crisis Intervention	The knowledge and skill required to recognize and respond effectively to an individual/group/community in crisis.
Family and Social Support	The knowledge and skill required to work effectively with those individuals or groups that have been most affected by the client's substance use problems and/or have a significant ability to support the client's treatment goals. These individuals or groups may constitute "family" in the traditional sense or in a broad sense, including social networks and community systems, depending on the client's preference and circumstances.
Group Facilitation	The knowledge and skill required to develop and implement evidence-informed models, methods and styles when working in a group treatment setting. This requires a clear understanding of how to manage group dynamics in order to motivate and engage participants in a group process and an understanding of the acquisition of skills associated with positive behaviour change.
Mental Health	The knowledge and skill specific to mental health that are required to work effectively with clients experiencing co-occurring substance abuse and mental health problems.
Outreach	The knowledge and skill required to design and deliver effective outreach services targeting prevention and health promotion, early intervention, treatment and/or aftercare services, to a broad range of client populations including those at risk for, experiencing or affected by substance abuse, through the mobilization of multidisciplinary teams composed of substance abuse specialists, community-based resources, and allied professionals, as required.

Competency Title	Definition
Pharmacology	The knowledge and skill required to understand various types of pharmacological substances and to apply interventions that are relevant to the field, including the range and types of psychoactive substances that are used and abused, alone or in combination (polydrug use), pharmacological interventions that are applied as harm reduction measures or in the treatment of substance use disorders, and/or pharmacological interventions that are used in the treatment or management of co-occurring mental health disorders.
Prevention and Health Promotion	The knowledge and skill required to effectively prevent, delay or reduce immediate and long-term harms related to substance abuse through the design and delivery of prevention and health promotion programs/services in a variety of settings to diverse communities and groups.
Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation	The knowledge and skill required to develop a new program or modify an existing program in response to an identified need, oversee implementation, and evaluate outcomes.
Screening and Assessment	The knowledge and skill required to select, administer and interpret evidence-informed screening and assessment tools that are used to measure substance use, abuse and dependency. Information is gathered through the use of skillful interviewing techniques and the results are interpreted for the purpose of informing the development of a client-centred treatment plan and motivating and referring the client to an appropriate intervention service (for example, withdrawal management, day outpatient treatment, residential treatment, treatment for co-occurring mental health disorders, etc.).
Treatment Planning	The knowledge and skill required to participate effectively in a collaborative process that seeks to identify the client's goals, as derived from the assessment findings, match the client to the treatment activities that will assist in achieving these goals, and monitor the plan to ensure that changes in the client's circumstances, wants or needs are addressed.
Understanding Substance Use, Abuse and Dependency	The knowledge and skill required to understand the continuum of substance use, abuse and dependency, and the diverse social, political, economic and cultural context within which this continuum exists, including the risk and resiliency factors that aggravate or mitigate risk for problematic substance use, and to apply this understanding in the development of effective, appropriate and respectful strategies and subsequent actions.

18 Behavioural Competencies and Definitions

Competency Title	Definition
Adaptability/ Flexibility	Willingly adjust one's approach to meet the demands and needs of constantly changing conditions, situations and people and to work effectively in difficult or ambiguous situations.
Analytical Thinking and Decision Making	Gather, synthesize and evaluate information to determine possible alternatives and outcomes and make well-informed, timely decisions. Includes critical thinking and reasoning.
Client-centred Change	Enhance, facilitate, support, empower, and otherwise increase client motivation for positive change. Positive change is achieved by involving the client actively in the change process and encouraging the client to take responsibility for the outcomes he or she achieves. Clients may be individuals, groups, communities and organizations.
Client Service Orientation	Provide service excellence to clients (which can include individuals, groups, communities and organizations). Includes making a commitment to serve clients and focusing one's efforts on discovering and meeting client needs within personal, professional and organizational capacities and boundaries.
Collaboration and Network Building	Identify and create informal and formal interdisciplinary networks and allied community groups to support the provision of client services and achievement of the organization's objectives. Clients include individuals, groups, organizations and communities.
Continuous Learning	Identify and pursue learning opportunities to enhance one's professional performance/development and the effective delivery of high-quality programs and services.
Creativity and Innovation	Use evidence-based practices in innovative and creative ways to initiate both effective new ways of working and advances in the understanding of the field of practice. Innovation and creativity are achieved in translating research into practice to optimize improvements in service delivery and professional practice.
Developing Others	Facilitate and motivate sustained learning and create learning opportunities and resources, as well as promote and respect others' needs for ownership of learning outcomes. Includes creation of a continuous learning environment that fosters positive growth in both work and public contexts among peers, clients, client families, communities and other groups (recipients).
Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness	Provide respectful, equitable and effective services to diverse populations, as defined by culture, age, gender, language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, legal status, health, ability, sexual orientation, type and mode of substance use, etc. Affirm and value the worth of all individuals, families, groups, and communities; and protect the dignity of all.

Competency Title	Definition
Effective Communication	Articulate both verbally and in writing across a range of technologies in a manner that builds trust, respect and credibility and that ensures the message is received and understood by the audience. Includes active listening skills (attending, being silent, summarizing, paraphrasing, questioning and empathizing) and congruent non-verbal communications.
Ethical Conduct and Professionalism	Provide professional services according to the principles and values of integrity, competence, responsibility, respect and trust to safeguard both self and others. Includes the development of professionalism and ethical behaviour in self and others (individuals, groups, organizations, communities).
Interpersonal Rapport/Savvy	Establish and maintain relationships based on mutual respect and trust, appropriate sensitivity, empathy and compassion with clients, organizational members and the greater community. Encompasses skills of tact, diplomacy, and sensitivity in all encounters with others.
Leadership	Help others achieve excellent results and create enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission, even in the face of critical debate and adversity.
Planning and Organizing	Identify and prioritize tasks, develop and implement plans, evaluate outcomes, and adjust activities in order to achieve objectives.
Self Care	Deliberately and continuously apply professional and personal self care principles to oneself and, at times, others to sustain optimal productivity while maintaining physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health.
Self Management	Appropriately manage one's own emotions and strong feelings; maintain a calm and tactful composure under a broad range of challenging circumstances; and think clearly and stay focused under pressure. Encompasses self-regulation and mindfulness.
Self Motivation and Drive	Remain motivated and focused on a goal until the best possible results are achieved, with both passion for making a difference in the substance abuse field and persistence despite confronting obstacles, resistance and setbacks.
Teamwork and Cooperation	Work cooperatively and productively with others within and across organizational units to achieve common goals; demonstrate respect, cooperation, collaboration, and consensus-building.

Core Behavioural Competencies: Proficiency Levels

Each competency has four proficiency levels and behavioural indicators that describe examples of successful performance for that competency at each of the four levels. The indicators are neither exhaustive nor mandatory. They provide guidance in determining which level of competency a particular job might require, based on the actions one would expect to see from an individual performing successfully in that job.

The levels are cumulative; someone who is required to have a basic, or level 2, proficiency is also expected to have the introductory, or level 1, proficiency.

Two sample behavioural competencies, *Client Service Orientation* and *Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness*, are provided on the following pages.

Client Service Orientation Provide service excellence to clients (which can include individuals, groups, communities and organizations). Includes making a commitment to serve clients and focusing one's efforts on discovering and meeting client needs within personal, professional and organizational capacities and boundaries.

	1 = Introductory	2 = Basic	3 = Intermediate	4 = Advanced
E X A M P L E S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on genuinely understanding the unique nature of each client's situation and perspective • Explains the different treatment models may be differentially effective for certain types of clients and client problems • Engages the client in mutual dialogue and values client's perspective • Responds to client needs in a timely, professional, helpful and courteous manner, regardless of client attitude • Follows up with clients during and after delivery of services to ensure their needs have been met • Informs client of confidentiality rights and client service program procedures and regulations • Accurately assesses each client's needs and exercises good judgement in recommending appropriate services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently provides client service within professionally established and regulated practice boundaries • Keeps clients up-to-date on their progress and changes that affect them • Ensures service is provided to clients during critical periods • Collaborates with clients to prioritize issues and develop action plans accordingly • Looks for ways to add value to client service and enhance client service delivery systems and processes • Employs evidence-, experience- and strength-based practices in alignment with client needs • Formulates mutually agreed upon client service goals and objectives and methods of monitoring and evaluating both progress and outcomes • Consults other professionals and refers cases to appropriate resources when client needs surpass practice limits and competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to the organization and profession through advocacy, client service excellence and alignment of services with client needs • Acts as a seasoned facilitator and advisor as appropriate, providing independent input on complex issues and initiatives • Encourages client to consider difficult/critical issues that are in their best interests • Proactively addresses preventable client adverse effects and acts to implement and support initiatives to improve service delivery • Monitors and evaluates client service impacts and outcomes using evidence-based approaches • Builds networks to support client service and advocates on behalf of client to gain necessary resources • Collaborates with clients to identify when existing services are no longer needed and plans for discharge and/or revision of goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically and systematically evaluates emerging and longer-term opportunities for and threats to meeting clients' needs integrating results from emerging research and evidence • Determines strategic direction to best meet clients' evolving needs • Monitors, evaluates and, as needed, renews the client service model and service standards • Continually assesses systemic organizational and client service delivery processes to enhance service • Creates organizational cultures that value and support high quality service delivery

Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness Provide respectful, equitable and effective services to diverse populations, as defined by culture, age, gender, language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, legal status, health, ability, sexual orientation, type and mode of substance use, etc. Affirm and value the worth of all individuals, families, groups and communities; and protect the dignity of all.

	1 = Introductory	2 = Basic	3 = Intermediate	4 = Advanced
E X A M P L E S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates respect for all clients, groups and communities • Demonstrates language and listening skills that respect cultural differences • Acts fairly and respectfully when dealing with diverse cultural groups • Monitors own attitudes and behaviour with respect to culture and diversity issues • Creates a welcoming environment that reflects the diverse communities served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes fairness and good judgment in the application of diversity principles and policies • Engages in activities that support the development of other world views and perspectives • Seeks out opportunities to incorporate and promote culturally appropriate programs • Demonstrates commitment to identify and address inappropriate behaviour or discriminatory practices in the workplace • Demonstrates understanding of how issues of diversity affect the delivery of respectful and appropriate services • Supports clients in identifying and implementing culturally appropriate solutions to issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages and supports a workplace climate that supports diversity in the delivery of services • Demonstrates an understanding of cultural/diversity influences on health, beliefs, and behaviours • Possesses considerable knowledge and understanding of historical, cultural, spiritual, political and socio-economic issues that affect diverse populations and develops effective, inclusive and respectful working relationships with these individuals and groups • Supports diverse populations in developing and implementing strength-based solutions to problems • Identifies and promptly addresses inappropriate behaviour or discriminatory practices in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a leadership role in shaping an organizational vision and service delivery system that reflects and supports diversity and cultural responsiveness • Develops and implements strategic action plans, policies and procedures that support diversity and cultural responsiveness within the organization • Develops and implements strategies to identify and address cultural/diversity barriers to accessing services • Consults with representatives from diverse communities to inform organizational planning • Develops and implements strategies to address possible barriers to recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention of diverse cultural groups as staff, volunteers and partners • Removes systemic barriers to culturally appropriate support for staff and clients

Common Occupational Clusters

Research findings revealed seven occupational clusters (job groups) common in the substance abuse workforce to which the competencies would most apply. These are listed in the table below.

In addition, the competencies can apply to other jobs or roles that have not been profiled or identified in the clusters due to their unique nature and particular work environments (e.g., allied professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, addiction-specific physicians, mental health workers, social workers, enforcement officials, Aboriginal Elders, peers and volunteers). The core technical and behavioural competencies were developed for the substance abuse workforce as a whole and may be applied to those jobs/roles with similar job functions as the seven occupational clusters outlined below.

Occupational Cluster	Role Description/Function
Administration Support	Definition: Provides administrative support to substance abuse professionals and, at times, clients. Duties may include office management and administration, communicating with clients in person or on the phone, coordinating office activities and logistics, and related administrative duties.
	Example job titles: Administrative Assistant, Administrator, Regional Administrator, Clinic Technician
Counselling	Definition: Provides counselling services to individuals, groups, and family members for substance abuse and related problems as required. Liaises with other substance abuse professionals to create treatment plans for a broad range of substance abuse issues.
	Example job titles: Counsellor, Addictions Counsellor, Alcohol & Drug Counsellor, Substance Abuse Counsellor, Intake Counsellor, Therapist, Clinical Therapist, Recreation Therapist
Health Promotion	Definition: Develops and delivers education and awareness programs in the substance abuse field to a wide range of individuals, groups and audiences. Assesses emerging substance abuse issues in targeted groups to develop timely and effective education and awareness strategies. Works closely with other agencies and community coalitions to develop, deliver and evaluate substance abuse awareness initiatives and education programs.
	Example job titles: Health Promotion Specialist, Health Education Specialist, Prevention Specialist/Coordinator, Health Educator, Health Promotion & Protection Specialist/Worker

Occupational Cluster	Role Description/Function
Senior Management	Definition: Provides overall direction in all aspects of the agency's functioning and all services it provides. Provides leadership in the development and implementation of strategic and operational plans; manages finances, HR strategy and public relations.
	Example job titles: Executive Director, Clinical Director, Program Director, Program Manager, Controller, Office Manager
Supervision	Definition: Provides direction for development, functioning and evaluation of program services and staff. Oversees and evaluates the quality and efficiency of services and provides supervision to staff. Works in conjunction with management to develop and deliver the goals and objectives of the organization.
	Example job titles: Clinical Supervisor, Non-Clinical Supervisor, Senior Counsellor, Lead Clinician, Manager, Coordinator
Support and Outreach	Definition: Provides encouragement, emotional support, help, and advice on practical matters to clients, their families and communities. Coordinates support and outreach activities that may include: coordination of substance abuse and related services, motivational counselling, brief assessment and referral, conducting education and information sessions, monitoring and supporting daily activities of clients.
	Example job titles: Support Worker, Outreach Worker, Alcohol Worker, Drug Worker, Substance Abuse Worker, Drug Outreach Worker, Substance Abuse Practitioner, Community Outreach Worker, Community Liaison Worker, Attendant
Withdrawal Management	Definition: Provides medical and/or non-medical support and withdrawal management services to substance abuse clients. Works with other professionals in the substance abuse field to create and deliver withdrawal management and associated treatment plans to meet the needs of clients.
	Example job titles: Withdrawal Management (Detox) Worker, Detox Nurse, Specialty Nurse, Withdrawal Management (Detox) Counsellor, Attendant

Generic Profiles by Occupational Cluster

In the table below, the occupational cluster profiles identify the core behavioural competencies required for successful performance in jobs within each cluster and the level of proficiency for each competency. These were determined by approximately 120 substance abuse professionals from across Canada. The results presented below indicate agreement between 60% and 100% (no asterisk indicates 100% agreement, * indicates 80% agreement, ** indicates 60% agreement, and a blank cell indicates less than 60% agreement).

1 = Introductory level 2 = Basic level 3 = Intermediate level 4 = Advanced level

Generic Profiles by Occupational Cluster							
Competencies (bold font indicates competency is critical for all positions)	Levels of Proficiency by Occupational Cluster						
	Administration Support	Counselling	Health Promotion	Senior Management	Supervision	Support & Outreach	Withdrawal Management
Adaptability/Flexibility	1	3*	3	4**	3*	3	3
Analytical Thinking and Decision Making	1*	3**	2*	4*	3*	2*	2*
Client-centred Change		3*				3	3*
Client Service Orientation	1*	2**			3*		
Collaboration and Network Building			3*	4*		2*	
Continuous Learning	2	2	3	4	3	2	2
Creativity and Innovation			3	4*	3*	2**	
Developing Others			3*	4**	3		
Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness	1	3	3	4	3	3	3
Effective Communication	2	3	3	4	3*	3	3
Ethical Conduct and Professionalism	1	2	2	4	3	2	2
Interpersonal Rapport/Savvy	2	3*	3*		3**	3*	3
Leadership				4	3*		
Planning and Organizing	2		3*	4*	3*	2	3*
Self Care	2	3	2	4	3	3	2
Self Management	2	2**				2*	3*
Self Motivation and Drive			2**				3*
Teamwork and Cooperation	2	2*	2*	4**	3**		2

Modifying the Generic Profiles

The generic profiles provide a **starting point** for identifying job-specific competencies that can then be used in human resource management processes. This is true for both substance abuse specialists and allied professionals (health care providers, policing and enforcement personnel, teachers, etc.).

Interviewing and Performance Management Tools

Interviewing and performance management guides and tools have been developed to assist organizations to use a competency-based human resource management approach. These are all contained in the document *Behavioural Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce, v.1*. It will be available online at www.cnsaap.ca and on CD by request to CCSA (613-235-4048 or info@ccsa.ca) by late 2009.

The **Performance Management Guide** includes:

- The performance management cycle
- Planning for Performance
- Providing ongoing feedback
- Evaluating performance
- Creating learning plans
- Using occupation-specific performance management tools

The **Guide to Competency-based Interviewing** includes:

- Behavioural questions, examples, and false behavioural questions
- Legal considerations in selection
- Preparing for the interview
- Common rating errors
- Using occupation-specific interview tools

The **occupation-specific performance management tools** include:

- Suggestions for planning and conducting the performance cycle
- Performance planning and review charts
- Learning and development charts
- Summary review and overall evaluation chart

The **occupation-specific interview tools** include:

- Guidelines for conducting interviews
- Questions for applicable competencies at the appropriate level of proficiency
- Guidelines for evaluating the interview
- An interview rating scale
- A summary table for scores

Making Gains in Mental Health and Addictions 2009 Participant Survey

We want to know which core behavioural competencies are most relevant to various disciplines/professions in the substance abuse workforce. This includes substance abuse specialists and allied professionals (e.g., psychologists, mental health workers, Elders, social workers, law enforcement officials, etc.).

Instructions

In your group, review and discuss **only the core behavioural competencies**.

Determine the **10–12 competencies** most relevant to your position.

Put an **X** next to them (listed below). You have 15 minutes.

Please indicate

Occupational Group: _____ Number in discussion group: ____

18 Behavioural Competencies

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability/Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical Thinking and Decision Making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Client-centred Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Client Service Orientation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration and Network Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity and Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing Others | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical Conduct and Professionalism | <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal Rapport/Savvy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Organizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Care | <input type="checkbox"/> Self Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Motivation and Drive | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork and Cooperation |

Other competencies: _____

Any comments?