

COMPETENCIES FOR CANADA'S SUBSTANCE ABUSE WORKFORCE

Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce is a supportive resource that aims to enhance professionalism and excellence within the substance abuse workforce by identifying the technical and behavioural competencies required to perform effectively in the field.

What exactly are competencies?

Competencies are specific, measurable skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values needed to effectively perform a particular job function or role. They are typically learned and developed through work, education, training, and other life experiences.

Why are competencies important?

They serve as an evidence-based framework that identifies the specific abilities required by the substance abuse workforce to help individuals and organizations **ensure consistent quality of service delivery and care by providing tools and resources to:**

- ▶ Identify knowledge and skill sets for substance abuse and allied professionals
- ▶ Support employers in hiring and staff development
- ▶ Assist educators and trainers in developing strategies for learning

Who are the competencies for?

Developed for the **specialized substance abuse workforce in Canada**, the *Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce* identify specific abilities and behaviours related to seven common job clusters, including:

Administrative Support	Counselling
Health Promotion	Senior Management
Supervision	Support and Outreach
Withdrawal Management	

The Competencies are also relevant to other groups, such as **allied professionals** who interact with individuals affected by substance abuse issues (e.g., primary health care providers, social workers, enforcement officials, Elders, volunteers), and **research, education, training, and policy staff** whose efforts impact substance-using populations.

Why were they developed?

A 2004 Canadian addiction treatment workforce survey revealed a critical need for national standards and competencies for the substance abuse workforce. In response, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), under the guidance of the National Advisory Group on Workforce Development (NAGWD), undertook the Competencies Project to identify competencies needed by the substance abuse workforce.

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.

The research behind the Competencies

The CCSA Competencies are based on the best available evidence on competencies for the field and more than five years of research, including cross-Canada consultations, expert reviews, focus group discussions, literature reviews and comparative analysis, key informant interviews, and blogs. As this ongoing research proceeds, the competencies will continue to evolve and reflect recent changes in the field. To date, the research has culminated in two sets of competencies: behavioural and technical.

Behavioural Competencies

*Adaptability/Flexibility
Analytical Thinking and Decision Making
Client-Centred Change
Client Service Orientation
Collaboration and Network Building
Continuous Learning
Creativity and Innovation
Developing Others
Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness
Effective Communication
Ethical Conduct and Professionalism
Interpersonal Rapport/Savvy
Leadership
Planning and Organizing
Self Care
Self Management
Self Motivation and Drive
Teamwork and Cooperation*



Technical Competencies

Case Management
Community Development
*Conflict Management
Counselling
Crisis Intervention
*Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness
*Ethics and Professionalism
Family and Social Support
Group Facilitation
Mental Health
Outreach
Pharmacology
Prevention and Health Promotion
Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation
Screening and Assessment
*Teamwork
Treatment Planning
Understanding Use, Abuse, and Dependency

**Please note that due to research findings, these four competencies have been incorporated into the Behavioural Competencies since they were first introduced in 2007.*

More than just Competencies

Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce does more than simply identify specific competencies. The document also contains the following:

- ▶ seven occupational clusters
- ▶ competency definitions
- ▶ competency profiles
- ▶ how-to guide on adapting the competency profiles
- ▶ sample behavioural indicators of each competency
- ▶ competency-based Interview Guide
- ▶ Interview Tools for all seven job clusters (for use with the Behavioural Competencies)
- ▶ Performance Management Guide
- ▶ Performance Management Tools for all seven job clusters (for use with the Behavioural Competencies)

Together these components form the necessary tools and resources to assist employers with hiring, retention, and performance development practices within the specialized substance abuse field.

How do I learn more?

Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce is now available online at www.ccsa.ca and www.cnsaap.ca.

You can learn more about this important resource and other workforce development issues by going to www.ccsa.ca, and clicking on the Workforce Development link under the Priorities tab.

What is CNSAAP?

CNSAAP (Canadian Network of Substance Abuse and Allied Professionals) is the first national website developed specifically for Canada's substance abuse workforce. This resource provides information, tools and resources to facilitate the adoption of evidence-informed practice across the continuum of care and to encourage and support ongoing learning, with particular emphasis on emerging trends, quality assurance and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

What is CCSA's Workforce Development Priority?

Both the 2004 Canadian addiction treatment workforce survey and the **National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drug Substances in Canada** identified "Sustaining Workforce Development" as a priority that needed to be addressed. As a result, CCSA created the Workforce Development Priority and began to engage with both addiction specialists and allied professionals to enhance the level of professionalism within the field.

Acknowledgements

CCSA thanks all members of the substance abuse workforce who participated in the Competencies' national consultations for their significant contributions.

CCSA also thanks the National Advisory Group on Workforce Development and other subject matter experts who participated in reviews of both sets of Competencies.

About CCSA

With a legislated mandate to reduce alcohol- and other drug-related harms, CCSA provides leadership on national priorities, fosters knowledge-translation within the field, and creates sustainable partnerships that maximize collective efforts. CCSA receives funding support from Health Canada. The views expressed by CCSA do not necessarily reflect the views of Health Canada. Learn more at www.ccsa.ca.



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