



# Competencies and Their Application for the Substance Abuse Workforce

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## Mission

- To provide national leadership and evidence-informed analysis and advice to mobilize collaborative efforts to reduce alcohol- and other drug-related harms.
- 3 strategic directions guide our activities:
  - ❖ leadership
  - ❖ knowledge translation
  - ❖ partnerships

## What are **core** competencies?

Competencies are **essential** skills, knowledge, attitudes, values:

- Technical competencies: The “*what*” (e.g. Counselling)
- Behavioural competencies: The “*how*” (e.g. Client Centred Change)



## Why are competencies important?

- **2004 Canadian Substance Abuse Treatment Workforce Survey:**
  - ❖ **National standards and competencies**
  - ❖ **Design best practices education and training programs**
- **Enhance professionalism in the field**
- **Identify knowledge and skills sets for allied professionals**
- **Support employers in hiring and staff development**
- **Assist educators/trainers**
- **Provide Canadians with quality services**

## What has happened so far?

**2004/2005**

**The workforce survey(s) and report**

**2007**

**Core (technical) Competencies for the Substance Abuse Field, v.1**

**2008**

**An Examination of Substance Abuse Core Competencies in Academic Curriculum: The Social Work Example**

**2009**

**Core Behavioural Competencies for the Substance Abuse Workforce, v.1**

## Research Behind the Technical Competencies

- Identification and comparative analysis of addiction workforce competencies
- Preliminary list of 50 competencies: technical and behavioural
- Technical Competencies: refined by National Advisory Group on Workforce Development (NAGWD) and other subject matter experts
- Broader engagement:
  - ❖ Regional focus groups & facilitated teleconferences
  - ❖ Key informant interviews
  - ❖ E-mail consultations and a “blog”

**Result: 18 Technical Competencies**

## Proficiency Levels for Each Competency

- **4 levels of proficiency**
  - ❖ *Foundational*
  - ❖ *Basic*
  - ❖ *Intermediate*
  - ❖ *Advanced*
- **Behaviour indicators at each level of proficiency**
  - ❖ 2-6 behavioural examples at each level
  - ❖ Reviewed/revised by NAGWD, SMEs, and experts across Canada



## 14 Core Technical Competencies

- **Counselling**
- **Case Management**
- **Crisis Intervention**
- **Community Development**
- **Family and Social Support**
- **Group Facilitation**
- **Mental Health**
- **Outreach**
- **Pharmacology**
- **Prevention and Health Promotion**
- **Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation**
- **Screening and Assessment**
- **Treatment Planning**
- **Understanding Substance Use, Abuse and Dependency**



# **Influencing Change through Substance Abuse Core Competencies and Post-Secondary Education: the Social Work Example**

**Elva Keip for Greg Graves**

## Study Goals

- 1. Examine degree to which core (technical) competencies are embedded in general and addictions-specific curricula in schools and faculties of social work throughout Canada**
- 2. Determine extent of knowledge and use of competencies by social work faculty**

## Methodology

- **Obtained outlines from universities**
  - ❖ 33 universities offering Bachelor of Social Work
  - ❖ 28 universities offering Master of Social Work
- **Examined course objectives to determine which curricula aligned with core (technical) competencies**
- **Conducted key informant interviews with 15 faculty members (across Canada)**
  - ❖ Importance of teaching competencies
  - ❖ Degree to which curriculum reflects competencies
  - ❖ Knowledge of core competencies report
  - ❖ View on adopting/integrating core competencies into college/university curriculum

## Findings, Course Outlines

- **On average 6.7 competencies are part of mandated curriculum for BSW**
  - ❖ Ranging from 2 to 11
- **Most social work undergraduates receive formal education in:**

Diversity and cultural responsiveness	Counselling
Ethics and professionalism	Group facilitation
Community development	Family and social support
- **No faculty/school mandated curriculum teaches:**

Outreach	Treatment planning
Pharmacology	Understanding substance use, abuse and dependency

## Findings, Course Outlines (continued)

- Addictions elective offered by 23 undergraduate social work programs (72%)
- Curriculum varies greatly
  - ❖ Competencies taught range from 2 to 13, with mean of 5.6
- Most commonly taught competencies in addictions elective:
  - ❖ Understanding substance use, abuse and dependency (91.3%)
  - ❖ Pharmacology (69.6%)
  - ❖ Prevention and health promotion (65.2%)
- Master programs incorporate fewer competencies than undergraduate programs (3.8 vs. 6.7)
- Fewer than one-fifth of 28 graduate programs have a specific addictions elective.

## Findings, Key Informant Interviews

- **Near-uniform agreement on central importance of teaching substance abuse-specific competencies in social work programs**
- **Awareness exists that employers are increasingly looking at competency-based standards when hiring, but students only have time to learn foundations**
- **No formal process exists for integrating competencies into academic curriculum**
- **Nearly two-thirds of informants knew of CCSA core (technical) competencies report released in November 2007**

## Findings, Key Informant Interviews (continued)

### Informants

- **Thought gaps existed between social work competencies and core (technical) competencies for substance abuse field**
  - ❖ Social work competencies match 9 core (technical) competencies
- **Saw competency-based education as starting point for necessary follow-up in the field through professional development and clinical practice**
- **Prevented from exploring each competency in sufficient depth due to time constraints.**

## Discussion

- **No obligation or accreditation expectation exists for social workers to have any knowledge of psychoactive drugs or addictions**
- **Key informants agreed to value in promoting competency-based education standards in post-secondary setting**
- **Issues remain: how to**
  - ❖ Ensure compliance
  - ❖ Break down competencies into single course/term
  - ❖ Audit courses to ensure competencies are properly taught
  - ❖ Determine which competencies to focus on

## Discussion (continued)

- **And: Would professors actually follow through with this approach?**
  - ❖ Interested in collaborative approach
    - Integrate core competencies and still respect academic freedom and individual choice
  - ❖ Saw value in standardizing curriculum to ensure consistency and avoid personal bias
  - ❖ Demonstrated willingness to enhance competency-based education to better prepared students entering the workforce.

## Conclusion

- **Substantive differences exist in design and measurement of social work competencies as compared to core (technical) competencies**
- **Faculty expressed desire to shift focus of addictions studies away from elective to core-course offerings**
- **Agreement that core substance abuse knowledge and skills must be embedded in academic curricula to be effective – requires long-term collaborative strategy**
- **Key informants want direct engagement in ongoing development, implementation and evaluation of competency-based education**
- **Effective development and implementation of competency-based education demands engagement of broad range of stakeholders:**
  - ❖ **Government at all levels, provincial addictions organizations, employers, regulators, colleges and universities, front-line practitioners, allied professionals.**

## Last:

- **CCSA is committed to engaging directly with schools of social work (colleges and universities)**
  - ❖ offering advice, support, information, consultations
    - How to adopt core competencies in a manner consistent with their needs
- **CCSA plans to extend the lessons learned to a wide range of disciplines and, with their help, identify practical strategies on how to further embed the core competencies in academic curricula.**

**Questions?**

# **Behavioural Competencies for Canada's Substance Abuse Workforce**

**Elva Keip  
National Priority Advisor**

## Research Behind the Behavioural Competencies

- **Worked with HRSG, consulting firm in Ottawa**
- **Identified preliminary list of 19 behavioural competencies and 7 occupational clusters**
  - ❖ Administration support, Counselling, Health promotion, Senior management, Supervision, Support and outreach, Withdrawal management
- **Hosted 11 focus groups (in-person and webinar) across Canada**
  - ❖ In-person: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Charlottetown, Halifax
  - ❖ Webinar: Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Prairies & West Coast, and Yukon

## Research (continued)

- **Participants (103)**
  - ❖ Validated occupational clusters
  - ❖ Identified competencies for each cluster
  - ❖ Rated each competency's importance relative to others
  - ❖ Identified necessary level of proficiency for each
- **Expert panel - NAGWD and other senior managers across Canada (19)**
  - ❖ Reviewed competencies data
  - ❖ Identified interview questions for each competency in each cluster
  - ❖ Created performance management objectives for each cluster, all linked to competencies.

**Result: 18 behavioural competencies**

## Core Behavioural Competencies

- 
- Analytical Thinking and Decision Making
  - Adaptability/ Flexibility
  - Client-Centred Change
  - Client Service Orientation
  - Continuous Learning
  - Creativity and Innovation
  - Collaboration and Network Building
  - 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*

## Proficiency Levels

- **4 levels of proficiency**
  - ❖ *Introductory*
  - ❖ *Basic*
  - ❖ *Intermediate*
  - ❖ *Advanced*
- **Behaviour indicators at each level of proficiency**
  - ❖ 5-8 behavioural examples/indicators at each level
  - ❖ Reviewed at focus groups, revised as necessary.



## Interview and Performance Management Guides and Tools

Administration Support  
Counselling  
Health Promotion  
Senior Management  
Supervision  
Support & Outreach  
Withdrawal Management



## Allied Professionals



**Competencies apply to many disciplines**



**Competencies are based on function**



**Generic profiles are templates *only***



***Adaptable* interview and performance management guides and tools**

## Issues and Challenges in the Literature

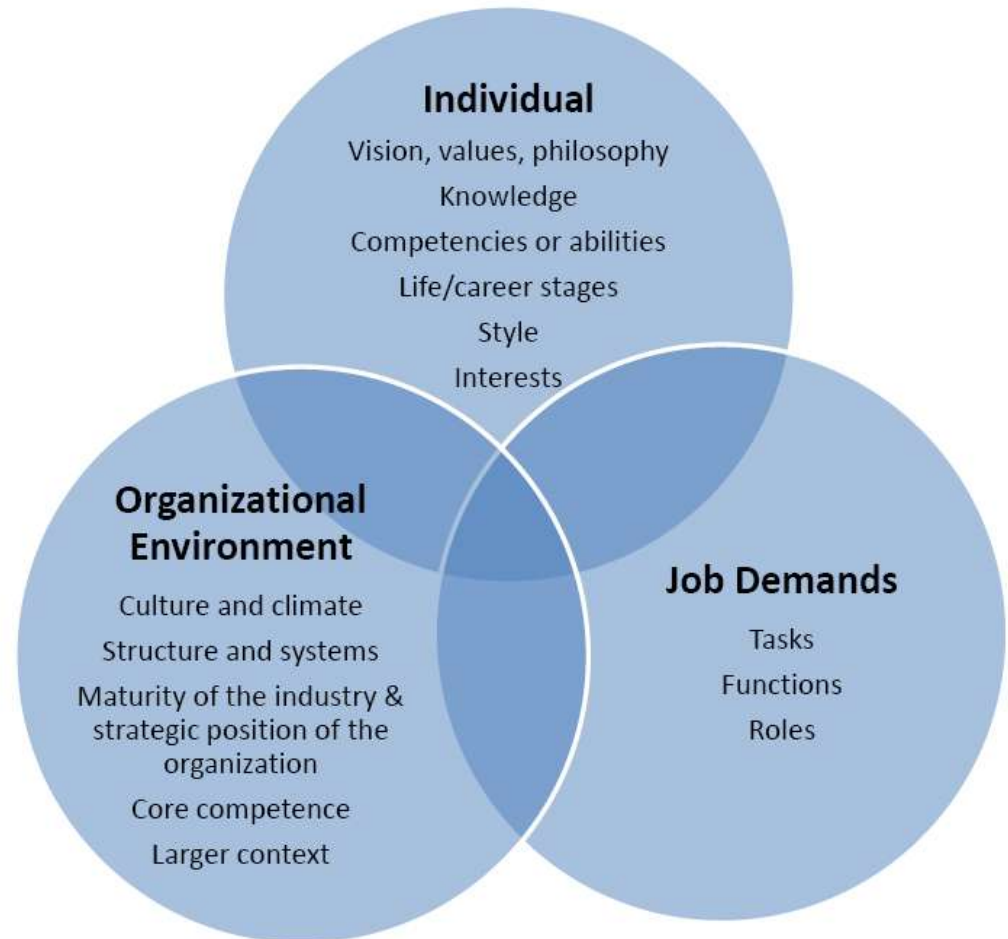
- **The Thorngate Dilemma:**
  - ❖ simplicity
  - ❖ accuracy
  - ❖ generalizability
  
- **Questions about...**
  - ❖ what constitutes a competency?
  - ❖ how to assess competencies?
  - ❖ terminology (e.g. “hard” vs. “soft”)

## The Link Between Competencies and Performance

**Best fit**  
*(maximum performance,  
stimulation, and commitment)*

=

**Area of maximum overlap  
or integration**  
*Boyatzis's Theory of Action  
and Job Performance*



## What competencies are needed for your work?

### *Participant Survey*

#### Instructions

1. On your own or with a partner, review and discuss only the core behavioural competencies.
2. Determine the 10-12 competencies most relevant to your work.
3. Put an X next to them (Each person records their choices on the handout). Prioritize if you have time.

You have 15 minutes.

Please also indicate:

- Your occupational group.
- Number of people in your group.

## Competencies Project – for more information

- Canadian Network of Substance Abuse and Allied Professionals:  
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# Thank you!

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