

CalSWEC II Mental Health Initiative
Mental Health Competencies
Foundation Year
August 2006

**A Competency-Based Curriculum in Community Mental Health
For Graduate Social Work Students**

Introduction

The Mental Health Competencies were developed by a collaborative partnership consisting of California practitioners, educators, community leaders, and other stakeholders from the fields of mental health and social work. The competencies support and promote recovery and wellness through independence, hope, personal development and resiliency for children, adults and older adults with serious emotional disturbances and severe mental illness. The competencies support the development and utilization of evidence-based and promising practices throughout the mental health system and promote culturally and linguistically competent services that are sensitive and responsive to the needs of local communities and focus on issues of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious/spiritual beliefs. Consistent with the shared vision of the mental health partnership, services are to be provided in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting with attention to consumer and family involvement at all levels of the mental health system.

The Mental Health competencies are divided into Foundation and Advanced/Specialization categories, which correspond roughly to the first and second years of the MSW program. The Competencies are based on a series of principle statements adapted from the Mental Health Services Act (December 2004) and the California Mental Health Master Plan: A Vision for California (March 2003).

Foundation Competencies (1st Year)	Advanced Competencies (2nd Year)
I. Culturally and Linguistically Competent Generalist Practice	I. Culturally and Linguistically Competent Mental Health Practice
II. Foundation Practice	II. Advanced Mental Health Practice
III. Human Behavior and the Social Environment	III. Human Behavior and the Mental Health Environment
IV. Workplace Management	IV. Mental Health Policy, Planning And Administration

California Community Mental Health Curriculum Principles

The CalSWEC Mental Health Competencies are designed to prepare an MSW level workforce to effectively provide mental health services to children, adults and older adults, and to contribute to a Mental Health system which:

- 1. Promotes recovery/wellness through independence, hope, personal development and resiliency for adults and older adults with severe mental illness and for children with serious emotional disorders and their families.*
- 2. Provides culturally and linguistically competent services that are sensitive and responsive to the needs of the local community, and addresses issues of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious/spiritual beliefs.*
- 3. Strives to involve clients and families appropriately in all aspects of the public mental health system, including but not limited to: planning, policy development, service delivery and evaluation.*
- 4. Strives to create a partnership of cooperation and a shared vision of mental health services with other agency partners in the social service arena.*
- 5. Is an advocate for clients' rights.*
- 6. Promotes the development and use of self-help, peer support and peer education for all persons with mental illness and their families.*
- 7. Assists clients in their recovery to return to the most constructive and satisfying lifestyle of their own definition and choice.*
- 8. Provides persons with severe mental illness and/or serious emotional disturbances effective treatment and high priority for receiving services in the most timely manner.*
- 9. Provides services in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting.*
- 10. Supports a Children's System of Care consisting of family-driven, culturally competent, individualized, coordinated and integrated care with accountability to positive outcomes, which meet the unique needs of children and their families.*
- 11. Supports an Adult System of Care consisting of client driven, culturally competent, coordinated, integrated and effective services meeting the unique needs of adults with severe mental illness, their families and their extended social support system.*
- 12. Supports an Older Adult System of Care consisting of comprehensive and integrated service meeting the unique needs of older adults with severe mental illness, their families, their caregivers and their extended community support system.*
- 13. Addresses the special mental health needs of all persons with severe mental illness and/or serious emotional disorders who also present with co-occurring substance abuse, psychiatric disabilities and/or other multiple vulnerabilities.*

I. Culturally and Linguistically Competent Generalist Practice

A working knowledge of and sensitivity to the dynamics of ethnic and cultural differences is at the core of mental health services. As a result of their personal experiences with mental illness, mental health systems and their own cultural identity, mental health consumers and social workers alike develop attitudes regarding mental health, along with their individual values, beliefs and lifestyles. Given that cultural awareness and sensitivity are key aspects of providing effective mental health services, this section includes the foundation knowledge, values and skills essential to working with multicultural populations. Linguistically competent practice not only underscores the importance of language itself, but also includes an understanding of the complexities of effective communication in rendering culturally competent services.

1. Student demonstrates understanding of the influence of racial, ethnic, age, class, cultural identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation identity on interpersonal relationships in community mental health practice.
2. Student demonstrates knowledge of immigration, migration, resettlement and relocation patterns of the major ethnic groups in the United States in the context of both historical and current manifestations of oppression, racism, prejudice, discrimination, bias and privilege.
3. Student demonstrates knowledge of differences between the experiences of immigrants and refugees and the different impact those experiences have on individuals and families.
4. Student demonstrates awareness of the effects of acute and accumulative trauma on the health status, health beliefs, help-seeking behavior, health practices, customs, and traditions of diverse consumers and communities.
5. Student demonstrates knowledge of the unique legal, historical and current relationships between the American Indian/Alaska Native nations and the United States government and the effect these relationships have on the health status and practices, health beliefs, and help-seeking behaviors, as well as on the customs and traditions within and among their diverse tribal communities.
6. Student demonstrates understanding of the influence and value of traditional ethnic and culturally based practices, which affect the mental health of the individual or family and uses this knowledge in working with consumers, families and the community.
7. Student demonstrates knowledge of legal, social, political, economic and psychological issues facing immigrants and their families in new environments. Student uses this knowledge to better understand consumer's choices/decisions related to multiple health care systems (mental health care, health care, etc.).
8. Student demonstrates understanding of the impact and importance of assimilation and acculturation processes in working effectively with culturally diverse individuals, families, and communities
9. Student is able to apply appropriate theories of practice to various ethnic and cultural groups, as well as other diverse groups.

10. Student demonstrates a commitment to cultural competence by undertaking an ongoing self evaluation process with regard to his/her own multicultural awareness and perceptions of difference.
11. Student demonstrates understanding of the importance and necessity of using the consumer and community's native language in all forms of communication (staff, signage, forms, etc.) and its importance to mental health treatment.
12. Student demonstrates understanding of the full range of implications for assessment and diagnosis, including the danger of misdiagnosis when English is not the consumer's primary language and professional translation services are not utilized.
13. Student demonstrates understanding of how variance in a consumer's language can impact the expression and understanding of symptoms and attributions of illness.
14. Student demonstrates understanding and awareness of how his/her own cultural values, beliefs, norms, and world view influence perception and interpretation of events and can influence the relationship with consumers.
15. Student respects religious and or spiritual beliefs and values about physical and mental functioning that differ from his/her personal beliefs and values.
16. Student demonstrates understanding of how biases, prejudices and beliefs are formed about poverty, gender identities, sexual orientation, homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness and how these biases affect relationships with consumers.
17. Student demonstrates understanding of disparities for racial and ethnic minorities, and other culturally diverse groups in terms of access, appropriateness, availability and quality of mental health services.
18. Student demonstrates understanding of the value, necessity, and promotion of consumer and community engagement, participation and involvement in mental health program design and treatment

II. Foundation Practice

This section identifies the foundation skills that are essential for basic practice in the public mental health domain. Competencies include interviewing, assessment, treatment planning and intervention using an ethno, bio-psycho-social strength-based approach. This approach includes skills in working with children, and adolescents with serious emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as adults and older adults with severe mental illness. Underlying principles of these competencies include knowledge of cultural diversity, linguistic sensitivity and client strength as well as knowledge of concepts of recovery, empowerment, and a consumer-centered, family driven, community mental health perspective. These competencies are demonstrated in accordance with legal and ethical standards, principles of cultural diversity, and commitment to social and economic justice, with sensitivity to the needs of vulnerable populations.

Practice with Individuals

1. Student demonstrates understanding of human development and the life cycle. Student understands the major themes and tasks of each developmental stage.
2. Student demonstrates recognition of personal values and biases and can distinguish life-style choices from clinical issues.
3. Student demonstrates effective interviewing and engagement skills with individuals and families.
4. Student demonstrates understanding of the role and limitations of using interpreters and translators in providing services.
5. Student demonstrates the ability to complete a comprehensive assessment of an individual and his/her family. Student follows legal and ethical guidelines and obtains appropriate collaborative information for assessment.
6. Student demonstrates an understanding of contributing factors to serious emotional and behavioral disorders.
7. Student demonstrates an understanding of the factors that contribute to the disabling effects of severe mental illness.
8. Student is able to identify the signs of abuse/neglect with minors, older adults and dependent adults. Student demonstrates knowledge of reporting laws and collaborates with supervisors in reporting.
9. Student demonstrates knowledge of reporting laws regarding suicidal and homicidal intent. Student collaborates with his/her supervisor regarding appropriate action including involuntary commitment.
10. Student demonstrates knowledge of ethical issues pertaining to treatment including boundaries, dual relationships and confidentiality.
11. Student understands and utilizes proper documentation/charting as required by the agency.
12. Student demonstrates knowledge of natural, community and institutional supports for persons in crisis.
13. Student demonstrates beginning knowledge of crisis intervention models of suicide and family violence prevention.
14. Student demonstrates knowledge of the diagnostic criteria for substance abuse and dependence.
15. Student demonstrates beginning ability to develop a diagnostic formulation based on thorough assessment.

16. Student is able to develop a coordinated intervention plan, including treatment and/or case management services and a discharge plan.
17. Student demonstrates beginning skills using time-limited interventions.
18. Student demonstrates understanding of therapeutic ‘use of self’ as an intervention tool for delivery of effective services.
19. Student demonstrates knowledge of the principles of integrated dual diagnosis treatment.
20. Student demonstrates knowledge of the principles underlying recovery supportive practice.

Practice with Families

1. Student demonstrates understanding of interdisciplinary theories and clinical models that guide social work intervention with diverse family systems.
2. Student demonstrates awareness of the changes that affect family functioning occurring across the life span of family members.
3. Student is able to assess from an ecological perspective the diversity of family characteristics (i.e. membership in an ethnic and racial group, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) as these guide the design and implementation of interventions.
4. Student demonstrates ability to implement a psycho-educational intervention model which provides information, support and structure for families of a consumer with a major mental illness.
5. Student demonstrates ability to engage and work with a family in an effective family-driven manner.

Practice with Groups

1. Student demonstrates understanding of the appropriateness of group intervention following a comprehensive assessment.
2. Student is able to distinguish the different types of groups (i.e. psycho-educational, psychodynamic, self-help) and formats for group structure (i.e. open ended vs. closed, directive vs. non-directive).
3. Student demonstrates understanding of the cultural dynamics of the consumer and how this affects the consumer’s involvement in a group.
4. Student demonstrates knowledge of the normative stages of group development.
5. Student demonstrates knowledge of available resources in the community that utilize group interventions.
6. Student is able to use strategies that improve adherence to group participation.

7. Student demonstrates ability to work with persons with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse in group intervention.

Practice with Community

1. Student demonstrates understanding of the resource advocate role in relation to the policies and programs that impact public mental health agencies and their consumers.
2. Student understands and supports the consumer movement, including issues of patient's rights, peer support, self-help and advocacy.
3. Student is able to respect, value, and effectively work with diverse communities.
4. Student demonstrates knowledge of current target population eligibility criteria for publicly funded mental health services.
5. Student demonstrates understanding of the development and resource potential of the self-help movement such as reciprocal help and family advocacy for children, youth, adults and older adults.

III.Human Behavior and the Social Environment

The competencies in this section include knowledge and understanding of how developmental, psychological, social and cultural theories influence the life span of human development, and the evolution of community and societal change, and how these processes affect practice with children and adolescents with serious emotional disorders, and adults and older adults with severe mental illness

1. Student is able to identify the major theories, categories and models used to explain serious emotional disturbances in children and serious mental illness in adults and older adults.
2. Student demonstrates understanding of mental illness along the life cycle, and the effect of cultural, bio-psycho-social and environmental conditions.
3. Student demonstrates understanding of the family life cycle, the intergenerational conceptual framework and human development across cultures and social classes.
4. Student demonstrates appreciation for the special strengths, issues and variations found in various family models (i.e. two-parent family, single parent family, blended family, extended family, etc.)
5. Student demonstrates understanding of the developmental, intergenerational and life cycle approach to community mental health practice transculturally.
6. Student understands the impact of mental illness and substance abuse on the consumer and family members at all stages of the life cycle.

7. Student demonstrates awareness of the difference between protective factors and risk factors in individuals and families, and how these factors influence the development of coping skills.
8. Student demonstrates understanding of the dynamics of trauma in its various forms and the impact on individuals, families and communities.
9. Student demonstrates understanding of the unique mental health needs of people in transition between life stages.

IV. Workplace Management

This section contains competencies concerning important aspects of agency practice. They address internal relations, organizational requirements, and interdisciplinary and community collaboration for empowerment and social justice. In the foundation year, the students acquire strategies for self-care and safety on the job. Students demonstrate understanding of practice and policy advocacy. Students also understand the importance of consumer, family, organization and community feedback for evaluation of practice processes and outcomes.

1. Student demonstrates awareness of the need to negotiate and advocate for the development of community based and culturally sensitive resources to assist mental health populations in meeting their goals.
2. Student demonstrates ability to work effectively with agency personnel and consumers in an environment characterized by human diversity.
3. Student demonstrates understanding of consumer and system problems and strengths from the perspectives of all participants in a multidisciplinary team and can effectively maximize the positive contributions of each member.
4. Student is able to identify the interaction between a community and an organization's strengths and limitations, and is able to assess their effects on services for community mental health populations.
5. Student is able to identify the strengths and limitations of an organization's cultural competence and commitment to human diversity and how these are demonstrated.
6. Student is able to seek consumer, family, organization and community feedback (including mental health consumer advocacy groups) for evaluation of practice, process and outcomes.
7. Student demonstrates ability to utilize interdisciplinary collaborative skills and techniques in organizational and community settings to enhance service quality.
8. Student demonstrates understanding of how organizations operate and how their organizational culture impacts service delivery and social work roles, including internal and external forces that both promote and inhibit organizational change.

9. Student is able to plan, prioritize and effectively monitor completion of assigned activities and tasks within required time frames and standards.
10. Student demonstrates awareness of organizational risk management issues, and is able to appropriately respond to potentially harmful situations, including workplace violence.
11. Student demonstrates awareness of potential work-related stress factors and is able to develop self-care and organizational strategies to minimize their impact.
12. Student demonstrates knowledge of fiduciary responsibilities tied to funding streams, regulatory compliance and practice requirements.
13. Student demonstrates understanding of the relationship between accountability for performance outcome, the quality of service and the financial sustainability of the organization.