
APPENDIX F: CORE COMPETENCIES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)

The Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy (DSHRS) was formed as a joint partnership between the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Provincial Network on Developmental Services (PNDS), which represent agencies providing services and supports in the Developmental Services Sector. This partnership seeks to improve and maintain the quality of human resources in the developmental services sector. On February 23, 2010 the Core Competencies Pilot Implementation Project was launched. Sixteen agencies that provide support to adults with developmental disabilities across the province were selected to pilot the implementation of Core Competencies in their agencies. The following questions and answers were developed as part of that pilot to assist you in having readily available answers to the most common questions asked during the implementation of competencies at an agency.

I. COMPETENCIES (OVERVIEW)

1. *Were Core Competencies identified for all positions?*

- Core Competencies were developed for seven positions, - Direct Support, Supervisor, Manager, Director, Executive Director, Clinical and Specialized employees.

2. *Do all jobs have the same Core Competencies?*

- No. Core Competencies are role-specific. There is one Core Competency that applies across all roles, "Advocating for Others", but the target level may be different depending upon the specific responsibilities of each individual role. While "Advocating for Others" is not in the developmental competency model for Executive Directors it is a threshold competency for that role.

3. *What is a "threshold" competency?*

- Threshold (baseline) competencies are those competencies that are required to be considered for a particular role in the sector. They are often based on organization-wide values.

4. *What is a behavioural (Core) Competency?*

- Core Competencies are the behaviours, demonstrated by an employee, that are important contributors to predicting outstanding performance in a position, within a particular organization. They mark the difference between good/solid/average job performance and outstanding performance.

5. What is a behavioural (Core) Competency model?

- A Core Competency model is a set of predefined developmental Core Competencies required to perform successfully in a specific position or role. Each Core Competency has a set of associated behaviours.
- For each Core Competency a target level, or target “behaviour”, has been identified that defines “excellence” for a specific position.
- Different positions require different Core Competency models since Core Competencies for superior performance are position-specific.
- Core Competency models are housed in an organizing structure called a *Competency Dictionary*. This document includes the Core Competency model, target levels for specific positions and examples of behaviours associated with the different levels of each Core Competency.

6. What if the job titles used in the dictionary are different from the job titles we use?

- Job titles used in the dictionary are the job titles commonly used in most agencies. If the agency uses different titles, please adjust the dictionary accordingly.

II. BENEFITS

1. Why do we need Core Competencies?

- As a result of ongoing developments in developmental services in Ontario and new legislative changes, employee roles are undergoing a significant transition from one of “shielding and protecting” to one of “empowering”; to reflect a transformation from “supporting individuals” to “inclusion” and “meaningful participation/full citizenship”. This transformation will require new behavioural (Core) Competencies. Most employees already embody these Core Competencies but formal implementation puts a name to desired behaviours and also reinforces the importance of these behaviours during this period of transition.
- The introduction of Core Competencies also provides a clear framework for the hiring of new employees and the development of future employees by the colleges.

2. How do Core Competencies benefit me?

- Research has shown that when Core Competencies are effectively introduced into a workplace, within one year, employees feel more capable to perform their assigned duties; find the work more enjoyable; and are viewed more professionally by those who interact with them.

III. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. *How were our Core Competencies developed?*

- As part of the DSHRS, Hay Group was hired to assist in developing the Core Competencies for the sector. Hay Group is a global management consulting firm focused on making change happen and helping people and organizations realize their potential. Hay Group originated the concept of “competencies” based on research conducted jointly by Harvard University and Hay Group.
- Two approaches were used to identify our Core Competencies – one approach for Executive Directors, and a similar approach for the other six positions. The Core Competencies Committee played a significant role in the oversight of the methodology to ensure the adequate representation of employees, families, professional and government bodies.
- Development of the Core Competency models took approximately one year. The key steps in the process were:
 - 1: Understand the context in which Core Competencies would be used, including understanding the likely impacts on agencies of pending legislative changes. Interviews were conducted with a cross-section of Executive Directors and a representative from the MCSS, Community and Developmental Services Branch.
 - 2: Understand the various positions in agencies. Job descriptions for all positions at all levels within the sector were reviewed.
 - 3: Based on the above, Hay Group prepared a preliminary Core Competency dictionary with the assistance of the Core Competencies Committee, which was comprised of sector representation and MCSS representation. The preliminary *Core Competency Dictionary* consisted of 30 Core Competencies, and included Core Competencies relevant to both direct support and management positions.
 - 4: A series of 13, one-day focus groups, involving 188 participants across all job categories were conducted. The objectives of the focus groups were two-fold: 1) to understand the behaviours used by superior performers in executing their day-to-day responsibilities; and 2) to examine those behaviours against the preliminary Core Competency models. The models were adjusted as needed and possible target levels, by role, were identified. In addition, separate focus groups were conducted with members of self-advocate groups and with families.
 - 5: The data was analyzed and a draft *Core Competency Dictionary* and Core Competency models were developed. Two more steps followed:
 1. The draft models were reviewed by the Core Competencies Committee and a series of discussions conducted and revisions made to ensure that the final models accurately reflected the language used in the sector and an understanding of the roles and culture.

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2. The development of the Executive Director's (ED) model involved focus groups. In addition, more in-depth interviews were conducted with a cross-section of EDs to identify the behaviours used by superior performers in conducting their day-to-day responsibilities and gain an understanding of the sector landscape.

2. *Have the unions been involved with the development and implementation of Core Competencies?*

- Unionized and non-unionized employees participated in the focus groups where the Core Competencies were developed. Corporate and local bargaining agents as well as representatives of non-unionized direct support employees are represented on the Human Resource Shared Interest Committee (HRSIC). The HRSIC has supported the Core Competencies and worked to produce the *Intention of Core Competencies* document.

IV. INTRODUCTION PROCESS FOR CORE COMPETENCIES AT AN AGENCY

1. *How will they be introduced to employees?*

- Core Competencies will be introduced through a series of training sessions to all employees beginning with those individuals who supervise other employees. This latter group will also receive training on how to coach for Core Competencies to enable employees to increase their skill development in Core Competencies.

2. *We have employees who work different schedules and at different locations. How will Core Competencies be introduced to our employees?*

- Introducing Core Competencies across employees that work various shifts can be difficult. In this guide, we recommend several approaches to manage the training of large staff groups with variable work schedules. These include the use of staggered training sessions, e-learning, etc.

V. IMPACT ON CURRENT JOBS

1. *How will Core Competencies change my job?*

- Core Competencies won't change job duties. Core Competencies recognize how one executes one's job duties.

2. *Will Core Competencies impact the way I am compensated?*

- No.

3. *Will Core Competencies be used for discipline?*

- The primary benefit and intent of the Core Competency model is to enable and facilitate positive professional development, not to be used for disciplinary purposes.

VI. CORE COMPETENCY TRAINING

1. ***How am I going to learn them?***

- *Introduction to Competencies* training sessions will be conducted at all agencies.
- Managers will be taught how to coach for competencies to support employees interested in developing a higher level of capability in Core Competencies that the individual has identified as a development area.
- Each agency will have a *Development Resource Guide* which allows individuals to identify actions they can take to develop a higher level of capability in a specific Core Competency.

2. ***How much time do I have to learn them?***

- Learning Core Competencies happens over time. This initial year is an ideal time to become familiar with the Core Competencies and what the behaviours associated with each Core Competency look like in action. Your manager can assist you in this regard by providing you coaching on those Core Competencies that may not be a part of how you typically go about doing your job. This is something you may wish to discuss with your manager.

3. ***What happens if I don't develop these Core Competencies?***

- Core Competencies are being introduced to help us better meet the needs of those individuals that we serve. The focus is on personal growth in our roles. Developing a capability to demonstrate the Core Competencies associated with a given role is no different than developing a capability in the technical skills associated with that role. The primary benefit and intent of the Core Competency model is to enable and facilitate positive professional development, not to be used for disciplinary purposes.

4. ***Do I have to develop them all?***

- Yes. It is, however, expected that most employees within the sector are already proficient in the identified Core Competencies.

5. ***Are some Core Competencies more important for some jobs than others?***

- Some Core Competencies are more important than others to a specific role and an individual may want to develop a higher level of proficiency in certain Core Competencies to enhance their ability to meet the needs of the people we serve.

6. ***Will the colleges be including Core Competencies in their courses?***

- Agencies have engaged in discussion with local colleges to determine strategies to include Core Competencies in the education of students.

VII. MEASURING SUCCESS

1. *How will we know if introducing Core Competencies is making a difference?*

- The effectiveness of Core Competencies will be measured in several ways. Some of the ways to measure include:
 - Increase in employee satisfaction measured by before and after surveys;
 - Increase in the satisfaction of people we support based on before and after surveys; and
 - Increased interest in working in the sector based on an increase in college enrollment.