

CalSWEC II Mental Health Initiative
Mental Health Competencies
Foundation Year
March 2005

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

Introduction

This document builds upon the Mental Health Competencies originally developed in a collaborative effort of faculty from Schools of Social Work and professionals from County Mental Health Agencies throughout California in 1993. During 2003, a new collaborative partnership between Mental Health and Social Work Education was formed, and through this effort, the document has been revised to accurately reflect the state of public mental health practice today. This document includes revisions recommended by the CalSWEC Mental Health Initiative Committee and a variety of community based stakeholder organizations and participants.

The format of the Mental Health competencies divides them into Foundation and Advanced 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 and older adults with severe mental illness, their families and their extended social support system.*
- 12. 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

The worker-client relationship is the key component of effective practice and can only be beneficial in a context of genuine empathy that creates meaningful engagement. A working knowledge of and sensitivity to the dynamics of ethnic and cultural differences is at the core of mental health services. Mental health clients and social workers bring a set of values, beliefs and lifestyles that are molded as a result of their personal experiences with mental illness, mental health systems and their own identity within their culture. Students will be able to recognize, understand and appreciate their own culture as well as the cultures of others. This section includes knowledge, values and skills to assist foundation students in developing awareness and sensitivity to key issues in working with multicultural populations.

Given the increasingly diverse service population in the public mental health system, cultural competency and understanding of the cultural norms of California's major ethnic groups should be a criterion for competent performance throughout the curriculum. Linguistically competent practice is not only the importance of language but includes the dynamic complexities of effective communication in order to provide culturally competency services.

Foundation Competencies

1. Student understands the impact of the role of racial, ethnic, age, class, multiple cultural identities, gender identities, and sexual orientation identity on interpersonal encounters in community mental health practice relationships.
2. Student demonstrates knowledge of immigration, migration, resettlement and relocation patterns of the major ethnic groups in the US 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 behaviors; and health practices, customs and traditions of diverse clients and communities.
5. Student demonstrates knowledge of the unique legal, historical and current relationships with the US government that American Indian/Alaska Native nations possess and the effect these relationships have on the health status; health beliefs; help-seeking behaviors; and health practices, customs and traditions within and among their diverse tribal communities.

6. Student understands the influence and value of traditional ethnic and culturally based practices, which impact the mental health of the individual or family, and uses this knowledge in working with clients, families and the community.
7. Student demonstrates knowledge of legal, social, political, economic and psychological issues facing immigrants and their families in a new and different environment. The student uses this knowledge to better understand client's choices/decisions related to mental health care, health care etc.
8. Student demonstrates an understanding of the impact and importance of assimilation and acculturation processes in order to work effectively with culturally diverse individuals, families, and communities
9. Student understands the background and applicability of theories of practice to various ethnic and cultural groups, as well as other diverse groups.
10. Student shows respect for professional social work values and demonstrates a commitment to cultural competence by demonstrating an ongoing self evaluation process with regard to their own multicultural awareness and perceptions of difference.
11. Student understands the importance of the client and community's native language, how it reflects and influences identity, meaning and world view, as well as its importance in mental health treatment and its necessity in all communication with clients and the community (signs, forms, receptionist, media, etc.)
12. Student understands the full range of implications for assessment and diagnosis, including the danger of misdiagnosis when English is not the client's primary language and professional translation services are not utilized.
13. Student understands that variance in a client's language can impact the expression and understanding of symptoms and attributions of illness.
14. Student understands and is aware how his/her own cultural values, beliefs, norms, and world view influence perception and interpretation of events and can influence the relationship with clients.
15. Student respects religious and or spiritual beliefs and values about physical and mental functioning that are different from their own.
16. Student understands how biases, prejudices and beliefs are formed about poverty, gender identities, sexual orientation, homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness and the affect on their relationship with clients.
17. Student demonstrates understanding and awareness 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 understands the value, necessity, promotion and expectation of client and community engagement, participation and involvement in mental health program design and treatment

II. Foundation Practice

This section of the competency document identifies the foundation skills that are essential for basic practice in the public mental health domain. Competencies in this area include interviewing, assessment, treatment planning and interventions using an ethno, bio-psycho-social strength based approach. This approach includes skills in working with children, and adolescents with severe emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as adults and older adults with severe mental illness. An underlying principle in all the competencies is recognizing the importance of cultural diversity, linguistic sensitivity and client strengths. Students are to be knowledgeable about the recovery process, empowerment, and a client-centered family driven community mental health perspective.

Foundation Competencies

Practice with Individuals

1. Student has an understanding of human development and the life cycle. Student has knowledge of the major themes and tasks of each developmental stage.
2. Student will be able to recognize personal values and biases and be able to distinguish life-style choices from clinical issues.
3. Student demonstrates effective interviewing and engagement skills with individuals and families.
4. Student understands the role and limitations of using interpreters and translators in providing services.
5. Student will demonstrate the ability to understand and complete a comprehensive assessment of an individual and their family. Following legal and ethical guidelines, appropriate collaborative information will be obtained to assist in the 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 serious mental illness.
8. Student can identify the signs of abuse/neglect with minors, the elderly and dependent adults. Student will be knowledgeable of reporting laws and collaborate with their supervisor regarding reporting.

9. Student will be knowledgeable of reporting laws regarding suicidal and homicidal intent. Student will collaborate with their supervisor regarding appropriate action including involuntary commitment.
10. Student will be knowledgeable about ethical issues pertaining to treatment including boundaries, dual relationships and confidentiality.
11. Student will demonstrate proper documentation/charting as required by the agency.
12. Student will have knowledge of natural, community and institutional supports for persons in crisis.
13. Student demonstrates beginning knowledge of crisis intervention models of prevention of suicide and family violence.
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 a thorough assessment.
16. Student is able to develop a coordinated treatment and/or case management service plan, which includes discharge planning.
17. Student demonstrates beginning skills in the use of 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 has an understanding of interdisciplinary theories and clinical models that guide social work intervention with diverse family systems.
2. Student has knowledge of the changes occurring across the life span of family members, which impacts on family functioning.

3. Student is able to assess from an ecological perspective the diversity of family structures (i.e. membership in an ethnic and racial group, gender, sexual orientation) as these have meaning for guiding the design and implementation of interventions.
4. Student implements a psycho-educational intervention model which provides information, support and structure for families of a client with a major mental illness.
5. Student shows an ability to engage and work with a family in an effective family-driven manner.

Practice with Groups

1. Student has an understanding, following a comprehensive assessment, of the appropriateness of group intervention.
2. Student has a knowledge of 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 is able to have an understanding of the cultural dynamics of the client and how this impacts on their involvement in a group.
4. Student will understand normative stages of group development.
5. Student will be knowledgeable about available resources in the community utilizing group interventions.
6. Student will understand strategies that improve adherence to group participation.
7. Student will demonstrate working with persons with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse with group intervention.

Practice with Community

1. Student knows and understands their role as a resource advocate in relation to the policies and programs that impact public mental health agencies and their clients.
2. Student understands and supports the consumer movement, including issues of patient's rights, peer support, self-help and advocacy.
3. Student demonstrates an ability to respect, value and effectively work with diverse communities.

4. Student understands the current target population eligibility criteria for publicly funded mental health services.
5. Student understands 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 and social and cultural theories influence life span human development, and the evolution of community and societal change, and how these processes impact their practice with individuals with severe mental illness or serious emotional disorders.

Foundation Competencies

1. Student can identify the major theories, categories and models used to explain severe mental illness in adults and older adults, and serious emotional disturbances in children
2. Student demonstrates understanding of mental illness along the life cycle, and the impact of cultural, bio-psychosocial and environmental conditions.
3. Student understands the family life cycle, the intergenerational conceptual framework and human development across cultures and social classes.
4. Student shows appreciation for the special strengths, issues and variations found in various family models (i.e. two-parent family, single parent family, blended family) and other models.
5. Student can apply 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 client and family members at all stages of the life cycle.
7. Student is aware of the difference between protective factors and risk factors in individuals and families, and how these factors impact the development of coping skills.
8. Student understands the dynamics of trauma in its various forms and the impact on individuals, families and communities
9. Student understands 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. The competencies address internal relations, organizational requirements, and interdisciplinary and community collaboration for empowerment and social justice. In the foundation year, the student will acquire strategies for self-care and safety on the job and demonstrate an understanding of practice and policy advocacy.

1. Student understands the need to negotiate and advocate for the development of community based and culturally sensitive resources to assist mental health populations to meet their goals.
2. Student is able to work effectively with agency personnel and clients in an environment characterized by human diversity.
3. Student understands client 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 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 organizations' cultural competence and commitment to human diversity and how these are demonstrated.
6. Student is able to seek client, family, organization and community feedback (including mental health consumer advocacy groups) for evaluation of practice, process and outcomes.
7. Student understands and demonstrates an ability to utilize interdisciplinary collaborative skills and techniques in organizational and community settings to enhance service quality.
8. Student demonstrates an 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 is aware of organizational risk management issues, and is able to appropriately respond to potentially harmful situations, including workplace violence.

11. Student is aware of potential work-related stress factors and is able to develop self-care and organizational strategies to minimize their impact.
12. Student understands fiduciary responsibilities tied to funding streams, regulatory compliance and practice requirements.
13. Student understands the relationship between accountability for performance outcome, the quality of service and the financial sustainability of the organization.