A Competency Model for Child Welfare Supervisors

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Acknowledgements

Maine Child Welfare Training Institute

a collaborative effort of the
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A Competency Model for Child Welfare Supervisors

In 1991, the Maine Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) completed a pilot test of a training program for child welfare caseworkers. This pilot test was the first step in the realization of a long-held dream of Maine's Bureau of Child and Family Services to develop a state-wide, coordinated, comprehensive, competency-based training program for all of its staff. Competency models have now been developed for Maine's child welfare caseworkers (December 1994), foster and adoptive parents (July 1995) and support enforcement agents with the Bureau of Family Independence (May 1996).

This report relates specifically to the competencies of supervisors in the public child welfare system. The long-term goal is to develop a training system which begins with a competency assessment of prospective workers and includes a variety of competency-based activities designed to promote the ongoing learning and professional development of providers at all levels of the child welfare system.

The materials contained in this report are the result of a lengthy collaborative process between the public agency and the university. The partners in this process bring their own perspective and knowledge base as we pursue the common goal of improving child welfare services to the children in care in Maine; and specifically to enable supervisors to identify, develop and use the best practices possible. The competency model produced through this process is a living document, a work in progress which we continue to refine and adapt. In presenting this product to the field, our hope is that others throughout the country involved in similar work will benefit from our experience as they strive together to produce models for their own use.

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I. Overview

A. Maine Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI)

Formally launched in 1991, CWTI is a cooperative project between the Bureau of Child and Family Services of the Maine Department of Human Services, and the Center for Public Sector Innovation, Edmund S. Muskie Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Southern Maine. The goal of CWTI is to enhance the professional development and organizational effectiveness of child welfare providers in order to improve the quality of services delivered to the children and families of Maine. While several states have implemented similar human services training programs in recent years, this Maine Institute has several unique features that influence its activities: collaboration, comprehensiveness, unifying themes, and a holistic approach to competencies.

Collaboration

Agency personnel and Institute staff work as a team to design and deliver training consistent with agency priorities and reflective of the state of the art in adult learning. To ensure that training is incorporated as an essential element of the organization, all activities are designed and developed in a collaborative approach. The end-users of all training components provide information on their needs; the university provides technical assistance and guidance. With top-level administrative support and oversight, standing committees guide all activities related to developing and delivering training programs.

Comprehensiveness

Training is viewed as an ongoing process of professional development that includes monitoring and reinforcing classroom learning and relating this to behavior on the job. Institute activities range from preservice training, job shadowing, in-service workshops, and management training, to informal learning or participation in academic courses. The Institute also addresses issues of selection, retention, performance appraisal and organizational development.

Unifying Themes

Six themes provide a unifying vision for the Institute, a way of communicating across institute activities, creating a sense of commonality through shared values and a sense of direction through articulating a set of principles to guide action. The themes are Self-responsibility, Striving for Excellence, Valuing Diverse Perspectives, Systems Thinking, Team Learning and Parallel Process (see Appendix A).

Competency-Based

Training is based on a holistic view of the competencies needed for effective performance on the job. This holistic view includes both the specific job tasks, the individual performing the job and the organizational context.

Tasks: Jobs are more than a sum of the specific job tasks. Jobs are not static but, particularly in today's volatile work environment, they are made up of a variety of responsibilities which change in response to emerging needs of the organization. People do not perform tasks in a neat sequence, one at a time, but in the real world of people, juggle several tasks at once, shifting gears and setting priorities *in media res*. Thus, anticipating new priorities, collaborating with others and managing the workload are all essential job functions in addition to the specific tasks which form the core responsibilities. The mechanistic view of jobs, as a listing of job duties which can be defined in a job description, is being replaced by a more organic view of jobs as a fluid set of responsibilities.

Further, new organizational patterns are promoting the concept of inclusion and participation, recognizing that to be effective an organization needs input from all levels. As we move towards these new organizational structures the concept of people performing specific tasks in isolation becomes less relevant. The concept of "contextual performance" recognizes that effective organizations need people who commit significant time and effort to extra-job activities such as volunteering on committees, mentoring new employees and supporting the organization's goals.

Individual: People at work are whole persons. We can think of individuals at work as being like icebergs. Above the surface, we can observe the knowledge, skills and abilities (often called the KSAs) needed to perform the job tasks, but below the surface are a number of personal characteristics (their attitudes, values, traits, motives) which influence how well they do their job as a whole. This entire range of KSAs and personal characteristics make up the competencies needed for effective performance.

Studies have shown that the competencies which distinguish outstanding performers, the "waterwalkers" or "stars" in a particular job or role, tend to be the underlying personal characteristics such as flexibility or results orientation rather than KSAs such as interviewing skills or the ability to operate a particular piece of equipment. Because the underlying personal characteristics are more difficult to change, it makes sense to screen and hire for individuals with the necessary underlying personal characteristics and train for the KSAs once people are on the job.

Context: Jobs are not performed in a vacuum but in specific organizational settings. The mission and goals of the organization, its customers or clients, policies, procedures, structure, culture and climate all impact on how the job is defined and therefore what constitutes effective job performance. Therefore a holistic view of competencies also includes the contextual knowledge and skills needed to be effective in a specific organization.

Some of these contextual knowledge and skills are readily acquired in an orientation program. For example, the specific policies and procedures of the organization, the standard operating procedures (SOPs), the specific software program or information system, the organizational structure and reporting relationship are all appropriate content for on-the-job training. Other contextual skills are less easy to acquire on the job. For example, the culture of an organization may require a degree of conformity and deference to authority which an otherwise qualified individual may not be able to demonstrate. In these instances, it is appropriate to identify the necessary contextual skills and to screen for them in the hiring process.

A systems view of job performance suggests a continual, dynamic interaction among these three major components: the *tasks* or job duties, the *individual* performing the job, and the setting or *context*. A holistic view of competencies includes all three components. First, the KSAs which are needed to perform the tasks; second, the underlying personal characteristics that distinguish effective performers (the attitudes, values, traits and motives which drive people to action); and third, the context skills and knowledge needed in the specific organizational setting. Finally, linking all these skills (as a meta-competency), the Maine competency model emphasizes self-awareness and reflective practice as the basis for self-directed, ongoing learning to bridge the gap from the classroom to job performance in the real world of work.

B. Components of a Holistic Competency Model

Developing a holistic competency model requires combining several different approaches to the analysis of job performance and to the collection of data.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs): The functional or task-related knowledge and skills are developed through task analysis using both on-site observation and expert opinion. Here the focus is on generating detailed listings of the job duties and then identifying what people need to know or to be able to do in order to perform these tasks. People familiar with the job (incumbents, supervisors or trainers), the so-called Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are used to identify this information.

Personal Characteristics: The characteristics of outstanding performers are generated through a different technique known as the Behavioral Event Interview. Using a structured approach, trained interviewers probe beneath the surface to articulate the underlying characteristics of individuals who have been identified as being outstanding at their particular job.

Context Knowledge and Skills: The identification of the context knowledge and skills requires yet another approach. Here the unit of analysis moves from the specific job tasks to the organizational setting. Some of this information is drawn from organizational data in policy and procedures manuals. Surveys or focus groups provide more in-depth information on the organizational culture and climate.

This holistic approach to competency identification results in a competency model which has five categories:

(1)	**Work Management Skills:**	Performing effectively in the work context.
(2)	**Conceptual Skills:**	Using information effectively.
(3)	**Interpersonal Skills:**	Relating to others effectively.
(4)	**Self Management Skills:**	Effective use of self in the job.
(5)	**Technical Knowledge:**	Information necessary to perform the job tasks.

Each category contains a list of competencies with specific indicators that demonstrate performance.

Data from each of the different approaches are combined and redundancies eliminated. The resulting model is then reviewed and validated by focus groups familiar with the job in question. Such reviews ensure that both concepts and language accurately reflect the experience of those most knowledgeable about effective performance. Furthermore, the reviews reflect the Institute's commitment to shared ownership.

In this holistic approach, effectiveness on the job is viewed as a process, a constant spiral of learning, growth and renewal which stems from the individual's inner core of competencies, her or his attitudes, values and motives. Because training can address this inner core only to a limited extent, the responsibility for the on-going process of effectiveness must rest with each individual.

A holistic approach also recognizes that effective functioning in the real world of work involves the capacity to learn from experience and to manage change. The truly competent professional is engaged in an ongoing process of self-assessment and reflective practice, competencies that are emphasized throughout the training offered by the Institute as well as modeled by the trainers. In this constant spiral of learning and growth, of reflecting upon and learning from experience, the individual is engaged in a continual process of becoming competent at being competent.

II. Development of a Competency Model for Child Welfare Supervisors

A. Approach

The approach described above was used to develop a competency model for child welfare supervisors. A work group of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) was convened and met several times for a period of six months. CWTI has experience with developing a number of competency models (e.g. child welfare caseworker, child support enforcement agent, adoptive and foster parents). To develop these models, a three-pronged research-based approach was used.

(1) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Needed to Perform the Job Tasks

The competency model focuses first on the specific tasks or duties that make up a job or role. In Maine, all job descriptions in the state system are written using a modified functional job analysis approach. Thus the basic task data are already available as the basis for generating a listing of the technical knowledge required for the position.

(2) Characteristics of Outstanding Performers

This component of the training model attempts to get below the surface of observable behavior to identify the personal characteristics (e.g. values, motives, traits) that distinguish people who are outstanding in the particular role. Typically in Institute training programs, this component is developed by Delphi Consultants, private consultants who are trained and certified by McBer and Company of Boston in the Behavioral Event Interview. After interviewing outstanding performers, consultants analyze the data to identify an array of competencies that distinguish excellent performance.

(3) Context Skills

Context skills identify the competencies required to function effectively in a specific organizational setting. Information about the specific context knowledge needed is collected from the agency's Policy Manual and mission statement, as well as from federal and state statutes. In addition, Subject Matter Experts are asked to rate a listing of the organizational issues (mission, policy and procedures, professional standards, external environment, and culture/climate) which impact on job performance in the agency.

(4) Self Assessment and Reflective Practice

The competency listing is then reviewed to ensure adequate representation of self assessment and reflective practice skills, especially in the category of Self-management Skills.

In developing the competency model for casework supervisor, it was agreed that instead of using the research-based approach, the group would work from existing data on the competencies needed. Several data sources were compiled for this purpose: the Maine Functional Job Analysis of the Human Services Casework Supervisor, Kadushin's definitions of the roles of supervision (1992), a survey conducted in Tennessee on effective supervision (1989), the Maine Competency Model for Child Welfare Caseworkers (1994), the Maine Competency Model for Human Services Managers (unpublished) and the Ohio competency model for managers and supervisors from the Institute for Human Services (1992). The challenge for the WorkGroup was to review the voluminous information in these data sources and to identify those competencies and behavioral indicators relevant to the job of the child welfare casework supervisor.

After two frustrating sessions of trying to cull out relevant data from the child welfare caseworker model, the group agreed that an assumption needed to be made that to be effective as a casework supervisor, an individual needed to have performed effectively as a caseworker. Therefore, instead of trying to incorporate the caseworker competencies into the supervisor model, the group agreed to preface the model with a statement that it is assumed that the Child Welfare Supervisor has demonstrated the child welfare caseworker competencies and is therefore qualified to assume the additional responsibilities of the supervisor role. An outline of the competencies of the child welfare caseworker is included as Appendix B. This decision enabled the work group to identify the additional competencies needed by a supervisor.

Once the draft competency model had been developed, it was further reviewed and refined by Central Office administrators within the Bureau of Child and Family Services and by the Supervisory Training Subcommittee of CWTI. The final listing of 19 competencies and behavioral indicators is included as Appendix C.

Because of limited resources, the model has not been subjected to rigorous validation procedures. However, supervisors and managers alike have reacted that it has face validity, i.e. it reflects their perception of what is needed to be effective in the job.

In utilizing existing data to develop the model, the group made a basic assumption about the role. Since all supervisors within the Maine child welfare agency are promoted from casework positions, it is assumed that to be a supervisor, an individual needs the caseworker competencies as a basis. To a large extent this makes sense, particularly in the area of technical knowledge. However, it should not be assumed that the specific competencies which characterize *outstanding* caseworkers are the same competencies which will characterize *outstanding* supervisors. It may be that supervisors need other competencies. In the absence of the data derived from the in-depth Behavioral Event Interviews with star supervisors, we cannot know whether or not this competency model truly captures the characteristics of outstanding performers. Nevertheless, the model provides a solid basis for a number of human resource development and management applications.

B. Applications

The competency model can be used in a number of areas:

1. **Developing criteria for hiring and promotion of supervisors:** designing job samples, interview questions, candidate rating sheets; assessing job applicants.

2. **Developing individual competency development plans:** specifying prior learning and experience; planning for pre- and in-service learning outcomes; designing ongoing professional development.

3. **Designing curriculum:** identifying specific competencies to be addressed in training interventions; obtaining competency-based individual/group profiles for training events; designing training activities to develop competencies.

4. **Evaluating performance:** linking performance appraisal and promotion with competency-based professional development plans; using competencies to identify and address performance problems.

5. **Developing competency profiles of the organization:** arraying data on competency-based learning outcomes and needs assessments in reports to managers, policy makers, committees, trainers.

Competencies have also been used to develop training interventions for supervisors. In the summer of 1995, a competency-based training session for new supervisors was designed and offered by CWTI staff.

The competency model is a work in progress. It is designed to help child welfare casework supervisors think about what it takes to do the work with which they are engaged day-to-day. As the model is reexamined, rearranged, and applied in new and different ways, it will become increasingly meaningful and useful.

III. Maine Child Welfare Supervisor Competencies*

A. Outline

I.   Work-Management Skills

1.   Collaboration
2.   Organizational Ability
3.   Decisiveness and Directness
4.   Team Leadership

II.   Conceptual Knowledge and Skills

5.   Judgement
6.   Conceptual Thinking

III.   Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills

7.   Interpersonal Understanding
8.   Teamwork and Cooperation

IV.   Self-Management Skills

9.   Self-Responsibility
10. Flexibility
11. Organizational Commitment

V.   Technical Knowledge

12. Organizational Leadership
13. Program Administration
14. Personnel Administration
15. Educational Supervision
16. Casework Supervision
17. Supportive Supervision
18. Financial Management
19. Public/Community Relations

* Note that it is assumed that the Child Welfare Supervisor has demonstrated the child welfare caseworker competencies and is therefore qualified to assume the additional responsibilities of the supervisor role.

B. Maine Child Welfare Supervisor Competency Model

I. Work-Management Skills

1.00 Collaboration

Identifies, understands available resources; understands, appreciates different view, perspectives of other individuals and systems; advocates for clients in creative ways; participates in work groups, activities to improve program functioning; supports co-workers, relates effectively with administration.

01.01 Identifies and understands what resources are available, and builds and maintains effective working relationships with a network of systems.

01.02 Understands and appreciates the different views, expertise and experience of others; understands the perspectives and limitations of other individuals and systems.

01.03 Finds creative and effective ways to advocate for clients and staff.

01.04 Participates constructively on inter- and intra-agency work groups and activities to clarify and improve system and program functioning and service delivery.

01.05 Offers support to colleagues.

01.06 Relates effectively with all levels of administration inside and outside the organization.

2.00 Organizational Ability

Shows ability to plan, schedule, direct work of self and others; balances task requirements and individual abilities; organizes materials to accomplish tasks; sets challenging yet achievable goals for self and others; sets work schedules and caseload/workload standards.

02.01 Shows ability to plan, schedule, and direct the work of self and others.

02.02 Balances task requirements and individual abilities (matching people and assignments).

02.03 Organizes materials or activities to accomplish tasks efficiently.

02.04 Sets challenging yet achievable goals for self and others.

02.05 Sets work schedules and caseload/workload standards that promote the effective and efficient use of staff and delivery of services.

3.00   Decisiveness and Directness

Anticipates need for information; recognizes when a decision is required and makes timely decisions based on available data; maintains and/or explains positions when under pressure; shifts positions if new information indicates; gives directions based on personal authority when situation requires.

03.01   Anticipates significant information necessary for decision making.

03.02   Recognizes when a decision is required and makes timely decisions based on available data.

03.03   Maintains and/or explains positions when under pressure from others, confronting resistance if necessary.

03.04   Shifts positions if new information indicates.

03.05   Gives directions or orders based on personal authority, rules, and procedures when a situation requires.

4.00   Team Leadership

Communicates a vision and inspires motivation; engages with others in team process to solve problems; works to find a win/win resolution of differences; is aware of how management style impacts staff productivity and development; modifies leadership style to meet situational requirements; stays focused on major goals while managing within a context of multiple directives; uses knowledge of the system to identify long term opportunities and problems.

04.01   Shows ability to communicate a clear vision, motivation and commitment to the safety and well-being of children.

04.02   Engages with others in team process to solve problems.

04.03   Works with others to find a win/win resolution of differences.

04.04   Shows awareness of how management style impacts on staff productivity and development.

04.05   Shows ability to modify leadership style to meet situational requirements.

04.06   Shows ability to manage within a context of multiple or ambiguous directives while staying focused on major goals.

04.07   Uses knowledge of the system to identify long-term opportunities and problems.

II. Conceptual Knowledge/Skills

5.00   Judgment

Reaches sound conclusions and makes reasonable decisions; balances short and long term considerations; sets priorities for tasks in order of importance; maintains objectivity in handling difficult situations.

05.01   Reaches sound conclusions and makes reasonable decisions based on available information.

05.02   Balances short- and long-term considerations.

05.03   Sets priorities for tasks in order of importance.

05.04 Maintains objectivity in handling difficult issues, events, or decisions.

6.00 Conceptual Thinking

Uses theoretical frameworks and learning from experience to guide analysis or action; applies past experience to interpret events.

06.01 Uses theoretical frameworks and incorporates learning from past experience to guide analysis and practice.

06.02 Applies past experience to interpret events, seeing crucial similarities and differences in present and past situations.

III. Interpersonal Knowledge/Skills

7.00 Interpersonal Understanding

Perceives strengths, needs, feelings of others; understands and values diversity; recognizes emotion-laden situations and handles them sensitively; listens and observes to anticipate and prepare for others' reactions.

07.01 Perceives strengths, needs, challenges, and feelings of others.

07.02 Understands and values diversity and different styles of perceiving, learning, communicating, and operating.

07.03 Recognizes emotion-laden issues or situations and handles them with sensitivity.

07.04 Uses understanding based on listening and observation to anticipate and prepare for others' reactions.

8.00 Teamwork and Cooperation

Solicits input for decisions and plans; keeps people informed about activities; can effectively engage diverse groups of people in working together toward a common goal; recognizes and works to resolve conflicts.

08.01 Solicits data, information, ideas and opinions for specific decisions and plans.

08.02 Keeps people informed and up-to-date about activities, sharing all relevant or useful information that affects the group.

08.03 Shows the group process skills needed to get diverse groups of people to work together effectively to achieve a common goal.

08.04 Recognizes the complexities inherent in conflict, including aspects of child welfare work and proactively engages others in conflict resolution.

IV. Self-management Skills

9.00 Self-Responsibility

Assesses own performance recognizing strengths and challenges; takes responsibility for mistakes and shortcomings; learns from mistakes; continually strives to clarify personal values and develop professionally.

09.01 Describes and evaluates own performance in terms that reflect recognition of personal strengths and challenges.

09.02 Takes responsibility for own performance and outcomes and learns from mistakes.

09.03 Clarifies personal values and carries out plans for professional development to meet client and agency needs.

10.00 Flexibility

Recognizes alternative viewpoints; adapts behavior or communication.

10.01 Recognizes and values alternative viewpoints.

10.02 Adapts communication, behavior or approach to adjust to a situation or to the agency's larger objective.

11.00 Organizational Commitment

Adjusts priorities to meet client and agency needs; recognizes/builds on agency strength; focuses on agency goals.

11.01 Adjusts work-related priorities and activities to meet client and agency needs while maintaining focus on agency goals.

11.02 Recognizes and builds on the purpose of the agency and its organizational environment to meet client needs.

11.03 Maintains focus on agency goals.

V. Technical Knowledge

12.00 Organizational Leadership

Organizational Development; Promoting Collaboration; Cultural Diversity; Current Leadership Issues.

12.01 Organizational Development: Demonstrates knowledge regarding organization and management development theory; the role of power and authority; the operation of effective organizations and the dynamics of organization change.

12.02 Promoting Collaboration: Demonstrates knowledge of ways to develop effective collaboratives both inside and outside the organization.

12.03 Current Leadership Issues: Demonstrates understanding of current issues that affect the organization.

13.00 Program Administration

Child Welfare Philosophy and History; Program Planning; Agency Mission; Role Clarity.

13.01   Child Welfare Philosophy and History: Demonstrates understanding of relevant human services history, theory, values and ethical considerations.

13.02   Program Planning: Demonstrates a general knowledge of the concepts of strategic, operational and long range planning.

13.03   Agency Mission: Demonstrates knowledge of the mission of the agency and its role in the child and family service system.

13.04   Role Clarity: Understands and clarifies roles and responsibilities of participants in the child welfare system.

14.00 Personnel Management

Personnel Law/Regulations; Affirmative Action/EEO Guidelines; Hiring and Selection and Termination; Employee Performance Appraisal; Disciplinary Action.

14.01   Personnel Law/Regulations: Has knowledge of and can access personnel laws, rules, regulations and the union contract.

14.02   Affirmative Action/EEO Guidelines: Demonstrates knowledge of and can access Affirmative Action guidelines and Civil Service requirements.

14.03   Hiring, Selection, and Termination: Demonstrates the ability to participate in the hiring, selection, and termination process.

14.04   Employee Performance Appraisal: Demonstrates the ability to participate in the employee appraisal process; to use competencies in performance planning; and to assess employee performance.

14.05   Disciplinary Action: Demonstrates the ability to identify employee performance problems and apply principles of progressive discipline.

15.00 Educational Supervision

Motivation; Adult Learning; Ongoing Learning; Professional Development; Team Development.

15.01   Motivation: Understands factors that motivate performance and can use this information to assist staff to improve job performance.

15.02   Adult Learning: Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of adult learning.

15.03   On-going Learning: Creates a learning climate in which the development and maintenance of competencies, professional judgement and sound decision making in supervisees takes place through clear, sympathetic supervisory direction and assists staff to transfer knowledge and skills learned through in-service training to their jobs.

15.04   Professional Development: Keeps abreast and informs staff of the ongoing changes in the child welfare profession.

15.05   Team Development: Understands the concepts of team development, Total Quality Management, facilitation of effective meetings, and conflict management.

16.00 Casework Supervision

Standards of Practice; Casework Management; Casework Supervision; Supervisory Conferences.

16.01   Standards of Practice: Knows and can apply relevant federal and state statutes, rules, policies, procedures and current practice standards related to casework.

16.02   Casework Management: Demonstrates ability to effectively manage case assignments, case coverage and service delivery to clients via direct caseworker supervision.

16.03   Casework Principles: Knows, can model and teach necessary elements of assessment, decision making, case planning, and case process to staff.

16.04   Supervisory Conferences: Demonstrates ability to structure supervisory conferences (individual and group) to review and document casework activities and caseworker performance.

17.00 Supportive Supervision

Personal Barriers to Job Performance; Organizational Barriers to Job Performance.

17.01   Personal Barriers to Job Performance: Knows and can recognize when a worker's emotional responses and/or judgment interfere with the casework process and can empower the worker to identify and examine these issues.

17.02   Organizational Barriers to Job Performance: Uses strategies for advocating to reduce organizational barriers to staff performance, including: assessing needed resources, advocating for change in unit or regional policies or procedures, modifying unrealistic job expectations, and advocating with upper-level management for changes in problematic organizational issues.

18.00 Financial Management

Budget Issues.

18.01   Demonstrates general understanding of budgeting techniques and procedure for operating within a planned budget.

19.00 Public/Community Relations

Community Service Network, Public Relations, Public Speaking.

19.01   Community Service Network: Understands the community service network.

19.02   Public Relations: Presents a positive image to other service providers and to the community at large through use of the media, personal contacts and presentations.

19.03   Public Speaking: Demonstrates ability to deliver presentations at public/private meetings, conferences and workshops.

Appendices

Unifying Themes of the Institute

1) Self-Responsibility

Slogans: *"Take ownership," "Be proactive."*

Being responsible for self means being knowledgeable enough about ourselves, our perspectives, our behaviors, and our values that we can discern our effect on others. It also means owning our actions and words. Self-responsibility is a quest for continual learning achieved through an on-going process of reflection—discovering the gap between what we say and what we do. Self-responsibility means taking a proactive stance within the organization, figuring out what needs to be done, helping to create and shape the work environment.

2) Striving for Excellence

Slogans: *"Provide quality," "Can do!"*

We have a responsibility to identify and build on our own strengths as well as those of our colleagues. Although we work in a world where the demands made on us are often unrealistic, we must resist the temptation to use organizational realities as an excuse for failing to provide quality services. We must approach challenges creatively, identifying and removing barriers to quality services, rather than accepting problems and frustration as the norm. With clients as well as with colleagues, it is essential to have the expectation that, through collaborative efforts, situations can be managed and problems can be solved.

3) Valuing Diverse Perspectives

Slogan: *"Recognize mental models — your own and others'."*

We all carry around internal pictures of how the world works; these mental models influence what we do because they influence what we see. Recognizing the characteristics of different personal styles and different learning styles helps us to see more sharply the strengths and limits of our own mental models. When we affirm the reality of multiple mental models we open the way to draw on the resources of this variety — to engage in productive advocacy and inquiry.

4) Systems Thinking

Slogans: *"Look at the big picture," "Tension is natural."*

We work in a world of tension, in which we are constantly faced by multiple demands from different interest groups both within our organization and within the larger community. Dealing with these multiple demands calls for systems thinking: looking at the "big picture" rather than at separate events or individuals, and taking a long view which includes the future as well as the immediate present. This focus on interactions and on dynamics creates a climate for action that emphasizes causes rather than symptoms. When we take a systems view and when we recognize that tension is a catalyst for positive change, we can lay the groundwork for high quality problem solving.

5) Team Learning

Slogans: *"Communicate," "No blaming!"*

Teamwork means aligning ourselves with others who have different responsibilities and, perhaps, different priorities. Dialogue and discussion are tools to help us value these differences; effective teamwork is based on open, clear communication. When we collaborate we consolidate the energies of individuals who, in diverse ways, share and work towards the same goals. In working together, we need to extend compassion to ourselves, colleagues, supervisors and administrators as well as to clients. We need to work to solve problems without placing blame on people. It is essential to assume that we all are working toward the same goals; we all want good things for people.

6) Parallel Process

Slogans: *"Model positive behavior," "Stop the negative process."*

Both positive and negative attitudes, values, ways of interacting with and treating one another at one organizational level tend to be repeated at other levels. Organizational culture, climate and structure have a powerful effect on our behavior. In addition, much of what we learn comes through the modeling of behaviors, although frequently this takes place at an unconscious level. Wherever we are in the organization, we should take responsibility to model positive behaviors and stop negative parallel processes. Continued efforts to practice the unifying themes will promote more conscious and more positive modeling of behavior.

Maine Child Welfare Caseworker Competencies Outline

Maine Child Welfare Caseworker Competency Model

I. Work-Management Skills
1. Collaboration
2. Role Clarity
3. Results Orientation

II. Conceptual Knowledge and Skills
4. Psychological Understanding
5. Observational Skill
6. Analytic Thinking
7. Strategic Thinking

III. Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills
8. Interpersonal Sensitivity
9. Communication Skill
10. Interviewing
11. Interpersonal Techniques
12. Rapport-Building Skill
13. Coaching and Counseling Skills
14. Persuasiveness

IV. Self-Management Skills
15. Job Commitment
16. Self-Awareness
17. Self-Control
18. Self-Confidence
19. Flexibility
20. Self-Development

V. Technical Knowledge
21. Statutory and Regulatory Bases
22. Policy and Procedures
23. Protection of Children
24. Services to Families
25. Services to Children in Care
26. Adoption
27. Preparation for Adulthood
28. Casework Principles/ Management
29. Court/Judicial System
30. Human Development
31. Cultural Sensitivity
32. Psychological
33. Health
34. Computer Proficiency

Background Readings

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Competency model defined. Competency models should vary according to their purpose and how they will be used. There are a range of options to consider. One for the core values, another for core competencies, a leadership competency model and multiple competency models for job specific competencies. Competency models that address organizational values, core competencies and leadership competencies should have no more than 5-7 competencies. If there are too many competencies assessment is less accurate because reviewers will lose focus and will not properly consider their responses. Academic journal article Child Welfare. A Clinical Consultation Model for Child Welfare Supervisors. By Strand, Virginia C.; Badger, Lee. Read preview. Academic journal article Child Welfare. A Clinical Consultation Model for Child Welfare Supervisors. The emphasis on administrative supervisory practice was characteristic of practice in New York City at the time this project was initiated. Two developments in child welfare in New York City made this project especially timely, however. One, when this project began in 2002, New York City was in the sixth year of a major effort to reform the child welfare system. In 1996, the city had created a new, commissioner-level agency for children which was monitored by an independent oversight panel. Competencies for Public Child. Welfare (one Advanced. Competency statement for. each of the ten EPAS Core. comps). 2.1.1. Able to articulate the roles of a. Identify as a. professional child welfare social. professional. worker and consistently. 1. Interact positively with clients, colleagues and supervisors and demonstrate skill in seeking out suitable client services and ensuring client access to those services. 2. Maintain professional demeanor and boundaries in practice situations, demonstrate skill in articulating professional knowledge and effective use of self, and utilize appropriate resources to ensure professional growth. Proposed competencies for. Professional child and youth work personnel. Draft document for comment* march 1, 2001. Ethics of Child and Youth Care Professionals Documents Collected Domain Team Participants A Framework for Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge. 4 4 4 4 5 5. 5 5 5 6. The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. Leadership Competency Framework. National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. Updated May, 2011. A Service of the Children's Bureau, a member of the T/TA Network. Acknowledgements. T. This competency model is being used as the basis for the curriculum for the NCWWI's Leadership Academy for Middle Managers and Leadership Academy for Supervisors. The model is a work in progress and as it is used, it will be adapted and refined. National Child Welfare Workforce Institute www.ncwwi.org. A Service of the Children's Bureau, a member of the T/TA Network © Updated May 2011.