A Competency Model
for Child Welfare Caseworkers

by Freda D. Bernotavicz

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Preface

In the fall of 1991, the Maine Child Welfare Training Institute (MCWTI) 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, and competency-based

Training program for its caseworkers. The long-term goal was to develop a training system which begins with a competency assessment of prospective caseworkers and includes a variety of competency-based training and mentoring activities designed to promote the ongoing learning and professional development of this important group of providers in the child welfare system.

The pre-service curriculum was based on a competency model developed specifically for child welfare caseworkers and intended to provide the conceptual base for the entire training system. This report on the competency model, originally produced in 1994, summarizes the work of developing the model and includes a description of the Maine Child Welfare Training Institute, its training model, the procedures for developing a competency model, and the original Competency Model for Child Welfare Caseworkers.

In 2007, under a Recruitment and Retention grant from the U.S. Children's Bureau, we updated the competency model to make it consistent with the competencies in the state performance appraisal process. As noted in the Preface to the 1994 document, competency models are living documents, works 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 a competency model for their own use.

Freda Bernotavicz

Portland, Maine

2014

Overview

Maine Child Welfare Training Institute (MCWTI)

Formally launched in 1991, MCWTI was a cooperative project between the Bureau of Child and Family Services of the Maine Department of Human Services and the Muskie Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Southern Maine. The goal of the Institute was 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 child welfare training programs in recent years, the Maine Institute had several unique features

That influenced its activities: collaboration, comprehensiveness, unifying themes, and a holistic approach to competencies.

1. Collaboration

    Agency personnel and Institute staff worked 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 was incorporated as an essential element of the organization, all activities were designed and developed in a collaborative approach. The end-users of all training components provided information on their needs; the university provided technical assistance and guidance. With top-level administrative support and oversight, five standing committees guided all activities related to developing and delivering training programs.

2. Comprehensiveness

    Training was 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 ranged from pre-service training, job shadowing, in-service workshops and management training, to informal learning or participation in academic courses. The Institute also addressed issues of selection, retention, and performance appraisal.

3. Unifying Themes

    Six themes provided a unifying vision for the Institute, a way of communicating across Institute activities, thus creating a sense of commonality through shared values and promoting 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.)

4. Holistic Approach to Competencies

Training was based on a holistic view of the competencies needed for effective performance. Like many competency-based programs, we used task analysis to identify the knowledge, functional skills, and abilities (often called the KSA's) needed to carry out job requirements. But such knowledge, skills and abilities reflect only the readily ob. servable competencies needed to perform the specific tasks; they do not capture the full range of competencies needed for effective job performance. A systems view of job performance suggests a continual, dynamic interaction among three major components: the individual performing the job, the tasks or job duties, and the organizational setting or context. To identify the competencies needed, the analysis needs to go beyond just the tasks.

A holistic view of competencies includes the underlying personal characteristics that distinguish effective performers (the attitudes, values, traits and motives which drive people to action). In addition, specific organizational settings — such as a large public bureaucracy or a small private agency — require different context skills and knowledge. 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.

Components of a Holistic Competency Model

Developing a holistic model requires combining several different approaches to the analysis of job performance and to the collection of data. The functional or task-related knowledge and skills are developed through task analysis using both on-site observation and expert opinion. 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.

The identification of the context knowledge and skills requires yet a different 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 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 reflected 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 ongoing process of effectiveness must rest with each individual. Thus, the first five days of Maine's twenty-day mandatory pre-service training for child welfare caseworkers was devoted to an exploration of self: the ways in which individuals see the world, how they process information and relate to others, how they deal with conflict, and how their personal experience and history impact on their values and behavior.

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 were emphasized throughout the curriculum as well as modelled 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.

Developing a Competency Model for Caseworkers

The CWTI approach was used to develop a competency model for the training of child welfare caseworkers.

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

   The training 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 were already available. The job descriptions for the three basic types of caseworker (Child Protective, Adoption and Children's Services) formed the basis for a Job Duties Survey in which caseworkers rated the importance placed on their job duties by themselves and by the agency. This process validated the task data, since workers consistently rated all job duties highly from both their own perspective and that of the agency.

Existing data from other states were then reviewed to identify the task-related competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) needed to perform the tasks. The listings were consolidated and duplicate statements eliminated. The resulting listing provided a framework for the content of the curriculum, the design of the learning experiences, and the assessments of learning outcomes.

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 consult- ants 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.

To identify the interview sample for this training program, peers and supervisors were asked to nominate outstanding child welfare caseworkers. Nominations were based on three criteria: excellent casework skills, excellent rapport with clients and other professionals, and general reputation as an outstanding child welfare caseworker. A group of seventeen interviewees represented different regional areas in the state and different program areas, and included both men and women. Consultants conducted two-hour, tape-recorded interviews with individuals who described key events in their experience as caseworkers. Detailed analysis of the transcripts produced a listing of competencies or personal characteristics that distinguished effective caseworkers. Interview data provided specific indicators for each competency and were grouped in the four categories of Work Management Skills, Conceptual Skills, Interpersonal Skills, and Self Management Skills.

3. Context Skills

Context skills identify the competencies required to function effectively in a specific organizational setting. To complete the picture of the competencies needed for effective performance in the Maine Bureau of Child and Family

Services, information about the specific content knowledge needed was collected from the agency's policy manual and mission statement, as well as from federal and state statutes. In addition, the seven- teen caseworkers in the sample rated 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. Analysis of their responses produced a list of context skills that was reviewed by the training committee and incorporated into the competency model — primarily in the category of Work Management Skills.

4. Self Assessment and Reflective Practice

   The competency listing was reviewed to ensure adequate representation of these skills, especially in the category of Self Management Skills.

Review and Verification

Throughout the process of developing the competency model, members of the Child Welfare Caseworker Training Committee reviewed and revised individual components, such as the Characteristics of Effective Performers and the Context Skills. These reviews resulted in changing the language to make it more reflective of the target audience, and in building familiarity and ownership of the competencies. The final competency model, therefore, belongs to those most directly involved in providing services to families and children, the caseworkers themselves.

Updating the Competency model

The competency model was used as the basis for caseworker training in Maine until the Child Welfare Training Institute was eliminated in 2010 as a cost-saving measure. In 2007, under the auspices of a Recruitment and Retention project funded by the U.S. Children's Bureau, the author reviewed and revised the competencies. The goal was to make them consistent with the generic state government competencies used in the performance appraisal process. This document includes both the original model and the updates.

Maine Child Welfare Caseworker Competency Model

A. Outline

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

B. Maine Child Welfare Caseworker Competency Model

I. Work-Management Skills

1.00 Collaboration

    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.

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

    01.05 Offers support to co-workers.

2.00   **Role Clarity**

02.01   Understands roles and responsibilities of participants in the child welfare system.

02.02   Clarifies for clients the role and responsibilities of caseworker and agency.

02.03   Helps clients understand issues/problems related to the basis for agency involvement and sets up behaviorally-specific goals and expectations related to those issues.

3.00   **Results Orientation**

03.01   Regularly re-assesses and re-prioritizes in order to focus attention on the most important tasks.

03.02   Acts quickly to solve problems and to get things done.

03.03   Uses "to-do" lists or other tools to manage time, keep track of what needs to be done, and manage multiple, pressing job demands.

03.04   Pays attention to and evaluates case progress; follows up to keep things on track (e.g., frequent communications with clients; checking others' progress on work related to their cases).

03.05   Is persistent and thorough in seeing problems through to some conclusion, in getting point across, in overcoming obstacles, and in tracking down resources.

03.06   Keeps providers, clients and oneself directed toward objectives; redirects or refocuses as needed.

II. Conceptual Knowledge and Skills

4.00   **Psychological Understanding**

04.01   Recognizes and understands underlying reasons for, or causes of, people's behavior.

04.02   Recognizes and understands the psychological impact of events or situations on people.

04.03   Recognizes and understands trends or patterns in behavior.

04.04   Makes sense of particular behaviors of the individual, within the context of the individual's environment and experience.

04.05   Observes and develops hypotheses about the meaning of nonverbal cues (e.g. body language, tone of voice).

04.06 Understands and recognizes group dynamics (e.g., interpersonal conflicts, hidden agendas, family tensions).

5.00 **Observational Skills**

05.01 Identifies key elements of behaviors or situations by reviewing and analyzing details and sorting out the most salient components (sense of what is most important in all that is observed).

05.02 Recognizes incongruities and inconsistences in information or observed behavior. ("What's wrong with this picture?")

05.03 Fits pieces of information into a coherent whole or summary.

05.04 Describes factually what is observed without using language that presumes values and motives (e.g., describes a specific behavior rather than saying the child behaved in a sexualized manner).

05.05 Records observations accurately as part of case documentation, using specific quotes and precise descriptions.

6.00 **Analytic Thinking**

06.01 Gathers information from a broad range of sources to develop own understanding of a situation (e.g., documentation, interviews with cognizant people, checks of collateral resources, consultation with experts).

06.02 Weighs available current and historical information about situations or behavior to form hypotheses.

06.03 Looks beyond superficial or simplistic explanations; searches for underlying causes of situations, behavior, or conditions.

06.04 Uses conceptual frameworks (e.g., child or human development, cultural diversity, family systems) to synthesize and analyze data or evaluate situations.

06.05 Thinks through the implications of situations or events (i.e., "if-then" analyses) to develop hypotheses or predictive statements.

06.06 Continually gathers and reevaluates available information and case progress; periodically takes stock of analysis, synthesis.

7.00 **Strategic Thinking**

07.01 Understands clearly the scope of involvement and proceeds within that frame- work; keeps a long-term perspective while working on immediate problems.

07.02 Ensures continuity and focus of effort toward long-term goal through a continual refocusing during each step in the process.

07.03 Enters each activity understanding what must be accomplished to reach objective.

07.04 Prepares in advance for situations (e.g., develops mental plans; visualizes upcoming situations and different scenarios; rehearses presentations).

07.05 Assesses the potential for things to go wrong and anticipates what is needed.

07.06 Weighs the pros and cons of options (i.e., risk/benefit analyses).

07.07 Tailors strategies to the particular needs and preferences of individual clients (e.g., takes developmental age into account; takes background and history into account).

07.08 Focuses on which approaches to use in given situations in order to be most helpful to clients.

III. Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills

8.00   Interpersonal Sensitivity

08.01 Recognizes and acknowledges the feelings of others, and demonstrates unwavering respect for clients and their rights.

08.02 Is empathetic; is able to see things accurately from the emotional perspective of others, and cares about their well-being.

08.03 Is discerning in understanding own feelings and is purposeful in expressing them.

08.04 Recognizes the importance of airing strong feelings and dealing with them openly in an appropriate setting.

08.05 Lets people know their feelings are legitimate and real, validating them in a non-judgmental way.

08.06 Shows genuine respect for the wishes, preferences, and privacy of clients, and advocates for them when appropriate.

08.07 Acknowledges and addresses survival needs of clients (e.g., heat, clothing, food) before attending to social and behavioral issues and problems.

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9.00   Communication Skill

    09.01 Creates opportunities for open communication and sharing of
           information, adapting approaches to the audience.

    09.02 Gives verbal and nonverbal evidence of attentive listening (to
           gather facts; to provide a sounding board; to make people feel
           heard; etc.).

    09.03 Uses a variety of questioning techniques to elicit information
           needed in order to form conclusions or make decisions.

    09.04 Makes sure clients/families have all the available information
           needed to manage situations and make sound decisions; explains
           complexities in an easy-to- understand manner.

    09.05 Respects requirements for confidentiality and exercises discretion
           when sharing information.

    09.06 Prepares clear, accurate, and appropriate written communications
           or documents.

10.00   Interviewing

    10.01 Communicates the purpose of the interview.

    10.02 Controls the process and direction while encouraging client
           participation.

    10.03 Selects strategies and techniques appropriate to the age or
           developmental stage of preschoolers and older children,
           adolescents, parents and families.

    10.04 Varies interview methods, using open-ended or closed questions,
           clarification, support, summarization, or confrontation, as
           appropriate.

    10.05 Observes and listens actively, helping clients to communicate
           feelings as well as facts.

11.00   Interpersonal Techniques

    11.01 Selects and uses appropriate behavior management techniques,
           especially for children who have been physically and/or sexually
           abused.

    11.02 Responds to crises with effective crisis intervention techniques.

    11.03 Manages conflicts, dealing appropriately in difficult situations
           with clients, supervisors, or peers.

11.04 Facilitates meetings and groups, providing leadership or support as needed to accomplish tasks and maintain group cohesiveness.

12.00 Rapport-Building Skill

12.01 Sees clients as whole individuals with strengths as well as weaknesses; affirms the worth of an individual even when distinguishing unacceptable behavior.

12.02 Establishes and nurtures client trust by being reliable, prompt, dependable and candid in interactions, making sure that behaviors match words.

12.03 Uses purposeful self-disclosure as a professional tool in order to recognize and acknowledge commonality and to develop the relationship with the client.

12.04 Recognizes opportunities for celebrations and interactions which encourage or acknowledge progress and build self-esteem.

13.00 Coaching and Counseling Skills

13.01 Recognizes and understands the interrelationships and dynamic nature of family systems and considers them in interaction with any family members.

13.02 Gives positive feedback and reinforces strengths in order to help people build self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

13.03 Lays groundwork for positive responses by addressing emotional needs.

13.04 Coaches and empowers people to make their own decisions and choices and to handle situations on their own.

13.05 Counsels clients to help them cope with emotionally demanding situations or to prepare them for situations they will need to face.

13.06 Gives feedback to people in order to help them understand the message and image they are projecting, or to improve the communication process.

14.00 Persuasiveness

14.01 Influences others by appealing to their sense of morality or to their children's best interests.

14.02 Uses sound logic, convincing arguments or legitimate authority to persuade people.

14.03 Informs people of possible negative or positive consequences of their actions.

14.04 Establishes a sequence of short-term actions or activities to allow clients to experience success.

14.05 Assists people in understanding others' points of view in order to facilitate agreements or compromises.

14.06 Structures situations or the environment to influence people's attitudes or behavior (e.g., setting deadlines; structuring investigative questioning; meeting in places to minimize stress or to limit interference from other sources).

14.07 Uses the situational authority of others; enlists their help in influencing events or situations.

IV. Self-management Skills

15.00 Job Commitment

15.01 Is enthusiastic and energetic; likes the job.

15.02 Has firm values and beliefs about protecting children and preserving families.

15.03 Takes ownership; assumes responsibility as a driving force in getting things done or in making changes with clients, agency and community.

15.04 Extends self to reach clients (e.g., driving long distances; responding in times of crisis).

15.05 Perseveres in the face of disappointment, hostility or adverse conditions; resists dwelling on disappointments; motivates self to make the best of things.

16.00 Self-Awareness

16.01 Understands and reflects upon own strengths and limitations and the implications for professional role.

16.02 Understands and reflects upon own values, cultural/ personal style, familial background and how each may impact others.

16.03 Understands how himself/herself is perceived by others.

16.04 Understands that people change over time, recognizes changes in self and others, and integrates this into their practice.

16.05 Acknowledges importance of prudently "taking care of oneself" to maintain mental health and conserve energies and enthusiasm.

17.00 Self-Control

17.01 Resists jumping to conclusions; checks out hearsay or others' opinions in order to form opinions and conclusions based on first-hand interaction and assessment.

17.02 Maintains composure in stressful situations; persists despite turmoil or conflict.

17.03 Without compromising safety, functions effectively in situations involving personal risk or when confronted with behavior or situations that may be personally offensive; follows reasonable and sound ground rules for safe interactions.

17.04 Restrains impulses to respond to crises which may mean being places in personal danger.

17.05 Demonstrates patience and acceptance; gives people reasonable time to understand or to change.

17.06 Controls own stress; finds ways, such as humor, to reduce or manage it.

18.00 Self-Confidence

18.01 Believes in own decisions, and is optimistic about own ability to get the job done.

18.02 Is in touch with own intuition and instincts.

18.03 Is able to think on one's feet and to be decisive in ambiguous or chaotic situations.

18.04 Knows when to be assertive, when to take a strong stand on issues; and when to confront others.

19.00 Flexibility

19.01 Adapts personal and professional styles to meet the needs of specific clients and situations.

19.02 Is open to new information and to changing own opinions.

19.03 Is able to shift gears and redirect activities.

19.04 Acknowledges and copes with both positive and negative outcomes of cases; recognizes and deals with issues of grief and loss, including lost opportunities and perceived error.

20.00 Self-Development

20.01 Keeps up with knowledge in the field.

20.02 Actively solicits feedback, recognizes needed changes and integrates them into performance.

20.03 Reflects on experience and applies learning to present situations.

20.04 Seeks to develop new areas of expertise, to improve skills, and to broaden own horizons.

V. Technical Knowledge

21.00 Statutory and Regulatory Bases

21.01 Statutory and Regulatory Base: Understands the basis in federal and state law, regulations and rules for the operation of child welfare programs.

21.02 Knowledge of Relevant Statutes: Knows the specific statutes related to the child welfare programs and their interrelationship with other related laws.

21.03 Definitions and Concepts: Understands legal definitions and concepts and is able to apply them within the law to casework and judicial process.

21.04 Ethical Issues: Understands the legal requirements of ethical practice and the ramifications to staff and clients when this does not occur.

22.00 Policy and Procedures

22.01 Policy Base: Understands the basis in policy for the operation of the child welfare programs.

22.02 Knowledge of Relevant Policy and Procedures: Knows the specific policies and procedures related to the child welfare programs and their interrelationship with other related systems.

22.03 Definitions and Concepts: Understands policy definitions and concepts and is able to apply them appropriately to casework and judicial process.

22.04 Ethical Issues: Understands the policy requirements of ethical practice and the ramifications to staff and clients when this does not occur.

22.05 Documentation: Knows information to be accumulated, analyzed and recorded; appropriate forms; relationship between documentation and accountability.

23.00 **Protection of Children**

23.01 Definitions of Abuse and Neglect: Understands definitions of child abuse and neglect and corresponding levels and methods of interventions.

23.02 Dynamics and Indicators of Abuse and Neglect: Understands dynamics and indicators of neglect and of physical, sexual and emotional abuse including family violence and their traumatic impact on children and families.

23.03 Reporting of Abuse and Neglect: Understands the statutory responsibility for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.

23.04 Investigation: Understands and is able to utilize specialized methods to assess alleged abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse in foster homes, day care homes, or child care institutions.

23.05 Intervention: Knows how to develop and implement plans and interventions necessary for the protection of children and family members which may include family (re)habilitation, preservation and/or (re)unification.

23.06 Treatment: Knows available treatment resources and modalities for dealing with child abuse and neglect.

24.00 **Services to Families**

24.01 Family Systems Theory and Therapy: Understands and is able to identify Theoretical frameworks and procedures for assessing family dynamics, understanding their relationship to abuse and neglect, and intervening (including family inter- views and service referral).

24.02 Effective Parenting: Understands and is able to identify models (behavior modification, STEP, PET) and criteria for identifying strategies appropriate for developmental level, individual needs.

24.03 Family Preservation: Understands and is able to identify standards and casework methods to promote permanence for children, including parent involvement in case planning, services to maintain children in their own homes, parent involvement with

children separated by placement, and services for timely reunification.

25.00 Services to Children in Care

25.01 Effects of Placement out of Family: Understands and is able to identify the effects on children who have been removed from their families and have been placed in another setting with different history, culture, values, expectations and behavior.

25.02 Placement Issues: Understands strategies for identifying and maintaining the most appropriate placement to meet child's needs, and avoiding unnecessary disruption.

25.03 Family Connectedness: Understands the dynamics of family relationships, and disruption resulting in separation, and the importance of maintaining a type of connectedness with previous families based on an assessment of each family's situation and the child's needs.

25.04 Placement Resources: Has knowledge of various types of placement and their differential use based on the child's needs, has knowledge of criteria for selecting among the alternatives (e.g., kinship care, foster homes, specialized foster homes, group homes, residential treatment centers), admission and department approval procedures.

25.05 Preparation for Placement: Understands and is able to utilize knowledge and techniques for preparation of the child and the child's placement resource, the need for continuity and information for and about the child, and ways to reduce stress and facilitate adjustment.

25.06 Special Education: Understands the broad criteria for identifying children in need of special education services, the Pupil Evaluation Team (PET) process, and the roles of the local education administration (LEA), the surrogate parent and the caseworker as set forth in department policy.

25.07 Extended Care: Understands the criteria and procedures for voluntarily extending care nearing adulthood and its relationship to developing independent living skills and abilities.

25.08 Placement Supervision: Understands methods and techniques for working collaboratively with foster parents and other caregivers to identify issues, needs and risk factors in the particular placement

and jointly develop strategies to meet needs to access and coordinate resources.

25.09 Child Safety: Understands procedures for on-going monitoring to identify indicators of risk and procedures for appropriate intervention.

26.00 Adoption

26.01 Recruitment: Understands and is able to utilize strategies to facilitate recruitment, including public relations, resource lists, and adoption exchanges.

26.02 Home Study: Understands and is able to utilize standards and procedures for thorough assessment of adoptive family applicants, including engaging family members in the home study and self-assessment, gathering pertinent data about the family, educating family regarding adoption, documenting data in written report and drawing conclusions to form the basis for a decision on acceptance.

26.03 Adoption Assistance: Understands criteria and procedures for accessing adoption assistance.

26.04 Adoption Placement Supervision: Understands the dynamics of adoptive placement, methods and resources for assisting the integration of the child into the adoptive family, standards for assessing the adjustment of the child and family that form the basis for decisions regarding the placement.

26.05 Post Adoptive Services: Knowledge of range of services and strategies to provide them.

27.00 Preparation for Adulthood

27.01 Transition to Adulthood: Understands and is able to identify strategies to prepare for and sustain independent living, including assessing capacities to maintain essential relationships; connecting past, present and future as tools for adulthood; developing a positive identity; and developing decision making skills.

27.02 Group Work: Understands the importance of group process in working with adolescents and adolescents' needs for networking skills; understands and is able to utilize techniques for organizing, facilitating, problem-solving in groups.

28.00 Casework Principles/Management

28.01 Casework Principles: Understands and is able to identify standards for development/maintenance of helping relationships.

28.02 Risk Assessment: Understands and is able to identify standards and procedures for obtaining pertinent information and decision making at various stages of the casework process and for integrating risk assessment with service planning for case outcomes.

28.03 Permanency Planning: Understands and is able to identify philosophy, definition, and practices; considerations necessary for determining the best interests of the child [weighing the consequences of weighing of remaining at home vs. placement in care].

28.04 Case Planning Process: Understands and is able to identify standards and procedures for prioritizing needs and objectives and for designing clear, concise action/service plans that address outcomes, incorporate measurable activities, and have meaning to the family.

28.05 Case Documentation: Understands and is able to identify standards and procedures for identifying pertinent data for inclusion in case records and reports; organizing information in a clear and concise manner; writing summaries of assessment, case plan and other supporting data for the case record in a timely manner.

28.06 Outcome Measures: Understands and is able to identify definition and purposes of outcome measures.

28.07 Case Reviews: Understands and is able to identify standards and procedures for routine and timely reviews.

28.08 Service Contracts and Referrals: Understands and is able to identify standards and techniques for coordinating the timely delivery of services to meet identified needs, including identification of community resources, advocacy, and appropriate follow-up reports.

28.09 Case Termination: Understands and is able to identify criteria and procedures for effectively terminating a relationship with a client.

29.00 Court/Judicial System

29.01 Legal System: Understands jurisdictions of various courts that deal with children and families.

29.02 Procedures and Process: Knows and can apply legal procedures, including basic rules of evidence, how to testify, standards of proof and preparation for court activity including adjudicatory and dispositional phases.

30.00 Human Development

30.01 Developmental Process: Understands and is able to identify stages and processes of attachment as well as physical, cognitive, social and psychological development.

30.02 Sexual Development and Behavior: Understands and is able to identify the process of human sexual development including sexual identity, sexual orientation and behavior as well as related issues such as sex education, birth control, teen pregnancy, gay, lesbian and bisexual youth, sexually transmitted disease and abortion.

30.03 Developmental Challenges: Understands and is able to identify the causes, symptoms and treatment approaches for developmental challenges or conditions such as attachment disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, fetal alcohol effect and syndrome, mental retardation, adolescent depression, suicide and other emotional disturbances, cerebral palsy and other conditions that delay or impair development.

31.00 Cultural Sensitivity

31.01 Cross-Cultural Diversity: Understands and is able to identify differences in cultural, ethnic, and religious values, perceptions, customs and behaviors.

31.02 Cross-Cultural Interactions: Understands and is able to identify ways cultural variables can impact on an assessment as well as ways of communicating and establishing relationships with clients from cultural backgrounds different from one's own.

32.00 Psychological

32.01 Separation and Loss: Understands and is able to identify the stages of grief and recovery related to separation or loss and the appropriate response to each.

32.02 Stress: Understands and is able to identify the causes and effects of stress and techniques for effective stress management and self-care.

32.03 Trauma and Victimization: Understands and is able to identify the causes and effects of trauma and victimization including the impact of early and cumulative trauma and victimization and techniques for management and recovery.

32.04 Power and Control: Understands and is able to identify power and control as forces that drive behavior, their use and abuse, and responses to their abuse such as co-dependency, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect.

32.05 Mental Dysfunctions: Understands and is able to identify the types of mental dysfunctions, their manifestations, implications and management.

32.06 Addiction Recovery: Understands and is able to identify stages of recovery from addiction and effects of the recovery process on the family system.

32.07 Psychological Testing and Evaluation: Understands and is able to identify purposes of cognitive, emotional, social, and developmental assessments; techniques for formulating specific referral questions, evaluating the quality of the assessment, and using psychological information in the development of the case plan.

33.00 Health

33.01 Preventive Health Care: Understands the range of routine medical care necessary to identify health problems or issues which may require health care.

33.02 Health and Medical Conditions: Understands the factors that can effect the well-being of individuals and can identify symptoms or conditions which indicate the need for health care or immediate medical attention.

33.03 Family Health History: Understands and can identify relevant factors in family and personal medical and genetic history and applications.

33.04 Medical Tests: Knows the types and purposes of tests, including X-ray techniques, blood tests, and cultures commonly used for diagnosis or treatment.

33.05 Medications: Knows the types, purposes and frequent side effects of common medications and knows how to secure such information when necessary on other medications.

33.06 Legal and Policy Issues: Understands the legal and policy issues related to particular diagnoses such as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV-AIDS, and other communicable diseases and knows how to secure appropriate guidance for the management of those issues.

33.07 Alcoholism and Drug Abuse: Understands and can identify the dynamics and indicators of addiction, medical risks, impact on individuals and families, and the connection with family violence, methods of intervention and treatment.

34.00 Computer Proficiency

34.01 Computer Concepts, Terminology and Uses: Understands and is able to apply basic computer concepts and terminology and describe uses.

34.02 Keyboarding: Understands and is able to apply keyboarding ability to access and process information.

34.03 Wordprocessing: Understands and is able to utilize the computer for basic word processing (correspondence, case record and narrative reports).

Maine Child Welfare Caseworker Competency Model

Revised 2007

A. Outline

Self Management

 1.0   Initiative

 2.0   Adaptability

 3.0   Decision Making

 4.0   Self Responsibility

Working with Others

 5.0   Customer Service

 6.0   Team work

 7.0   Interpersonal Relations

Work Management

 8.0   Planning and Organizing Work

 9.0   Analytic Thinking

 10.0 Observational Skills

 11.0 Collaboration

Job Knowledge

 12.0 Role Clarity

 13.0 Interviewing

 14.0 Technical Knowledge

 15.0 Computer Proficiency

Communication Skills

 16.0 Oral Communications

 17.0 Written Communications

B. Maine Child Welfare Caseworker Competency Model Revised 2007

Managing Self

1.0 Initiative: Drives for results and success. Sets high standards of performance. Pursues aggressive goals and works hard to achieve them. Displays a high level of effort and commitment to performing the work. Seeks to develop new areas of expertise, to improve skills and to broaden own horizons. Prepares in advance for situations.

2.0 Adaptability: Handles day-to-day work challenges confidently. Is willing to adjust to multiple demands, shift priorities, ambiguity and rapid change. Shows resilience in the face of constraints, frustrations of adversity. Ability to adapt styles and shift gears. Shows evidence of coping skills. Comfortable with new ideas; open to new information.

3.0 Decision Making: Shares information and involves appropriate others in the decision-making process. Makes timely, logical decisions. Decisions are modified based on new information when appropriate. Takes responsibility for decisions.

4.0 Self Responsibility: Accurate self-assessment: knows own strengths and challenges. Takes responsibility for own performance and outcomes and learns from mistakes. Emotional awareness: recognizes own emotions and their effects. Clarifies personal values and carries out plans for professional development to meet client and agency needs. Actively solicits feedback, recognizes needed changes and integrates them into performance; reflects on experience and applies learning to new situation.

Working with Others

5.0 Customer Service: Seeks feedback from internal and external customers. Anticipates customer needs and provides quality services to customers. Continuously searches for ways to increase customer satisfaction.

6.0 Teamwork: Contributes to organizational goals. Fosters collaboration among team members and among teams.

7.0 Interpersonal Relations: Shows respect and tolerance for each person. Relates well to others, possesses good listening skills, and demonstrates trust, sensitivity and mutual respect. Recognizes the contribution diversity brings to job performance and creativity. Demonstrates altruistic empathy – caring for others. Manages conflicts, dealing appropriately with difficult situations. Responds to crises effectively.

Work Management

8.0 Planning and Organizing: Develops short and long range plans that are appropriately comprehensive, realistic and effective in meeting goals. Integrates planning efforts across work units. Handles multiple demands and competing priorities. Manages meetings effectively. Defines and arranges activities in a logical and efficient manner. Effectively uses resources including time, money and materials.

9.0 Analytic Thinking: Gathers information from a broad range of sources; weighs information to form hypothesis; uses conceptual frameworks; looks beyond superficial explanations; thinks through the implications of situations or events; continually re-evaluates information. Assesses the potential for things to go wrong.

10.0 Observation Skills: Observes and identifies key elements; recognizes inconsistencies; fits pieces of information into a coherent whole; describes factually what is observed; records observations accurately in case documentation.

11.0 Collaboration: Identifies and understands what resources are available and builds effective working relationships with a network of systems; understands and appreciates different views, expertise and experience of others; understands the perspectives and limitations of other individuals and systems; finds creative and effective ways to advocate for clients; participates constructively on workgroups; offers support to co-workers.

Job Knowledge

12.0 Role clarity: understands and is able to describe the practice model; has firm values and beliefs about protecting children and preserving families; shows perseverance; understands roles and responsibilities of participants in the child welfare system; clarifies for clients the role and responsibilities of caseworker and agency; helps clients understand issues/problems related to the basis for agency involvement and sets up behaviorally-specific goals and expectations related to those issues. Respects requirements for confidentiality.

13.0 Interviewing: communicates the purpose of the interview; controls the process and direction while encouraging client participation; selects

appropriate strategies and techniques; varies interview methods; observes and listens actively.

14.0 Technical Knowledge: demonstrates understanding of the statutory bases of child welfare; policy and procedures; child protection; services to families; services to children in care; adoption; preparation for adulthood; court/judicial system; human development; cultural sensitivity; psychological issues; health issues.

15.0 Computer Proficiency: Understands computer concepts, terminology and uses; able to use keyboarding ability; word processing; use of MACWIS.

Communication Skills

16.0 Oral Communications: Speaks clearly and expresses self well in groups and in one-on-one conversations. Demonstrates attention to and conveys understanding of comments and questions of others.

17.0 Written Communications: Conveys information clearly and effectively through formal and informal documents.

Appendix A

Unifying Themes of the Maine Child Welfare Training 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.

Appendix B

Background Readings

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