



# Competencies for Professional Child & Youth Work Practitioners

REVISED 2010

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE  
& CHILD AND YOUTH CARE CERTIFICATION BOARD





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Compiled and edited by:

Martha A. Mattingly, Ph.D., CYC-P

Assisted by

Carol Stuart, Ph.D., CYC-P

Associate Editor:

Karen VanderVen, Ph.D., CYC-P

Revised by:

CYCCB Competency Review Committee

Carol Stuart, Ph.D., CYC-P, Chair

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# HISTORY OF THE COMPETENCIES

This document is the result of many years of work by North American Child and Youth Care Professionals. Initial development was undertaken by the North American Certification Project (NACP), sponsored by the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice. Some practitioners worked directly with the data, and in drafting and editing various sections of the document. More colleagues than can be named responded with expert opinions and additional information when called upon. This document articulates the competencies necessary for fully professional practice across the various settings in which Child and Youth Care Professionals work.

In May 2007, the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) organized the Child and Youth Care Certification Board (CYCCB), an independent non-profit corporation, to oversee the implementation and further development of the professional credentialing program created by NACP. In March 2010, the Competency Review Committee of CYCCB completed a review of the competencies and recommended language changes to better reflect diverse settings and evolving practices. These changes are included in this document.

The Association for Child and Youth Care Practice accepted the original competency document at the annual meeting on October 20, 2001 in Lexington, Kentucky. The revised document was accepted in April 2010.

The Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA) and its provincial members have reviewed the competencies and determined appropriate educational prerequisites. Each provincial association determines how the competencies are recognized within that province's certification program for child and youth workers. Workers who transfer between jurisdictions should check with the relevant provincial association.

## PROJECT ORGANIZATION

The North American Certification Project (NACP) arose from a broad opinion that North American certification for Child and Youth Care Practitioners was urgently needed. This project was a joint response of:

- › Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP formerly NOCCWA)

- › Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA)
- › International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care Work (ILC)

The NACP project was under the overall leadership of David Thomas, and had three working groups:

- › **Resources**, public relations, and networking: David Thomas
- › **Competency development**: Martha A. Mattingly
- › **Structure** and implementation of the credential: Martha Holden

These organizations formally supported the NACP:

1. Academy of Child and Youth Care Professionals
2. Albert E. Trieschman Center
3. Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (formerly NOCCWA)
4. Child Welfare League of America
5. Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations (CCCYCA).
6. International Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care Work (ILC).
7. National Resource Center for Youth Services

## GUIDING FOUNDATIONS OF THE PROJECT

The project was guided by the following description of the field and guiding principles.

### Description of the Child & Youth Care field

Professional Child and Youth Care Practice focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, including those with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span. The developmental ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings.

Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centers, day and residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs.

Child and youth care practice includes assessing client and program needs, designing and implementing programs and planned environments, integrating developmental, preventive, and therapeutic requirements into the life space, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice, and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation, and advocacy.

### Guiding principles

1. **Inclusion:** All national, state, and local organizations, as well as persons concerned with setting standards for Child and Youth Care Practitioners are invited and encouraged to participate.
2. **Credibility:** The process is based on standards which are professionally recognized and established by respected assessment methods.
3. **Generic Standards:** The standards are based on standards applicable to all child and youth care practice areas.
4. **Reciprocity:** The credential is designed to support and encourage reciprocity
5. **Ethics:** The certification process and standards are based on the Standards for Practice of North American Child and Youth Care Professionals developed by the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP) and the International Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care Work (ILC). Other ethical statements can be included as the collaboration develops.

## LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION NEEDED

Discussions in a variety of professional forums have led to the conclusion that three levels of certification in Child and Youth Care Work can be considered: entry level, professional level, and advanced level. The focus of this document is the professional level.

## WORK OF THE COMPETENCY GROUP

### Clarification of the task

This was an unfunded project with all participants, who were mature practitioners and academics in the profession, volunteering their time. Documents related to standards and competency in the field were collected and reviewed (Appendix B).

The task of the domain teams partly resembled a meta-analysis. The database

reflected the wisdom of our past, but the field has changed and continues to evolve. The domain team members had an understanding of these changes and at least an educated guess about future directions. In a sense, we stood on these documents in order to look ahead.

The task was to use the documents as useful, but to also include our interpretation of meaning, fill in gaps, remove what was not useful, articulate new directions, make the language clear and direct, and establish congruence with current scholarship.

### **The process**

From the database four domains were identified: Professionalism, Applied Human Development Relationship and Communication, and Developmental Practice Methods. An additional domain, cultural and human diversity, which did not emerge from the database, was added. It is likely that culture and human diversity did not emerge from the data base since many documents were older and our discussion of culture and diversity is a more recent phenomenon.

The field of child and youth care operates within a developmental ecological perspective. As such, this perspective is also applicable to the practice of the art and science of child and youth care. The domains of practice have application in a range of contexts. Organizing the competencies into discrete elements is useful for observing, assessing, and testing specific areas and for the design of training curricula. Professional practitioners have fully integrated the attitudes, skills, and knowledge components into any action they engage in and they adjust their practice according to the context. Skills are demonstrated within a context in a manner that demonstrates the practitioner's awareness of the meaning, atmosphere, and nature of the activities in that context. Communication with a supervisor, for example, is different from communication with a youth, yet the basic skills would be described in the same manner. It is the context within which the action occurs and the integration of the appropriate attitudes and knowledge that differentiate the application. While the skills and knowledge within a particular subcategory of a domain are described in a generic manner, when they are integrated with the foundational attitudes for each contextual layer, their unique qualities emerge. It is intended that each domain be developed by the professional practitioner at the professional level through the contexts of application: self, relationship, environment, organization (system), and culture. The integrated qualities of a professional practitioner are detailed in Appendix A.

Organizing the competencies within the contexts of practice will be a future project.

## Editing

The compiled work of the domain teams contained the material needed for the competency document. This work was revised and edited by Martha Mattingly and Carol Stuart. Karen VanderVen served as an additional editor.

The draft document was posted on the ACYCP web site for comment. Comments received were considered and revisions made.

## Revisions to the Competencies

The original competency document and the professional certification program that is based upon them were developed by the North American Certification Project (NACP), a sub-committee of the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice (ACYCP). Both are owned by ACYCP. Through a licensing agreement, the competencies and certification program are made available to the professional community by the Child and Youth Care Certification Board (CYCCB), a non-profit organization formed by ACYCP to oversee the implementation of the certification program.

Recommendations for changes to the competency document are periodically made by CYCCB. These are submitted to ACYCP for review and approval before being included. A full review of the competencies will be conducted periodically to assure that the document continues to describe the field as it evolves.

In 2009 and 2010, the competency document was reviewed by the Competency Review Committee of CYCCB. This ad hoc committee was assigned the task of checking the document for language and practices that have changed over the 10 years since the original competency document was compiled. The committee included practitioners drawn from diverse settings with mature knowledge of practice within their setting. The committee focused on adjusting the competency language to better represent the wide diversity of settings within the field. Limited editing of competency descriptions was also undertaken.

The CYCCB Competency Review Committee included:

### **Carol Stuart, Ph.D., CYC-P, Chair**

Faculty, School of Child and Youth Care  
Ryerson University  
Toronto, Canada



**Pam Clark, M.S.W.**

Member, Strategic Planning Group  
National Partnership for Juvenile Services  
Columbus, Indiana

**David Connolly, CYC (Cert.), B.A.**

President, Canadian Council of Child and Youth Care Associations

**Deborah Craig, M.A.**

Director, Next Generation Coalition  
Forum for Youth Investment  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Frank Eckles, B.A., CYC-P**

Board President  
CYCCB  
College Station, Texas

**Kelly Frank, B.S.**

The Journey  
Indiana Courage to Lead  
Indianapolis, Indiana

**James Freeman, B.S.**

Training Director  
Casa Pacifica  
American Association of Children’s Residential Centers  
Camarillo, California

**Michael Gaffley, Ed.D., CYC-P**

Special Project Manager & Program Professor  
Fischler School of Education & Human Services  
Nova Southeastern University  
North Miami Beach, Florida

**Ellen S. Gannett, M.Ed.**

Director, National Institute on Out-of-School-Time  
Wellesley Center for Women  
Wellesley College  
Wellesley, Massachusetts



**John Korsmo, Ed.D., CYC-P**

Faculty, Western Washington University  
Woodring College of Education  
Bellingham, Washington

**Judy Nee, M.A.**

President & CEO  
National After School Association  
Washington, DC

**Bonnie Politz, M.P.A.**

Center for Youth Development and Policy Research  
Academy for Educational Development  
Washington, DC

**Andy Schneider-Munoz, Ed.D., CYC-P**

Vice President  
Center for Youth Development and Policy Research  
Academy for Educational Development  
Washington, DC

**Janet Wakefield, M.S.**

Director & CEO  
The Journey  
Indiana Courage to Lead  
Indianapolis, Indiana



# COMPETENCY DOCUMENT

## EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The objective of the North American Certification Project (NACP) is to set credentialing standards for North America. However, it is important to recognize that there are significant differences between the United States and Canada, particularly in relation to educational programs.

**In the United States**, the baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university will be the minimal educational requirement to engage in the certification process at the professional level. The educational requirement will be waived for an applicant who can document five years or more of experience in the field for a 7-year grandfathering period that ends December 31, 2012.

Educational standards for engaging in the certification process for Canadians will be determined by the professional child and youth care community in Canada, using the structures in place (motions passed at the ACYCP Annual meeting on November 10-11, 2000).

It was further understood, but not the subject of an ACYCP motion that the credential planning and implementation group could specify whatever specific coursework and training may be deemed appropriate. Such requirements would be for those applicants not using the waiver of the educational requirement.

**In Canada** the educational requirement to engage in the professional level will include a minimum of one of the following:

1. Diploma (2 years or more) from a program in Child and Youth Care studies at a provincially accredited college.
2. Baccalaureate degree in CYC or a related field from a provincially accredited college or university.

For a 7-year period (2006 - 2012) following the implementation of NACP certification, the educational requirement will be waived for anyone with 5 years experience who was employed as a CYC practitioner at the time of, or prior to, implementation. This period ends December 31, 2012.

## FOUNDATIONAL ATTITUDES FOR PROFESSIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK

The Child and Youth Care Professional demonstrates the following attitudes which underlie all professional work:

- › accepts the moral and ethical responsibility inherent in practice
- › promotes the well-being of children, youth and families in a context of respect and collaboration
- › values care as essential for emotional growth, social competence, rehabilitation, and treatment
- › celebrates the strengths generated from cultural and human diversity
- › values individual uniqueness
- › values family, community, culture and human diversity as integral to the developmental and interventive process
- › believes in the potential and empowerment of children, youth, family and community
- › advocates for the rights of children, youth, and families
- › promotes the contribution of professional child and youth care to society



# THE COMPETENCIES

## I. PROFESSIONALISM

Professional practitioners are generative and flexible; they are self-directed and have a high degree of personal initiative. Their performance is consistently reliable. They function effectively both independently and as a team member. Professional practitioners are knowledgeable about what constitutes a profession, and engage in professional and personal development and self-care. The professional practitioner is aware of the function of professional ethics and uses professional ethics to guide and enhance practice and advocates effectively for children, youth, families, and the profession.

### A. Foundational Knowledge

- › History, structure, organization of Child and Youth Care Work.
- › Resources and activities of CYC
- › Current and emergent trends in society, services, and in CYC
- › Structure and function of Codes of Ethics applicable to practice which includes the Code of Ethics, Standards for Practice of North American Child and Youth Care Professionals ([www.acycp.org](http://www.acycp.org))
- › Accepted boundaries in professional practice
- › Stress management and wellness practices
- › Strategies to build a professional support network
- › Significance of advocacy and an array of advocacy strategies
- › Relevant laws, regulations, legal rights and licensing procedures governing practice

### B. Professional Competencies

#### 1. Awareness of the Profession

- a. access the professional literature
- b. access information about local and national professional activities
- c. stay informed about current professional issues, future trends and challenges in one's area of special interest
- d. contribute to the ongoing development of the field

## 2. Professional Development and Behavior

- a. Value orientation
  - (1) state personal and professional values and their implications for practice including how personal and professional beliefs values and attitudes influence interactions
  - (2) state a philosophy of practice that provides guiding principles for the design, delivery, and management of services
- b. Reflection on one's practice and performance
  - (1) evaluate own performance to identify needs for professional growth
  - (2) give and receive constructive feedback
- c. Performance of organizational duties
  - (1) demonstrate productive work habits
    - (a) know and conform to workplace expectations relating to attendance, punctuality, sick and vacation time, and workload management
    - (b) personal appearance and behavior reflect an awareness of self as a professional as well as a representative of the organization
- d. Professional boundaries
  - (1) recognize and assess own needs and feelings and keeps them in perspective when professionally engaged
  - (2) model appropriate interpersonal boundaries
- e. Staying current
  - (1) keep up-to-date with developments in foundational and specialized areas of expertise
  - (2) identify and participate in education and training opportunities

## 3. Personal Development and Self Care

- a. Self awareness
  - (1) recognize personal strengths and limitations, feelings and needs
  - (2) separate personal from professional issues
- b. Self care
  - (1) incorporate 'wellness' practices into own lifestyle
  - (2) practices stress management
  - (3) build and use a support network

## 4. Professional Ethics

- a. describe the functions of professional ethics

- b. apply the process of ethical decision making in a proactive manner
- c. integrate specific principles and standards from the relevant Code of Ethics to specific professional problems
- d. carries out work tasks in a way that conforms to professional ethical principles and standards

#### 5. Awareness of Law and Regulations

- a. access and apply relevant local, state/provincial and federal laws, licensing regulations and public policy
- b. describe the legal responsibility for reporting child abuse and neglect and the consequences of failure to report
- c. describe the meaning of informed consent and its application to a specific practice setting
- d. use the proper procedures for reporting and correcting non-compliance

#### 6. Advocacy

- a. demonstrate knowledge and skills in use of advocacy
- b. access information on the rights of children, youth and families including the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child
- c. describe the rights of children youth and families in relevant setting/s and systems advocate for the rights of children, youth, and families in relevant settings and systems
- d. describe and advocate for safeguards for protection from abuse including institutional abuse
- e. describe and advocate for safeguards for protection from abuse including organizational or workplace abuse
- f. advocate for protection of children from systemic abuse, mistreatment, and exploitation

## II. CULTURAL AND HUMAN DIVERSITY

Professional practitioners actively promote respect for cultural and human diversity. The Professional Practitioner seeks self understanding and has the ability to access and evaluate information related to cultural and human diversity. Current and relevant knowledge is integrated in developing respectful and effective relationships and communication and developmental practice methods. Knowledge and skills are employed in planning, implementing and evaluating respectful programs and services, and workplaces.





## A. Foundational Knowledge

The professional practitioner is well versed in current research and theory related to cultural and human diversity including the eight major factors which set groups apart from one another, and which give individuals and groups elements of identity: age, class, race, ethnicity, levels of ability, language, spiritual belief systems, educational achievement, and gender differences.

- › Cultural structures, theories of change, and values within culture variations
- › Cross cultural communication
- › History of political, social, and economic factors which contribute to racism, stereotyping, bias and discrimination
- › Variations among families and communities of diverse backgrounds
- › Cultural and human diversity issues in the professional environment

## B. Professional Competencies

### 1. Cultural and Human Diversity Awareness and Inquiry

- a. describe own biases
- b. describe interaction between own cultural values and the cultural values of others
- c. describe own limitations in understanding and responding to cultural and human differences and seeks assistance when needed
- d. recognize and prevent stereotyping while accessing and using cultural information
- e. access, and critically evaluate, resources that advance cultural understandings and appreciation of human diversity
- f. support children, youth, families and programs in developing cultural competence and appreciation of human diversity
- g. support children, youth, families and programs in overcoming culturally and diversity based barriers to services

### 2. Relationship and Communication Sensitive to Cultural and Human Diversity

- a. adjust for the effects of age, cultural and human diversity, background, experience, and development on verbal and non-verbal communication
- b. describe the non-verbal and verbal communication between self and others (including supervisors, clients, or peer professionals)
- c. describe the role of cultural and human diversity in the development of healthy and productive relationships
- d. employ displays of affection and physical contact that reflect sensitivity for individuality, age, development, cultural and human diversity as well as



- consideration of laws, regulations, policies, and risks
- e. include consideration of cultural and human diversity in providing for the participation of families in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services impacting them
- f. give information in a manner sensitive to cultural and human diversity
- g. contribute to the maintenance of a professional environment sensitive to cultural and human diversity
- h. establish and maintain effective relationships within a team environment by:
  - 1) promoting and maintaining professional conduct; 2) negotiating and resolving conflict; 3) acknowledging and respecting cultural and human diversity; and 4) supporting team members

### 3. Developmental Practice Methods Sensitive to Cultural and Human Diversity

- a. integrate cultural and human diversity understandings and sensitivities in a broad range of circumstances
- b. design and implement programs and planned environments, which integrate developmental, preventive, and/or therapeutic objectives into the life space, through the use of methodologies and techniques sensitive to cultural and human diversity
  - (1) provide materials sensitive to multicultural and human diversity
  - (2) provide an environment that celebrates the array of human diversity in the world through the arts, diversity of personnel, program materials, etc.
  - (3) recognize and celebrate particular calendar events which are culturally specific
  - (4) encourage the sharing of such culture specific events among members of the various cultural groups
- c. design and implement group work, counseling, and behavioral guidance with sensitivity to the client's individuality, age, development, and culture and human diversity
- d. demonstrate an understanding of sensitive cultural and human diversity practice in setting appropriate boundaries and limits on behavior, including risk management decisions

## III. APPLIED HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings. Special attention is given to the every

day lives of children and youth, including those at risk and with special needs, within the family, neighborhood, school and larger social-cultural context. Professional practitioners integrate current knowledge of human development with the skills, expertise, objectivity and self awareness essential for developing, implementing and evaluating effective programs and services.

### **A. Foundational Knowledge**

The professional practitioner is well versed in current research and theory in human development with an emphasis on a developmental-ecological perspective.

- › Life Span Human Development
- › Child/Adolescent Development (as appropriate for the arena of practice), including domains of
  - › Cognitive Development
  - › Social-emotional Development
  - › Physiological Development
  - › Psycho-sexual Development
  - › Spiritual Development
- › Exceptionality in Development including at-risk and special needs circumstances such as trauma, child abuse/neglect, developmental psychopathology, and developmental disorders
- › Family Development, Systems and Dynamics

### **B. Professional Competencies**

#### **1. Contextual-Developmental Assessment**

- a. assess different domains of development across various contexts
- b. evaluate the developmental appropriateness of environments with regard to the individual needs of clients
- c. assess client and family needs in relation to community opportunities, resources, and supports

#### **2. Sensitivity to Contextual Development in Relationships and Communication**

- a. adjust for the effects of age, culture, background, experience, and developmental status on verbal and non-verbal communication
- b. communicate with the client in a manner which is developmentally sensitive and that reflects the clients' developmental strengths and needs
  - (1) recognize the influence of the child/youth's relationship history on the development of current relationships
  - (2) employ displays of affection and physical contact that reflect sensitivity

- for individuality, age, development, cultural and human diversity as well as consideration of laws, regulations, policies, and risks
- (3) respond to behavior while encouraging and promoting several alternatives for the healthy expression of needs and feelings
- c. give accurate developmental information in a manner that facilitates growth
- d. partner with family in goal setting and designing developmental supports and interventions
- e. assist clients (to a level consistent with their development, abilities and receptiveness) to access relevant information about legislation / regulations, policies / standards, as well as additional supports and services

### **3. Practice Methods that are Sensitive to Development and Context**

- a. support development in a broad range of circumstances in different domains and contexts
- b. design and implement programs and planned environments including activities of daily living, which integrate developmental, preventive, and/or therapeutic objectives into the life space through the use of developmentally sensitive methodologies and techniques
- c. individualize plans to reflect differences in culture/human diversity, background, temperament, personality and differential rates of development across the domains of human development
- d. design and implement group work, counseling, and behavioral guidance, with sensitivity to the client's individuality, age, development, and culture
- e. employ developmentally sensitive expectations in setting appropriate boundaries and limits
- f. create and maintain a safe and growth promoting environment
- g. make risk management decisions that reflect sensitivity for individuality, age, development, culture and human diversity, while also insuring a safe and growth promoting environment

### **4. Access Resources That Support Healthy Development**

- a. locate and critically evaluate resources which support healthy development
- b. empower clients, and programs in gaining resources which support healthy development

## IV. RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

Practitioners recognize the critical importance of relationships and communication in the practice of quality child and youth care. Ideally, the service provider and client work in a collaborative manner to achieve growth and change. 'Quality first' practitioners develop genuine relationships based on empathy and positive regard. They are skilled at clear communication, both with clients and with other professionals. Observations and records are objective and respectful of their clients. Relationship and communication are considered in the context of the immediate environment and its conditions; the policy and legislative environment; and the historical and cultural environment of the child, youth or family with which the practitioner interacts.

### A. Foundational Knowledge

- › Characteristics of helping relationships
- › Characteristics of healthy interpersonal relationships
- › Cultural differences in communication styles
- › Developmental differences in communication
- › Communication theory (verbal and non-verbal)
- › Group dynamics and teamwork theory
- › Family dynamics and communication patterns, including attachment theory as it relates to communication style

### B. Professional Competencies

#### 1. Interpersonal Communication

- a. adjust for the effects of age, cultural and human diversity, background, experience, and development of verbal and non-verbal communication
- b. demonstrate a variety of effective verbal and non-verbal communications skills including
  - (1) use of silence
  - (2) appropriate non-verbal communication
  - (3) active listening
  - (4) empathy and reflection of feelings
  - (5) questioning skills
  - (6) use of door openers to invite communication, and paraphrasing and summarization to promote clear communication
  - (7) awareness and avoidance of communication roadblocks
- c. recognize when a person may be experiencing problems in communication due to individual or cultural and human diversity history, and help clarify the meaning of that communication and to resolve misunderstandings

- d. assist clients (to a level consistent with their development, abilities and receptiveness) to receive relevant information about legislation/regulations, policies/ standards, and supports pertinent to the focus of service
- e. provide for the participation of children/ youth and families in the planning, implementation and evaluation of service impacting them
- f. set appropriate boundaries and limits on the behavior using clear and respectful communication
- g. verbally and non-verbally de-escalate crisis situations in a manner that protects dignity and integrity

## 2. Relationship Development

- a. assess the quality of relationships in an ongoing process of self reflection about the impact of the self in relationship in order to maintain a full presence and an involved, strong, and healthy relationship
- b. form relationships through contact, communication, appreciation, shared interests, attentiveness, mutual respect, and empathy
- c. demonstrate the personal characteristics that foster and support relationship development
- d. ensure that, from the beginning of the relationship, applicable procedures regarding confidentiality, consent for release of information, and record keeping are explained and clearly understood by the parent/caregiver and by the child, as appropriate to his/her developmental age. Follow those procedures in a caring and respectful manner
- e. develop relationships with children, youth and families that are caring, purposeful, goal-directed and rehabilitative in nature; limiting these relationships to the delivery of specific services
- f. set, maintain, and communicate appropriate personal and professional boundaries
- g. assist clients to identify personal issues and make choices about the delivery of service
- h. model appropriate interpersonal interactions while handling the activities and situation of the life-space
- i. use structure, routines, and activities to promote effective relationships
- j. encourage children, youth and families to contribute to programs, services, and support movements that affect their lives by sharing authority and responsibility
- k. develop and communicate an informed understanding of social trends, social change and social institutions. Demonstrate an understanding of how social



issues affect relationships between individuals, groups, and societies

- l. identify community standards and expectations for behavior that enable children, youth and families to maintain existing relationships in the community

### **3. Family Communication**

- a. identify relevant systems/components and describe the relationships, rules and roles in the child/youth's social systems and develop connections among the people in various social systems
- b. recognize the influence of the child's relationship history and help the child develop productive ways of relating to family and peers
- c. encourage children and families to share folklore and traditions related to family and cultural background. Employ strategies to connect children to their life history and relationships
- d. support parents to develop skills and attitudes which will help them to experience positive and healthy relationships with their children/youth

### **4. Teamwork and Professional Communication Skills**

- a. establish and maintain effective relationships within a team environment by: promoting and maintaining professional conduct; negotiating and resolving conflict; acknowledging individual differences; and, supporting team members
- b. explain and maintain appropriate boundaries with professional colleagues
- c. assume responsibility for collective duties and decisions including responding to team member feedback
- d. use appropriate professional language in communication with other team members, consult with other team members to reach consensus on major decisions regarding services for children and youth and families
- e. build cohesion among team members through active participation in team-building initiatives
- f. collect, analyze and present information in written and oral form by selecting and recording information according to identified needs, agency policies and guidelines. Accurately record relevant interactions and issues in the relationship
- g. plan, organize, and evaluate interpersonal communications according to the identified need, context, goal of communication, laws/regulations, and ethics and involved. Choose an appropriate format, material, language, and style suitable to the audience
- h. acknowledge and respect other disciplines in program planning, communi-



- cation and report writing using multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Communicate the expertise of the profession to the team
- i. establish and maintain a connection, alliance, or association with other service providers for the exchange or information and to enhance the quality of service
  - j. deliver effective oral and written presentations to a professional audience.
  - k. demonstrate proficiency in using information technology for communication, information access, and decision-making

## V. DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE METHODS

Practitioners recognize the critical importance of developmental practice methods focused in CYC practice: Genuine Relationships, Health and Safety, Intervention Planning, Environmental Design and Maintenance, Program Planning and Activity Programming, Activities of Daily Living, Group Work, Counseling, Behavioral Guidance, Family (Caregiver) Engagement, Community Engagement. These are designed to promote optimal development for children, youth, and families including those at-risk and with special needs within the context of the family, community and the lifespan.

### A. Foundational Knowledge

- › Health and safety
- › Intervention theory and design
- › Environmental design
- › Program planning and Activity Programming including
  - developmental rationales
  - basic strategies of program planning
  - specific developmental outcomes expected as a result of participating in activities
  - principles of activity programming, e.g. activity analysis, adaptation, strategies for involving youth in activities
  - relationship of developmental processes to the activities of daily living (eating, grooming, hygiene, sleeping and rest)
  - the significance of play activities
  - community resources for connecting children, youth and families with activity and recreational programs
- › Behavioral Guidance methods including conflict resolution, crisis management, life space interviewing
- › Behavior Management methods
- › Counseling Skills



- › Understanding and Working with Groups
- › Understanding and Working with Families
- › Understanding and Working with Communities

## **B. Professional Competencies**

### **1. Genuine Relationships**

- a. recognize the critical importance of genuine relationships based on empathy and positive regard in promoting optimal development for children, youth, and families (as fully described in Section III)
- b. forming, maintaining and building upon such relationships as a central change strategy

### **2. Health and Safety**

- a. environmental safety
  - (1) participate effectively in emergency procedures in a specific practice setting and carry them out in a developmentally appropriate manner
  - (2) incorporate environmental safety into the arrangement of space, the storage of equipment and supplies and the design and implementation of activities
- b. health
  - (1) access the health and safety regulations applicable to a specific practice setting, including laws/ regulations related to disability
  - (2) use current health, hygiene and nutrition practices to support health development and prevent illness
  - (3) discuss health related information with children, youth and families as appropriate to a specific practice setting
- c. medications
  - (1) access current information on medications taken by clients in a specific practice site
  - (2) describe the medication effects relevant to practice
  - (3) describe the rules and procedures for storage and administration of medication in a specific practice site, and participate as appropriate
- d. infectious diseases
  - (1) access current information on infectious diseases of concern in a specific practice setting
  - (2) describe the components relevant to practice
  - (3) employ appropriate infection control practices





### **3. Intervention planning**

- a. assess strengths and needs
- b. plan goals and activities which take agency mission and group objectives, individual histories and interests into account
- c. encourage child/youth and family participation in assessment and goal setting in intervention planning and the development of individual plans
- d. integrate client empowerment and support of strengths into conceptualizing and designing interventions
- e. develop and present a theoretical/empirical rationale for a particular intervention or approach
- f. select and apply an appropriate planning model
- g. select appropriate goals or objectives from plans, and design activities, interactions, and management methods that support plans in an appropriate way
- h. work with client and team to assess and monitor progress and revise plan as needed

### **4. Environmental Design and Maintenance**

- a. recognize the messages conveyed by environment
- b. design and maintain planned environments which integrate developmental, preventive, and interventive requirements into the living space, through the use of developmentally and culturally sensitive methodologies and techniques
- c. arrange space, equipment and activities in the environment to promote participation and prosocial behavior, and to meet program goals
- d. involve children, youth and families appropriately in space design, and maintenance

### **5. Program Planning and Activity Programming**

- a. connect own childhood activity experiences and skills, and adult interests and skills, to current work
- b. teach skills in several different domains of leisure activity
- c. assist clients in identifying and developing their strengths through activities and other experiences
- d. design and implement programs and activities which integrate age, developmental, preventive, and/or interventive requirements and sensitivity to culture and diversity
- e. design and implement challenging age, developmentally, and cultural and human diversity appropriate activity programs
  - (1) perform an activity analysis

- (2) assess clients interests, knowledge of and skill level in various activities
- (3) promotes clients participation in activity planning
- (4) select and obtain resources necessary to conduct a particular activity or activity program
- (5) perform ongoing (formative) and outcome (summative) evaluation of specific activities and activity programs
- f. adapt activities for particular individuals or groups
- g. locate and critically evaluate community resources for programs and activities and connect children, youth, and families to them

## 6. Activities of Daily Living

- a. integrate client's need for dignity, positive public image, nurturance, choice, self-management, and privacy into activities of daily living
- b. design and implement, and support family members and caregivers to implement, activities of daily living, which integrate age, developmental, preventive, and/or interventive requirements and sensitivity to culture and diversity
  - (1) age and cultural and human diversity appropriate clothing
  - (2) pleasant and inviting eating times that encourage positive social interaction
  - (3) age and developmentally appropriate rest opportunities
  - (4) clean and well maintained bathroom facilities that allow age and developmentally appropriate privacy and independence
  - (5) personal space adequate for safe storage of personal belongings and for personal expression through decorations that do not exceed reasonable propriety
- c. design and maintain inviting, hygienic and well maintained physical environments and equipment and supplies which positively support daily activities
- d. encourage client development of skills in activities of daily living
  - (1) personal hygiene and grooming skills
  - (2) developing and maintaining of areas related to daily living e.g. maintaining living space, preparing and serving meals, cleanup
  - (3) socially appropriate behavior in activities of daily living; respecting other's privacy, expected grooming and dress for various occasions

## 7. Group Process

- a. assess the group development and dynamics of a specific group of children and youth

- b. use group process to promote program, group, and individual goals
- c. facilitate group sessions around specific topics/issues related to the needs of children/youth
- d. mediate in group process issues

### **8. Counseling**

- a. recognize the importance of relationships as a foundation for counseling with children, youth and families. (as fully described in Section III, Relationships and Communication)
- b. has self awareness and uses oneself appropriately in counseling activities
- c. able to assess a situation in the milieu or in individual interaction and select the appropriate medium and content for counseling
- d. able to make appropriate inquiry to determine meaning of a particular situation to a child
- e. assist other adults, staff, parents and caregivers in learning and implementing appropriate behavioral support and instruction
- f. employ effective problem solving and conflict resolution skills

### **9. Behavioral Guidance**

- a. assess client behavior including its meaning to the client
- b. design behavioral guidance around level of clients understanding
- c. assess the strengths and limitations of behavioral management methods
- d. employ selected behavioral management methods, where deemed appropriate
- e. assist other adults, staff, and parent and caregivers in learning and implementing appropriate behavioral guidance techniques and plans
- f. give clear, coherent and consistent expectations; sets appropriate boundaries
- g. evaluate and disengage from power struggles
- h. employ genuine relationship to promote positive behavior
- i. employ developmental and cultural/diversity understandings to promote positive behavior
- j. employ planned environment and activities to promote positive behavior
- k. employ at least one method of conflict resolution
- l. employ principles of crisis management
  - (1) describe personal response to crisis situations
  - (2) describe personal strengths and limitations in responding to crisis situations



- (3) take self protective steps to avoid unnecessary risks and confrontations
- (4) dress appropriately to the practice setting
- (5) employ a variety of interpersonal and verbal skills to defuse a crisis
- (6) describe the principles of physical interventions appropriate to the setting
- (7) conduct a life space interview or alternative reflective debriefing

#### **10. Family (Caregiver) Engagement**

- a. communicate effectively with family members
- b. partner with family in goal setting and designing and implementing developmental supports and/or interventions
- c. identify client and family needs for community resources and supports
- d. support family members in accessing and utilizing community resources
- e. advocate for and with family to secure and/or maintain proper services

#### **11. Community Engagement**

- a. access up to date information about service systems, support and advocacy resources, and community resources, laws, regulations, and public policy
- b. develop and sustain collaborative relationships with organizations and people
- c. facilitate client contact with relevant community agencies



# Appendix A

## A FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATING ATTITUDES, SKILLS, AND KNOWLEDGE

Competence as a practitioner arises from the integration of the attitudes, skills and knowledge described in this document into the contexts in which Child and Youth Care (CYC) practice occurs. Organizing the competencies into subcategories within each domain is useful for observing, assessing, and testing specific areas and for the design of training curricula. Professional practitioners though, engaged in quality practice, have fully integrated the attitudes, skills, and knowledge components into any action they engage in and they adjust their practice according to the context that they are in. This section presents a three-dimensional framework to develop competency beyond entry level and the first professional level of practice to advanced practice. Quality practice with fully integrated attitudes, skills, and knowledge occurs across the domains of practice in which the skills have been previously described and is performed in depth through five layers of context.

### KNOWLEDGE

The knowledge foundation for each domain is described previously. These areas of knowledge provide the background depth for the demonstration of practice in multiple contexts. Through the demonstration of skills, knowledge is applied in a manner that integrates theory and fact with experiential knowing and foundational values and attitudes. This integration results in high quality practice as knowledge deepens and is applied to many and varied problems. Mature practitioners recognize that theories and facts have multiple applications. Developmental theory explains not just the behavior of a child or youth but also the behavior of a co-worker or the way components of an agency relate to each other.

### CONTEXTS FOR PRACTICE

Knowledge areas are relatively discrete for each domain of practice but cross the layers or contexts in which practice occurs. Skills are demonstrated within a context in a manner that demonstrates the practitioner's awareness of the unique meaning, atmosphere, and nature of the activities in that context. While the skills and knowledge within a particular subcategory of a domain are described in a generic manner, when they are integrated with the foundational attitudes that define each contextual layer, their unique qualities emerge.

An ethical decision making process is applied to a decision about whether to report

evidence of neglect of a child during a visit with a family. In the practice milieu of family support, or supervised access; the meaning of making a report; the number of people and the nature of the effect of the report; and the activities and responsibilities of the CYC are specific to 1 or 2 children and their parents. A similar ethical decision making process is applied to a decision about whether to report licensing violations in a foster home or after school care visited by a CYC. In the context of this organizational system though the meaning of making a report; the number of people and the nature of the effects are potentially much broader and involve more people. The application of the skills of the ethical decision making process in each circumstance is different. A mature practitioner at the advanced level of practice brings a more integrated application of knowledge and attitudes to the skill of ethical decision-making, accounts for more variables in the process, and may well arrive at a decision faster and with greater clarity.

Similarly, developing a relationship and communicating with a supervisor, for example, is different from communication with a youth, yet the basic skills could be described in the same manner. It is the context within which the action occurs and the integration of the appropriate attitudes and knowledge that differentiate the application of these skills.

There are five contexts within which quality practice occurs. These contexts may occur simultaneously or distinctly.

1. The Self
2. Relationships
3. The Practice Milieu
4. The Organizational System
5. Culture

Each layer has a set of foundational attitudes that cross all of the domains of practice. The nature of each layer and the boundaries of its context are described below, followed by a depiction of the integrated framework in three-dimensional form. Following this is a brief description of the nature of integrated quality practice in each of the intersections of the domains of practice with the contexts of practice.

## **THE SELF**

Within the context of the self, practice focuses on the use of self as a mediator of knowledge and skills. Practitioners have insight into the factors of their own development, the impact of self factors on practice interventions, and the dialectic

tension between using one's personhood in relationships and their inter-personal communication with a client. They are aware of and act on the limiting effect of professional client boundaries on the relationship. They are aware of their culture and its impact on their day to day practice and have a sense of identity as a professional. Foundational to Child and Youth Care is the use of self, but to make effective use of self in practice one must first be aware of and able to articulate the nature of the self.

## RELATIONSHIPS

In the context of relationship, practice focuses on the form and nature of interpersonal relations, both with clients and with other practitioners. Practitioners actively develop relationships with others through communication and shared activities. They are conscious of the process of relationship development and actively consider how the psycho-social developmental status and culture of the other person and their own developmental history and culture influence the nature of any particular relationship. They are clear about the nature of personal and professional boundaries with clients and co-workers and respectful of the professional needs of others. All practice methods are implemented using the interpersonal relationship as a foundation from which development occurs.

## MILIEU

The milieu is the central context within which Child and Youth Care practice occurs. The milieu is used to enhance the developmental trajectory of children, youth, and families that participate in it. In this context, practitioners are aware of the environment and the multiple interactions and activities occurring within that environment. They arrange environmental factors to offer quality care and plan their communication with an awareness of the activities of the milieu and the nature of interpersonal relationships within it. They are able to integrate individual members of the milieu into a group culture. They demonstrate professional behavior reflective of the nature of their practice setting. Practice milieus encompass many different settings as outlined by the current description of the field:

*Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centers, day and residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs.*

## THE ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM

Child and Youth Care practice occurs within the context of an agency or organizational system. Skilled practitioners understand the nature of the system and its influence on their practice and work to influence the system so that it offers quality service to all clients. They interpret policy, procedures, and legislation according to the nature of the developmental status of their clients. Professional communication follows but is not limited by the system requirements. The planning and implementation of practice methods take into consideration the nature of the system and its philosophical standpoint. Skilled practitioners integrate the culture of the organization, their own culture, that of their clients, and their co-workers by respecting difference and negotiating a common understanding of right and wrong within this context.

## CULTURE

Culture is not just centered in race or ethnicity, but includes the social and political norms, values, morals, faith, language, and socio-economic status of a group of people with a common history. Culture is both a domain of practice and a context within which practice occurs. In the context of culture, skilled practitioners bridge cultural differences through communication and respect for individuals and groups. They actively seek an understanding how culture influences the developmental history of persons and how that may diverge from their own referential framework for culture. Skilled practitioners recognize and adopt a professional culture, without forsaking their own personal culture. In the nexus of culture as a domain of practice and culture as a context for practice, differences are bridged across all other contexts (layers) of practice.

## A RELATIONAL DATABASE FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE SKILLS

The skill competencies outlined previously can be re-organized in a manner that offers an integrated picture of skills, attitudes and knowledge. This type of organization is useful for determining training curricula that facilitate transfer of learning to the workplace, where such skilled integration is required in every interaction the practitioner has with a child, youth or family. The skill competencies can be organized according to sub-categories in the domains in the foregoing document, but each competency could also be identified as belonging to a particular context for practice. As such, they can be re-organized, if desired, into contextual layers of practice. This organization may assist in our using the competency organization of this document to develop application to entry level and professional level practitioners. A professional practitioner might demonstrate skills in all of these contexts. A beginning practitioner may only have skills in the first 3 contexts.



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For additional information, please contact us at:

CYC Certification Board Office  
1701 Southwest Parkway, Suite 113  
College Station, Texas 77840

email: [passageh2h@aol.com](mailto:passageh2h@aol.com)

office: (979) 764-7306

fax: (979) 764-7307

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