

Professional Direct Care Worker (DCW) Competency Requirements/Guidelines

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1. Understanding the Role of a DCW

The DCW understands and demonstrates the importance, role and scope of practice of the DCW profession and their rights and responsibilities as a DCW to master all needed competencies, uphold high professional and ethical standards, abide by agency, legal and *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996* (HIPAA) rules, support care coordination, participate in teams and organizational life, and protect participant rights across all work settings.

2. Professionalism and Ethics

The DCW works in a professional and ethical manner, maintaining confidentiality and respecting individual and family rights.

Skill Statements

The DCW

- a. *Follows relevant laws, regulations and is guided by ethical standards when doing work tasks.*
- b. *Supports the individual in a collaborative manner, respects and honors individual values and preferences, and maintains professional boundaries.*
- c. *Shows professionalism by being on time, dressing appropriately for the job, communicating respectfully, and being responsible in all work tasks.*
- d. *Seeks to reduce personal stress and improve wellness.*
- e. *Respects the individual's and their family's right to privacy, respect, and dignity.*
- f. *Maintains confidentiality in all spoken and written communication and follows the HIPAA rules.*

3. Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

The DCW understands that person-centered supports and services are based on building trusting, safe relationships, uses person-centered practices, assists individuals/families to make choices and plan goals, and provides support to help individuals achieve goals based on their values, preferences, beliefs, cultures, etc.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. *Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of person-centered thinking and how to apply them.*
- b. *Provides support using a person-centered approach that helps individuals achieve their goals.*
- c. *Assists the supports and services team in developing person-centered supports and services plans.*
- d. *Works in partnership with the individual and the supports and services team to track progress toward goals and adjust services as needed, and as desired by the individual.*
- e. *Observes and reviews information about an individual relevant to providing quality services, including questions and concerns expressed by family members, and reports these observations to the supports and services team.*

4. Communication

The DCW builds trust and productive relationships with individuals, family members, co-workers and others through respectful and clear verbal and written communications.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. Uses positive and respectful verbal, non-verbal, and written communication in a way that can be understood by the individual, and actively listens and responds in a respectful, caring manner. Assists in seeking appropriate services when language or communication challenges exist.*
- b. Explains services and service terms to the individual being supported and their family members.*
- c. Communicates with the individual and their family in a respectful and linguistically and culturally appropriate way.*
- d. Communicates with supervisor, if needed.*
- e. Communicates effectively with other members of the support team.*
- f. Understands professional boundaries and how to communicate them effectively.*
- g. Recognizes the role of assistive technology in supporting an individual's ability to communicate effectively.*
- h. Is familiar with a range of effective communication strategies (picture boards, gestures, tablets, etc.) and skills, and effectively uses whatever strategies the individual is most comfortable with to establish a collaborative relationship with the individual.*

5. Evaluation and Observation

The DCW closely monitors an individual's physical and emotional health, gathers information about the individual, and communicates observations to the *supports and services* team to guide services.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. Helps with the assessment process by gathering information about the individual and family, through observing and listening to relevant and appropriate sources.*
- b. Provides examples of changes in an individual's physical health, behavioral health, and substance use and how they interrelate.*
- c. Uses the results of assessments to respond, i.e. discuss goals and options with the individual, and supports and services team, if needed, and provide appropriate support within agency guidelines. If self-directed, support will be provided within guidelines established with the individual and/or family.*
- d. Assess the individual's satisfaction with services through observing, listening and relaying appropriate information to the supports and services team to adjust the supports plan, as needed.*
- e. Observes the health and behavior of the individual within their cultural context.*
- f. Evaluates environmental factors that need to be adjusted when an individual appears overwhelmed, frustrated, angry, upset, lonely or bored.*

6. Crisis Prevention and Intervention

The DCW identifies risks and behaviors that can lead to a crisis and uses effective strategies to prevent or intervene in the crisis in collaboration with others.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. Understand the signs and symptoms of potential risks or situations that can lead to a crisis.*
- b. Understands how to respond to different types of risk within boundaries of the profession, supports and services plan, and agency guidelines, if applicable.*

- c. *Recognizes risk, reports it to a supervisor if applicable, and works to prevent an individual's crisis in a way that meets the individual's needs and honors their preferences as much as possible.*
- d. *Remains calm and able to make clear-headed, appropriate decisions to address different situations.*
- e. *Uses positive behavior supports to prevent crisis and promote health and safety.*
- f. *Uses approved intervention approaches to resolve a crisis.*
- g. *Seeks help from other staff or services during a crisis, when needed.*
- h. *Monitors situations and communicates with the individual, family and support team to reduce risk.*
- i. *Reports incidents according to agency, individual and/or family policies.*
- j. *Sees own potential role within a conflict or crisis and changes behavior to prevent and minimize conflict through prevention methods such as stress management, strategies to diffuse situations, etc.*
- k. *Understands the effectiveness of proactive planning and strategies in minimizing challenging interactions and environmental conditions that may lead to distress or crisis situations.*

7. Safety

The DCW is attentive to signs of abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation and follows procedures for mandated reports to protect an individual from such harm. The DCW helps people to avoid unsafe situations and uses appropriate procedures to assure safety during emergency situations.

Skill Statements related to Abuse, Neglect, and Financial Exploitation

The DCW:

- a. *Demonstrates the ability to identify, prevent, and report situations of abuse (physical, psychological, sexual), neglect, and financial exploitation, according to laws and agency rules.*
- b. *Recognizes signs of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation, including the inappropriate use of restraints, and works to prevent all forms of abuse.*
- c. *Understands that DCWs are mandatory reporters.*
- d. *Understands who to report suspected abuse to.*
- e. *Knows agency policies, if applicable, related to reporting abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.*
- f. *Understands own role in possible abuse, neglect and exploitation and takes measures to prevent it, i.e. knows and uses time and stress management strategies, co-worker support, etc.*

Skill Statements related to Emergency Preparedness

The DCW:

- a. *Maintains the safety of an individual in the case of an emergency according to their values and preferences and within agency guidelines, if applicable.*
- b. *Helps individuals to be safe and learn to be safe in the community.*
- c. *Uses universal precautions and gives first aid as needed in an emergency.*
- d. *Knows when to call 911.*
- e. *Knows and uses recognized best practice body mechanics.*
- f. *Identifies and implements appropriate responses to health changes including life-threatening emergencies such as seizure care for different types of seizure activity, non-emergency health threatening conditions, and other minor health changes.*
- g. *Identifies and implements appropriate responses to changes in mental status, level of consciousness, and changes in mood and behavior.*
- h. *Identifies when and how to implement appropriate responses for substance use (prescriptions,*

controlled medications, over the counter/non-prescription medications, legal and illegal drugs, alcohol, household chemicals/products}.

- i. Knows the fundamentals of infection control, bloodborne pathogens, and use of durable medical equipment and personal protective equipment, and uses proper procedures within agency guidelines, if applicable.*

8. Participant Empowerment & Advocacy

The DCW provides advocacy and empowers and assists individuals to advocate for what they need and value in life.

Skill Statements

The DCW

- a. Encourages the individual to set goals, make informed choices, and follow-through on responsibilities within the boundaries of the role of the DCW and agency policies if agency employed.*
- b. Supports individuals to advocate for themselves by encouraging individuals to speak for themselves.*
- c. Supports the individual to get needed services, supports and resources.*
- d. Supports the individual in living a meaningful life according to their preferences and values.*
- e. Is aware of the individual's and family's rights and how they are protected.*

9. Health and Wellness

The DCW plays a vital role in supporting individuals to achieve and maintain good physical, mental, social, and emotional health essential to their well-being.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. Demonstrates a basic understanding of body systems and normal and pathological changes with aging (physical, mental, social, etc.).*
- b. Demonstrates a basic understanding of common mental illnesses, and intellectual and developmental disabilities.*
- c. Demonstrates a basic understanding of the different types of dementia and appropriate strategies for supporting an individual with dementia and his or her family.*
- d. Demonstrates a basic understanding of grief and loss.*
- e. Demonstrates a basic understanding of trauma across the lifespan including, but not limited to, the individualized nature of trauma, trauma triggers, conditions when re-traumatization may occur, how to minimize trauma triggers and effects of trauma, the six key principles of trauma, and secondary trauma.*
- f. Supports the spiritual, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing of the individual.*
- g. Recognizes the importance of feeling physically and emotionally safe and the effects on building trusting relationships*
- h. Demonstrates knowledge about how to build safe and trusting relationships with those supported, co-workers, families and professional colleagues.*
- i. Assists the individual in taking medication while following all laws and safety rules.*
- j. Accurately measures and records vital signs if needed, trained, and administratively authorized.*
- k. Assists the individual to learn disease prevention and maintain good health.*
- l. Identifies the key components of infectious disease control, including the chain of infection.*
- m. Assists the individual to use infection control procedures and prevent illness.*
- n. Helps the individual make and keep regular health and dental appointments, within the boundaries of the role of a DCW.*

- o. Helps the individual follow health care plans and use medical equipment as needed.*
- p. Helps the individual learn the signs of common health problems and take actions to improve health.*
- q. Demonstrates and uses recognized best practice body mechanics.*
- r. Demonstrates high-level, creative problem-solving skills.*

10. Independent Living Skills and Supports

The DCW helps individuals to manage personal and household tasks that are necessary on a day-to-day basis to pursue an independent, community-based lifestyle.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. Assists individuals to meet their physical and personal care needs (i.e. activities of daily living such as going to the bathroom, bathing, grooming), builds on their individual strengths and capabilities, and provides guidance and coaching, if needed, within the role of the DCW.*
- b. Assists individuals with household tasks (i.e. instrumental activities of daily living such as laundry, shopping, cleaning) to maximize their abilities and independence.*
- c. Assists individuals to learn about meal planning and shopping, and safe food preparation.*
- d. Provides person-centered support and helps individuals build on their strengths in life activities.*
- e. Supports daily routines that encourage health lifestyles and choices as indicated in the plan of supports and services, including but not limited to ADLs, seasonal health concerns and regular health maintenance.*
- f. Supports individuals in the management of chronic health conditions as indicated in the plan of supports and services, including but not limited to hypertension, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, obesity, risks to changes in skin condition, and chronic pain.*

Skill Statements related to Medication Monitoring and Administration

- a. Understands the role of medications within the service delivery and support process.*
- b. Supports, assists, and monitors individuals in taking their own medications.*
- c. Knows the basics and location of medication policy and procedures.*
- d. Knows medication preparation tasks as applicable to setting and individual needs as indicated in their supports and services plan.*
- e. Provides positive examples of supporting independence through medication monitoring.*
- f. Demonstrates proper documentation related to medication monitoring.*
- g. Administers medication if needed by the individual and if trained and legally and administratively authorized.*

11. Interpersonal and Family Relationships, Community Inclusion and Networking

The DCW helps individuals to be a part of the community through valued roles and relationships and assists with major transitions that occur in community life.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. Is knowledgeable about the formal and informal supports available in the community and assists the individual to identify and gain access to such supports.*
- b. Encourages and assists individuals in connecting with others and developing valued social and/or work roles based on respect and their personal choices.*
- c. Supports individuals to connect with friends and to live and be included in the community of their choice.*
- d. Uses human connectedness to enhance an individual's skills and abilities.*

- e. *Identifies coping skills that can support the foundation of supportive/trusting relationships including responses to trauma.*
- f. *Recognizes power struggles and support staff role in reducing stressors.*
- g. *Helps individuals transition between services and adapt to life changes, including moving into home and community based settings.*
- h. *Respects the role of family members in planning and providing services.*

12. Cultural Competency

The DCW respects cultural differences and provides services and supports that honor individual preferences.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. *Provides or accesses services that fit with the individuals' culture or preferences.*
- b. *Seeks to learn about different cultures to provide better support and services.*
- c. *Recognizes own biases and does not let them interfere in work relationships.*
- d. *Respects the cultural needs and preferences of each individual.*
- e. *Assists individuals to find social, learning, and recreational opportunities valued in their culture.*

13. Education, Training and Self-Development

The DCW obtains and maintains existing certifications and seeks opportunities to improve their skills and work practices through further education and training.

Skill Statements

The DCW:

- a. *Completes required training and continues to develop skills and seek certification.*
- b. *Completes required advanced, population- or agency-specific training if needed, such as:*
 - i. *Trauma Informed Care including, but not limited to, the impact of trauma on children, ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) assessment scores, resiliency skills, and key principles of trauma recovery.*
 - ii. *Medication Administration*
 - iii. *Advanced Infection Control*
 - iv. *Vital Signs*
- c. *Seeks feedback from many sources and uses to improve work performance and skills.*
- d. *Complies with current code and agency policies related to continuing education, if applicable.*
- e. *Learns and stays current with technology used for documentation, communication, and other work activities.*
- f. *Understands the need for self-care, especially related to conditions DCWs may face including but not limited to grief, burnout and secondary trauma.*

14. Documentation

The DCW is aware of the requirements for documentation in their organization and is able to manage these requirements efficiently.

Skill Statements – The DCW

- a. *Identifies required documentation and records all health care related observations, changes in health circumstances, and staff actions in response to health needs in appropriate location(s) (e.g. progress notes, incident reports, seizure log, etc.).*
- b. *Understands how to record and report observations, changes in health status, and staff responses in descriptive, objective terms.*

- c. Maintains accurate records and reports all relevant data to appropriate sources in a timely fashion.*
- d. Maintains standards of confidentiality and ethical practice.*
- e. Learns and remains current with documentation systems, sets priorities, and develops an effective system to manage documentation and technologies.*

15. Organizational Participation

The DCW is familiar with the mission and practices of the support organization and participates in the life of the organization.