

THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF PARENT SUPPORT PROVIDERS

The Parent Support Provider field is quickly evolving and becoming more complex and sophisticated. With the emergence of national certification from the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, the current standard of practice has been translated into the following summary of core competencies. The purpose of this brief is to provide a description of the minimal competencies as understood at this point in the evolution of Parent Support Providers and their work.

IDENTIFYING THE CORE COMPETENCIES

The core competencies described in this brief were derived from job descriptions of individuals currently working in the United States providing parent-to-parent support and advocacy for the families who have a child or youth with emotional, developmental, behavioral, substance use, or mental health challenges. Collection and analysis of these job descriptions began in 2007. The direct consensus method established the competencies needed in the field in December 2010. A DACUM job task analysis was completed in June 2011 and a national survey of knowledge, tasks, and abilities in September 2011. The knowledge and skills necessary to carry out these tasks have been incorporated in the development of the national examination for Parent Support Providers.

Additional competencies may be desirable for Parent Support Providers in specific settings, such as when Parent Support Providers are imbedded in schools, child welfare, juvenile justice, residential treatment, or health clinics.

THE SERVICES OF PARENT SUPPORT

PROVIDERS

Parent Support Provider is the title associated with national certification by the National Federation of Families and encompasses all local practices that often bear different titles. Other titles for this service include parent partner, family advocate, parent/peer navigator, to name a few. This brief will use the name Parent Support Provider since it is the national certification title.

Parent Support Providers provide peer-to-peer and parent-to-parent services, not clinical services. The

unique peer-to-peer and parent-to-parent support they provide is predicated on the use of their lived experience raising a child or youth with emotional, developmental, behavioral, substance use or mental health challenges.

Each Parent Support Provider should be well versed in the community, continuum of care and the social contexts affecting wellness as well as the prevention and treatment of children's mental health. The application of specific skills and knowledge will likely vary across settings and needs of family members. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that each Parent Support Provider's effectiveness is dependent upon his or her ability to champion the importance of self-determination in a family-driven and youth-guided approach and support service delivery.

THE ELEVEN DOMAINS OF COMPETENCE

Built upon the lived experience of parenting a child with emotional, mental, or behavioral disturbance, the foundation of this work is being able to articulate the *lessons learned* from parenting and cross walk them with the following eleven domains of competence:

1. Ethics
2. Confidentiality
3. Effecting change
4. Behavioral health information
5. Education information
6. Communication
7. Parenting for resiliency
8. Advocacy in and across multiple systems
9. Empowerment
10. Wellness and natural supports
11. Local resource information



LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY

Currently, there is a degree of variation in proficiency levels among Parent Support Providers in various locations, settings, and programs. Movement to standardize these with national certification from the National Federation of Families will serve to increasingly protect consumers and provide a higher level of accountability to purchasers of these services.

It should not be expected that every Parent Support Provider would be totally proficient in each competency. Some competencies require an awareness of the information and sufficient broad knowledge of how to review and utilize the information. Other competencies require mastery without additional review. Those specific levels of proficiency are a part of the standardization of national certification.

The levels of proficiency are:

1. Aware of
2. Knowledgeable about
3. Understands
4. Proficient

Awareness of or conversant with means that the certificant has been introduced to the information and can discuss it as a concept but will likely need to again locate the information for detailed use (with a parent and both will be processing it). This level of competency anticipates the Parent Support Provider will receive training through introductory lectures or handouts.

Knowledgeable about means that the certificant has been introduced to the information or the skill and can discuss it or utilize it at a beginning level (with a parent, meaning the Parent Support Providers are familiar enough that they can help a parent process it). This level of competency anticipates Parent Support Provider will receive training through a curriculum that provides video, audio or role-play demonstrations of the work.

Understands means that the certificant has utilized this information or skill and can discuss it or utilize it an intermediate level. It is anticipated that a Parent Support Provider could explain this material in a support group or help a parent process it without having the information right in front of them.

Proficient means that the certificant has utilized this information and skill, can discuss or utilize it in a manner that would be considered advance or able to teach to other Parent Support Providers.

DOMAIN 1 - ETHICS

This requirement includes the basis for the Code of Ethics prescribed to Parent Support Providers. In this domain, there are three broad areas of knowledge: compliance with laws and regulations, duty to persons served and duties to the profession. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Understands the Code of Ethics and consequences for its violation
2. Knowledgeable of and complaint with federal, state and local laws and regulations
3. Aware of domestic violence laws and regulations (including abuse/neglect indicators and reporting, child protection, adult protection, Indian Child Welfare Act, restraining orders, and custody determination), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996¹(HIPAA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004² (IDEA), Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records³ (42 CFR –Part 2), Americans with Disabilities Act, Social Security Administration benefits, involuntary commitment proceedings, juvenile justice proceeding, and basic concepts of criminal prosecution and defense
4. Understands and practices fundamentals of cultural and linguistic competency by treating all persons with respect, dignity, and self-determination. This includes the willingness to appreciate the values and life experiences of individuals and recognition of one's biases and prejudices toward other cultures and lifestyles
5. Knowledgeable in using peer to peer principles (family-driven, youth-guided, consumer driven)
6. Knowledgeable about current and accurate trends and issues in the field of children's overall health and adjust practice to reflect advances in the field

¹ PL 104-191, 45 CFR. §§ 160-164.530),

² PL 108-446, 30 CFR. § 104 and §300

³ 42 CFR §2



7. Understands the use of principles of non-exploitation of family members and colleagues for perceived personal or professional gain
8. Understands personal and professional limitations based on own knowledge, skill or experience
9. Understands peer and self-evaluation of professional performance applying ethical, legal, and professional standards to enhance self-awareness and performance.
10. Understands, as a certificant, how to promote the field, pay dues, abide by the standards of practice of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Certification Commission, and utilize all trademarks appropriately.

DOMAIN 2 – CONFIDENTIALITY

Trust between the family members and the Parent Support Provider is built on the foundation that the family member maintains control of all shared information. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Aware of the content of confidentiality regulations and laws and can help family members understand their confidentiality rights and responsibilities including any possible exception as it applies under HIPAA, IDEA, 42CFR-Part 2, Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 ⁴ (ICWA) and state child protection, domestic violence statutes and regulations, juvenile justice and in criminal cases
2. Aware of the purpose of interagency protocols, such as Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding, Contracts or Agreements between Business Associates, and Release of Information
3. Aware of the use of forms for Release of Information and waivers of confidentiality
4. Aware of conflict of interest in legal representation, counseling, and advocacy
5. Aware of the relationship between laws of the United States, tribal law or treaties and foreign laws or treaties
6. Understands the decision-making process and completion of forms related to confidentiality
7. Understands the value of forming partnerships involving family members and child protection

or other safety related agencies in order to conform with reporting report requirements and response to potential danger or harm.

DOMAIN 3 – EFFECTING CHANGE

Parent Support Providers are tasked with helping family members engage with formal services and informal supports. Often, they are called after a crisis or when the family has been unsuccessful in finding effective services. The Parent Support Provider must help the family act on strengths, use barriers or setbacks to increase resiliency, and establish routines to maintain wellness. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Understands supporting, teaching, coaching and mentoring parents in identifying and articulating their needs and goals
2. Understands how to serve as a role model and appropriately share lived experience as a family member
3. Knowledgeable in assisting the family member to find and use psycho-educational material
4. Knowledgeable about the principles of individual choices and self-determination
5. Understands motivational interviewing and the stages of change model or similar model
6. Understands the adult decision-making process and behavior change by being able to
 - a. Establish stable, supportive relationship with family members
 - b. Listen to and validate each family members' feelings and values
 - c. Serve as a role model and appropriately share lived-experience as a family member
 - d. Use conflict and discrepancy for decision-making
 - e. Support opportunities for self-efficacy
 - f. Provide necessary support by maintaining appropriate on-going contact
7. Knowledgeable in teaching and coaching family members to identify and practice self-care behaviors, including but not limited to Wellness Recovery Action Plan and relapse prevention planning
8. Knowledgeable about the grief process

⁴ PL 95-608, 25 U.S.C. §§ 1901-1963



- Understands how to assist family members to assess their own strengths, weaknesses, barriers, and opportunities.

DOMAIN 4 - BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PREVENTION AND TREATMENT INFORMATION

Even though Parent Support Providers provide peer-to-peer and parent-to-parent services, they still need to have enough information about clinical services to assist family members in understanding their child's, youth's, or emerging adult's needs and services. They need to be sufficiently conversant in the behavioral health language and concepts to assist the parent in navigating the continuum of services and interacting with the many professionals in health, social services, and educational agencies. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

- Knowledgeable about the type of treatment that is effective for specific children's diagnoses, e.g. Evidence Based Practices, Practice Based Evidence, best and emerging practices
- Knowledgeable in finding and summarizing research and published literature related to children's mental health, including as it relates to substance use, children with special needs and physical health
- Aware of the multi-axis diagnoses and assessments of children, including appropriate use of assessment tools and protocol
- Aware of the use of medication for particular diagnoses of children
- Knowledgeable in identifying common responses and reactions to a child's diagnosis by a parent or the youth
- Understands how to assist a parent or youth address controversial information related to diagnosis or treatment, including the use of medication and treatment planning
- Understands about trauma informed care and trauma informed services
- Understands the use of peer services as differentiated from clinical services
- Aware of data collection, documentation, and measuring outcomes in health, mental health and educational services

- Aware of payment and reimbursement policies and mechanisms for services for children, youth, and emerging adults.

DOMAIN 5 – EDUCATION INFORMATION

A child or youth's predominant social and cognitive focus is school. This is the most likely environment where they meet their peers and are challenged to expand their intellectual and vocational curiosity. Completing secondary school is a major contributor to succeeding later in life. Many students will benefit from some aspect of special education programming. Parent Support Providers are likely to need to prepare parents in becoming more aware of the opportunities and issues raised by special education regulations, school social environment, alternative education mechanisms, and post-secondary education. Parent Support Providers are also likely to be the bridge to school personnel who may need more familiarity with the student's needs and the interplay between behavioral health issues and educational success. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

- Aware of timelines, procedures and regulations related to Individual Education Plans, §504 plans and §1400 (c)(14) and (d) Transition plans
- Knowledgeable about resources for parents
- Knowledgeable about communicating written goals and outcomes
- Aware of procedural safeguards and enforceable regulations
- Understands effective meeting skills for parents and youth
- Aware of bullying and stigma associated with emotional, mental, or behavioral challenges.
- Aware of transitional programs, college-based programs, supported employment, and vocational rehabilitation program.

DOMAIN 6 - COMMUNICATION

Parent Support Providers must be proficient in win-win communication. Their major tasks center on either communicating information to parents or helping parents communicate with other parents, children, teachers, administrators, or health professionals. They act as translators between parents and professionals until parents have enough practice to interpret and communicate for themselves in planning and



evaluation meetings about their own child and in general children's mental health policy meetings. They teach, coach, and empower parents and other family members. Related to other domains, they also use verbal and non-verbal communication to benefit from supervision. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Knowledgeable about cultural and linguistic diversity, including but not limited to race, gender, age, ethnicity, spirituality and religion, sexual preference and marital status, economic and social class, language, geographic isolation, and disability
2. Understands the holistic view of family members' biological, psychological, social, and spiritual needs and resources
3. Understands the value of fostering cooperation among family members and individuals
4. Understand effective information gathering and questioning techniques
5. Aware of effective formal and informal instructional/teaching skills for adult learners
6. Understands active listening skills
7. Understands effective interpersonal communication skills, including assertive communication
8. Understands practical problem-solving skills
9. Understands informed and shared decision making
10. Understands win-win conflict resolution skills
11. Understands how to translate and communicate emotive language
12. Aware of access and use distance communication technology
13. Knowledgeable about support group facilitation
14. Aware of the need and process of data collection as related to peer and parent support.

DOMAIN 7 – PARENTING FOR RESILIENCY

The primary goal for Parent Support Providers in assisting parents is to ensure that parents continue to have hope and effectively use family and community support and skills in parenting children to become empowered and effective adults.

1. Knowledgeable about assisting families to identify and articulate their own culture, family and individual values and how to imbed these into their life planning

2. Understands parenting skills that encourage the child to make positive decisions
3. Understands physical, cognitive and emotional development of children, youth and emerging adults
4. Understands the role and effect of substance use, violence, and cognitive disabilities on mental health
5. Knowledgeable about parental use of control, choices and consequences
6. Understands parent-child shared decision-making
7. Knowledgeable about crisis planning and intervention
8. Understands life skills for the transition of youth to adulthood
9. Knowledgeable about issues faced by parents experiencing their own mental health or substance use challenges
10. Aware of use of mood regulation techniques
11. Knowledgeable about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, two-spirit (LGBT2S) issues
12. Aware of impact of foster care and adoption.

DOMAIN 8 – ADVOCACY IN AND ACROSS MULTIPLE SYSTEMS

In order for children to receive the services they need, often parents must coordinate multiple programs and agencies. Parent Support Providers assist parents by teaching or coaching them how to navigate through the programs that may not be clearly identifiable, may not coordinate with other funding sources, or may not be attuned to that particular family's needs. Advocacy is geared to coaching the parent and family members so that all participants are viewed as equals with professionals, coordination exists across various programs, and funding sources are improved for that family and other families who will follow. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Understands People-first and strength-based language and approach
2. Understands the mission and tasks of service systems for children and youth



3. Understands the mission and tasks of services systems for youth-in-transition and emerging adults
4. Knowledgeable about federal, state and local agency services and able to assist family members in identifying and accessing services, supports and resources in accordance with their plan and values
5. Understands funding streams and application process of services
6. Knowledgeable of local family-driven, youth-guided and consumer-directed resiliency and recovery services
7. Aware of role of others in children and youth services, including but not limited to case managers, care coordinators, wrap-around team facilitators, clinician, physicians, government social workers, government program managers, quality assurance personnel, etc
8. Understands advocacy for the individual and assisting the family acquiring knowledge about asserting their rights and responsibilities
9. Knowledgeable about fostering cooperation between family members and resources, services, supports and agencies
10. Understands the use of mediation techniques
11. Aware of the grievance and appeals process for denial or misapplication of services
12. Understands organizational behavior and decision-making
13. Aware of system-level advocacy techniques
14. Understands the use of effective social and professional networking.

DOMAIN 9 – EMPOWERMENT

The role of the Parent Support Provider is to build sufficient emotional and physical support around the parent so that he or she can and will sustain their positive parenting role. Additionally, the Parent Support Provider may assist parents to help other parents or assist professionals to effect change in how services for children and youth are planned, delivered, or evaluated. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Understands how to be an informed consumer by encouraging parents to learn about resiliency and mental health recovery

2. Understands the implementation of the use of consumer-driven, family-driven and youth-guided approach in behavioral health services
3. Understands promotion of self-determination and coaching for independent living skills
4. Knowledgeable about parenting skills, self-assessment and goal setting
5. Understands stigma, common superstitions and myths regarding emotional and behavioral health
6. Understands interventions to prevent or overcome stigma about mental health in society
7. Knowledgeable about bridge building and group leadership
8. Knowledgeable about leadership development.

DOMAIN 10 – WELLNESS AND NATURAL SUPPORTS

Children's mental health is built on pillars of self-care or self-management, positive adaptation skills and nurturance. Parent Support Providers assist parents in acquiring and practicing the skills necessary for parenting children, adolescents and young adults to learn coping skills, gain competencies, and increase their resistance to stress. Parent Support Providers also need to ensure that parents and family members are engaged with their family and community of choice, in addition to or as an alternative to formal services. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Understands crisis prevention and management for children and adults
2. Understands self care and wellness planning
3. Knowledgeable in using spirituality and strengths of culture and beliefs
4. Understands assisting parents to identify family and community strengths
5. Aware of community organization techniques
6. Understands how to assist family members to identify and build informal family and community supports.

DOMAIN 11 – LOCAL RESOURCES SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

Services and supports for children and families are configured differently from state to state and in vari-



ous locations. The following are the competencies attributable to this domain:

1. Understands assisting the family member to find and use local psycho-educational material
2. Knowledgeable about local IEP and §504 goal writing, mediation and local issues related to special education
3. Knowledgeable about specialization of schools or location of specialty programs
4. Understands the continuum of behavioral health services in area (prevention, outpatient, partial hospitalization, acute residential, long-term residential, transitional-age programs, peer support) and their approaches to treatment
5. Understands availability of local services and agencies, contact persons, process and strengths/challenges of each agency
6. Knowledgeable about local resources for homeless, domestic violence, sexual assault, health care and respite
7. Knowledgeable about local resources for children, 0-6, including funding process
8. Knowledgeable about local resources for children, 6-18, including funding process
9. Knowledgeable about youth-in-transition and emerging adults, 18-30, including funding process
10. Knowledgeable about funding streams for family members (emergency aid, employment, health, adult behavioral health services, etc)
11. Knowledgeable about specific cultural issues
12. Aware of communication issues in area, including tel-med sites and local customs of communication
13. Understands the agency data collection process (content and style of notes, purpose, and addressing confidentiality and release)
14. Aware of the wraparound process – benefits and challenges
15. Aware of regular supervision plan.

PARENT SUPPORT PROVIDER TRAINING

The standards for training of Parent Support Providers are still being developed; however, training of Parent Support Providers is intended to be primarily done by family-run organizations or networks as stand-alone or in cooperation with educational institutions. Training should include both initial preparation and regular supervision by a person skilled in parent-to-parent and peer-to-peer services. The training should offer

1. Up-to-date information, research and practice about each competency in every domain
2. Practice and group feedback on application of interaction skills
3. Annotated list of formal services and resources/benefits applicable to the locale of the employer
4. Formal group and individual supervision by a Certified Parent Support Provider or Certified Parent Support Provider Supervisor
5. Coordination with on-going clinical consultation as a part of the entire treatment team, when applicable.

CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

Requirements, application forms, and practice tests are available at www.ffcmh.org/certification or by contacting the National Federation of Families office listed below. While this brief represents information current at of November 2011, it is important that an applicant or other interested person should only rely on the National Certification site for official and current information.

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