COMPETENCY STANDARD 2: Psychotherapy

OVERVIEW

Psychotherapy is an intentional relationship between a trained professional (therapist) and client with the express purpose of improving the client’s mental health or helping the client better cope with emotional problems or problems of living. This arrangement can be undertaken by an individual, a couple, a family or a group. It is a special relationship between client(s) and a professional, who is trained and credentialed within his/her own discipline to provide non-medical treatment of mental and emotional problems.

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL

The following areas of knowledge and skill have been identified as benchmarks for satisfying Competency Standard 2: Psychotherapy.

Benchmark 2A: Psychotherapy Assessment
Benchmark 2B: Plan for Psychotherapeutic Intervention

BENCHMARK 2A: Psychotherapy Assessment

The qualified clinician demonstrates a comprehensive assessment strategy that addresses the full array of factors that may be relevant to the individual’s clinical presentation. In broad terms, the clinician gives thought to the following three key domains: (1) Bio/Medical; (2) Psychological; and (3) Social/Family.

Benchmark 2A Performance Indicators

In the area of Psychotherapy Assessment, the qualified clinician:

- Considers Bio/Medical factors
  - Suspected or Known Medication Side Effects
  - Suspected or Known Medical Illness
  - Suspected or Known Medical Conditions, including, but not limited to, the following conditions commonly associated with behavioral/psychiatric presentation: seizure disorders or pre-seizure irritability, sleep apnea, otitis media, blocked shunt, migraine headaches, menstrual/premenstrual problems, dental problems, and thyroid problems.
- Considers Psychological factors
  - Premorbid Personality
  - History of Presenting Problem/Symptom
  - Communication Difficulties
- Life Events/Stressors: phase-of-life change; loss of significant other; abuse; rejection; victimization; accidents, illness, disability.
- Considers Social/Family factors
  - Family Structure/System Dynamics
  - Bereavement/Loss
  - Change: some common examples include: a new boss, a new group home manager, new work assignment, a move, a sibling getting married.
- Communicates the results of the assessment in written form (e.g., in a Summary Statement or similar form)
- Includes the person and all other relevant stakeholders in the assessment process.

**BENCHMARK 2B: Plan for Psychotherapeutic Intervention**

The qualified clinician demonstrates skill in planning for psychotherapeutic intervention.

*Benchmark 2B Performance Indicators*

In the area of planning for psychotherapeutic intervention, the qualified clinician:

- Identifies what assessment tool(s) were used in the development of the plan.
- Provides a diagnosis or diagnoses, if appropriate, and indicates how they are supported by assessment findings.
- Makes clear how the proposed therapy relates to the assessment.
- Provides a rationale for his or her choice of therapeutic intervention that evidences awareness of the individual’s needs as well as strengths.
- Notes the need for referral to other services, in addition to psychotherapy, that might be critical to the individual’s maximal well-being (for example, social support through recreational services, or evaluation by a psychiatrist for medication issues).
- Notes the need for reporting of suspected abuse, where indicated.
- Recognizes the possible need for multi-modal intervention (for example, the use of a positive behavioral support plan including training for caregivers, along with individual or group psychotherapy).
- Notes possible suicide risks where relevant.
- Demonstrates knowledge of lifespan and development as related to psychotherapeutic intervention.

**References:**
