COMPETENCY STANDARD 1: ASSESSMENT AND OBSERVATION

The qualified direct support professional (DSP) is competent in the area of “assessment and observation” as it relates to individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Mental Illness (IDD/MI).

OVERVIEW

Accurate assessment supports good health. It helps identify the function of behavior. It ensures important aspects of care are not overlooked. Comprehensive assessment is a look at all areas of a person’s life. It is a careful review of the person’s physical and emotional state. It looks at environments and expectations. It identifies strengths and assets as well as needs. It is part of services that recognize that quality is achieved through support of the whole person and not just a focus on deficits. Targeted assessment may look very closely at one area and can be effective in delving deeper into one area. (For example, a functional assessment of a challenging behavior.)

For individuals with IDD/MI, comprehensive assessment or targeted assessments may be extremely important. These individuals may have serious barriers to communication. Information gathered from others will often hold the key to proper support. Assessment helps to identifying physical or mental health problems. It helps identify environmental triggers to behaviors or moods. It supports the effective use of medications. Areas where the person needs additional skills may be identified. Organized information may make all the difference.

The DSP is in a unique position to provide valuable assessment information. The DSP has the opportunity for observation in a variety of settings. These may be unavailable to other professionals. DSPs see people engage in all aspects of their daily lives. They are there on good days and difficult days. They often understand the person’s communication better than other professionals do. They may what is typical for the person and what is unusual. The qualified DSP recognizes a quality assessment process is important. They see it as a cornerstone to successful planning, implementation, and evaluation of services.

The qualified DSP is knowledgeable of both formal and informal methods of assessments. The DSP daily assesses individuals in many areas. These include health, safety, and functional life skills. They include behavior, emotional state, response to medication, and signs of crisis. They include personal desires, goals, and communication. The qualified DSP shares assessments appropriately with other members of the treatment and support team.

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL

The following areas of knowledge and skill have been identified as benchmarks for satisfying Competency Standard 1 – Assessment and Observation.

Benchmark 1A: Knowledge of Assessment and Observation Process
Benchmark 1B: Use of Assessment and Observation Tools
BENCHMARK 1C: Behavioral Assessment
Benchmark 1D: Documentation and Communication Related to Assessment and Observation

For each benchmark, DSP performance indicators have been developed. These are observable measures of the DSP’s mastery of that benchmark.

BENCHMARK 1A: Knowledge of Assessment and Observation Process

The qualified DSP is knowledgeable regarding specifics methods of assessment. The DSP is aware of potential cultural bias in formal assessment and works with others to ensure accuracy. The DSP uses results of assessments in planning, implementing, and evaluating services and outcomes. The qualified DSP demonstrates knowledge of the specific assessments and observations of individuals served, including assessments from other professionals.

*Benchmark 1A Performance Indicators*

In the area of “knowledge of assessment and observation” the qualified DSP:

1. Explains the importance and function of assessment in planning and providing quality services.
2. Identifies and describes common assessment methods and observational techniques.
3. Explains how mental health challenges may affect assessment of a person with an intellectual disability.
4. Identifies and describes common classifications of intellectual disabilities and the potential impact on assessment.
5. Describes the assessment methods of current health, emotional, social, and behavioral state of persons served that are specific to their employer.
6. Describes when, how, and with whom to share assessment information with others.
7. Assures confidentiality of assessment and observation information and is aware of agency’s confidentiality policies about sharing information.
8. Provides examples of potential cultural bias in assessment and describes how to compensate for these.

BENCHMARK 1B: Use of Assessment and Observation Tools

The qualified DSP demonstrates proficiency in the use of assessments and observation methods to support needs of individuals served.

*Benchmark 1B Performance Indicators*

In the area of “assessment and observation tools,” the qualified DSP:
1. Explains the assessment process to individuals in ways that are paced to and respectful of their unique needs.
2. Coordinates efforts with peers and others to ensure complete and accurate assessment.
3. Uses individual goals, desires, preferences, expectations, and interests for each person in daily interactions and support.
4. Recognizes and responds to signs of potential crisis.
5. Recognizes and responds to signs of changes in health or behavioral status.
6. Shares critical information regarding informal daily assessments in effective and timely ways.
7. Completes formal assessment tasks accurately and as requested.

BENCHMARK 1C: Behavioral Assessment

The qualified DSP recognizes behavior as a form of communication. The DSP demonstrates proficiency in observing and recording behavior. The DSP is able to summarize and analyze behavioral assessment information. The qualified DSP collaborates in the planning and implementation of interventions and services aimed at increasing desirable behavioral skills.

Benchmark 1C Performance Indicators

In the area of “behavioral assessment” the qualified DSP:

1. Describes and discusses various methods of observing and recording individual behavior.
2. Regularly observes, records, summarizes and uses the results of functional behavioral assessments.
3. Analyzes behavioral observations and behavioral data.
4. Identifies the likely function of behavior based on assessment and recommends alternative behavioral skills to reduce/replace challenging behavior.
5. Describes behavior in observable and measureable terms using objective language.
6. Accurately defines and uses descriptions of frequency, intensity and duration in recording behaviors.

BENCHMARK 1D: Documentation and Communication Related to Assessment and Observation

The qualified DSP demonstrates effective skills in documentation and communication of assessment information and observations to others. The DSP maintains ethical and legal standards of confidentiality.

Benchmark 1D Performance Indicators
In the area of “documentation and communication” the DSP:

1. Documents observations accurately and objectively in clear, measurable terms.
2. Describes and documents symptoms, signs, and related behaviors of both intellectual disabilities and mental health disorders accurately.
3. Observes and records behavior related to medication management clearly and consistently.
4. Reports and documents risks to individual health and safety promptly.
5. Communicates and documents information in a professional and culturally-sensitive manner.
6. Records and reports observations/assessment information as an active member of the treatment team in a clear and organized manner.
7. Discriminates between essential and non-essential information and reports only and all essential information when documenting or communicating.
8. Adjusts communication styles to meet the needs of individuals, family members, and professionals.