

COMPETENCY STANDARD 3: CRISIS PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

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

OVERVIEW

Many people with IDD/MI have trouble with challenging behavior. However, for a subset of people their mental health status or other needs may create a situation in which crisis behaviors are seen. A behavioral crisis is a situation where the person’s behavior puts him/her or others at risk of immediate and serious physical harm or death. They may also include serious damage of property or criminal behaviors. They may include other behavior that has serious long-term negative consequences-such as misuse of drugs or alcohol. These situations are extremely stressful, especially the first time they occur.

The qualified DSP recognizes that most crises can be prevented or interrupted before harm occurs. They have skills in identifying potential for crisis. They use techniques that deescalate and reduce crisis. They know when a person needs additional assistance and how to obtain it. They recognize that “crisis” by definition should not be a regular event. They work cooperatively with the full team to ensure effective treatment and support that prevents or reduces further occurrences. They recognize that a majority of people with IDD or MI alone or combined have past trauma experiences. They recognize this past trauma is often reengaged in a crisis. They take a universal precaution approach to trauma in crisis intervention.

Crisis prevention includes methods that are intended to keep people from experiencing future crisis. They include teaching strategies. For crisis, these often focused on early identification of situations that stimulate crisis or indications of mental health destabilization. Crisis intervention refers to strategies and responses used once signs of crisis are already present. They can reduce the impact of the crisis immediately. They can also decrease long-term problems. The qualified DSP engages the person receiving support to the maximum extent possible in these strategies. He or she knows how to appropriately engage specialized and community resources as needed manage the crisis and aftermath.

The qualified DSP recognizes that a person in crisis is vulnerable. He/she stays focused on the safety and well-being of the person. He/she is able to stay calm and make effective choices in the best interest of the person during crisis. The DSP is also able to make good choices regarding the safety of others. This includes protecting him or herself in a crisis. The qualified DSP recognizes that experiencing crisis can be trauma producing for him or herself as well. He/she engaged is in good stress management, counseling and efforts to prevent burnout on an ongoing basis.

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL

The following areas of knowledge and skill have been identified as benchmarks for satisfying Competency Standard 3 – Crisis Prevention and Intervention.

Benchmark 3A: Knowledge and Use of Crisis Prevention Strategies

Benchmark 3B: Knowledge and Use of Crisis Intervention Strategies

Benchmark 3C: Documentation and Communication Related to Crisis Situations

Benchmark 3D: Managing Stress and Burnout

For each benchmark, “performance indicators” have been developed to measure the DSP’s mastery of that benchmark.

Benchmark 3A: Knowledge and Use of Crisis Prevention Strategies

The qualified DSP recognizes great toll that crisis takes on individuals supported. He/she works to help each person reduce the risk of repeated crisis. The DSP implements daily strategies that reduce the likelihood of crisis. This includes supporting a health and safe environment. This includes helping the person learn new skills and abilities that prevent crisis. It includes being aware of early signs of building crisis or triggers for each person and taking early steps to avert crisis.

Benchmark 3A Performance Indicators

In the area of “crisis prevention” the qualified DSP:

1. Obtains and reviews information about specific risk of crisis and methods of preventing and responding to crisis on the part of each person he or she supports prior to providing support. Asks questions as needed to ensure understanding.
2. Recognizes signs of increased agitation, risks of suicide, or indications of potential criminal or crisis behavior on the part of a person supported and takes steps to deescalate the situation effectively.
3. Engages with the person and full team in obtaining further assessment and planning if a crisis has occurred in order to identify the best prevention and response strategies.
4. Reviews each crisis (formally or informally) after the fact to consider their own behavior and environmental triggers, in order to improve future capacity to manage and prevent crisis.
5. Assists individuals in identifying and responding to potential catalysts to crisis, helping them identify signs and trends in their behaviors and strategies that stop or reduce crisis. Help them identify what others can do to support them in prevention and response.
6. Supports people in lifestyle choices that reduce vulnerabilities (exercise, sleep, food, therapy, support group, family time, relaxation, etc.).
7. Supports the person in identifying and learning alternative coping skills and for how to avoid or reduce triggers to crisis.
8. Maintains a positive environment that minimizes or eliminates triggers to crisis and prevents dangerous options per ethical and legal guidelines. (i.e., remove or lock up pills, knives, alcohol, etc.)
9. Uses treatment and crisis plans to guide responses when individuals experience loss, crisis, and challenging behavior.

10. Adjust daily support and expectations in order to prevent crisis when there are signs of increased needs of individuals at risk for crisis.
11. Assists and support coworkers and others in understanding crisis, behavior management, coping skills, and treatment planning.
12. Accepts and implements suggestions for improved ability to prevent and respond to crisis.
13. Seeks additional information and skills related to causes of crisis and crisis prevention on a regular basis and as needed.

Benchmark 3B: Knowledge and Use of Crisis Intervention Strategies

The qualified DSP uses safe and effective crisis intervention strategies when necessary. He/she is aware of the specific needs and triggers of individuals supported and works with each person individually. He/she also is able to handle unexpected crises by using established response techniques. In a crisis, the qualified DSP is able to stay calm and work well with the person and others. He/she is able to work effectively with emergency response personnel. He/she is able to consider immediate as well as long-term outcomes for the person in choosing responses. The DSP is organized with necessary information and supports the comfortable transition of the person supported to crisis services. The DSP correctly identifies who to inform and when post-crisis.

Benchmark 3B Performance Indicators

In the area of “crisis *interventions*” the qualified DSP:

1. Recognizes when a situation has become unsafe or the person needs more assistance and takes steps to respond in a way that protects people.
2. Activates procedures identified in the crisis plan as described.
3. Describes how crisis may engage past trauma experiences and the person’s ability to process and respond to information and describes methods that may be effective in this situation.
4. Uses methods likely to reduce trauma and agitation including a calm gentle voice, a relaxed but attentive demeanor at a safe distance, allowing for maximum freedom of movement of the individual, validation of individual’s concerns or needs, and offers of help. Paces interventions so that the person has time to process.
5. Avoids methods that may increase trauma or agitation such as crowding the person, threatening the person with aversive consequences, yelling, panicking, demanding, dismissing the person’s concerns, touching or unnecessarily blocking the person from movement.
6. Uses non-physical interventions to control and/or protect individuals and others in a crisis situation whenever possible.

7. Identifies and utilizes appropriate contact information in crisis situations (i.e. community mental health services, 911 and hotline resources, etc.).
8. Provides crisis prevention/intervention education to first responders and emergency personnel regarding the individual's dual diagnosis.
9. Is prepared for contact with emergency personnel including complete medical and personal information, complete details of the incident, and preferences for treatment and intervention.
10. Works effectively with police officers and recognizes when and how to advocate for the individual when criminal justice systems are engaged.
11. Recognizes cultural and social factors may influence a person's trust and ability to comply with police and crisis intervention services and works with individuals to provide maximum safety of all involved if these interventions are necessary.
12. Identifies the function and importance of debriefing and actively encourages individuals to participate in debriefing sessions following a crisis.
13. Accompanies individuals to emergency room, psychiatric health facilities or other temporary placements as possible for comfort and to assist with determining appropriate course of action plans.
14. Promptly reports crisis to correct members of the support and treatment team.
15. Facilitates follow-up services while individuals are in other temporary placements as requested.

Benchmark 3C: Documentation and Communication of Crisis Situations

The qualified DSP recognizes that effective and complete documentation of crisis events is useful. It will guide future decisions regarding prevention and response in crisis. He/she follows all employer documentation guidelines as well as the state documentation requirements. The qualified DSP is familiar with and skilled at following each individual's treatment plan. He/she communicates with the treatment team as indicated. The qualified DSP understands his/her unique position to observe and document individual behavior. This will support the treatment team in understanding behavioral antecedents and possible positive reinforcements.

Benchmark 3C Performance Indicators

In the area of "documentation and communication of crisis situations" the qualified DSP:

1. Documents and communicates observations regarding the coping skills identified in treatment and behavior support plans in accordance with agency policy and state guidelines.
2. Identifies and documents mental health symptoms to be monitored according to the individual's treatment plan.

3. Recognizes and documents changes in behavior, including responses to specific interventions.
4. Communicates with treatment team when mental health symptoms and challenging behavior arise.
5. Discusses crisis situation with the individual so that he/she is informed as much as possible about what is happening with out of home placements/hospitalizations.
6. Documents and reports events of crisis incidents accurately and in a timely manner, in accordance with agency policy and state guidelines.
7. Communicates with family and the person supported in a clear and supportive way post-crisis to help them understand next steps and to minimize trauma.

Benchmark 3D: Managing Stress and Burnout

The qualified DSP recognizes that supporting people who experience significant or frequent crisis is a challenging job. The DSP recognizes that these experiences affect their own mental health and well-being. The DSP knows that burnout and stress can reduce effectiveness. In order to maintain a positive and effective approach to support, the DSP must be skilled at recognizing and attending to his or her own needs. The DSP has methods of recognizing signs of toxic stress and burnout. The DSP regularly engages in prevention and response strategies relate to these needs.

1. Observes healthy and positive boundaries with people supported, support teams and coworkers.
2. Maintains a healthy lifestyle that allows for energy and focus when providing direct support.
3. Describes risks of being overtired, stressed out, or frustrated when providing direct support and ways in which a DSP can manage these risks.
4. Recognizes signs that he/she is becoming toxically stressed or burned out and engages effective strategies for getting back on track.
5. Seeks professional help or assistance from employer as needed to prevent or manage toxic stress and burnout.