COMPETENCY STANDARD 4: HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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

OVERVIEW

Good health is a state of overall physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or illness. Wellness is an active process that requires daily effort. It includes becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy lifestyle. Wellness is considered on multiple levels including the following: social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional.

People with an IDD/MI diagnosis are at risk for more health and wellness problems than people without. They often take medications that include serious complications to health. Many developmental syndromes and processing disorders have overlapping symptoms with mental illness. The expression of symptoms can be different when IDD and MI co-occur. Many people with IDD/MI have barriers in communication and their ability to plan or organize information. These issues can make it more difficult for the person to take an active role in their health. It can make it more difficult for professionals to sort out symptoms or recognize emerging issues in a timely way. Unfortunately, few professionals are well versed in the needs of people with co-occurring IDD/MI.

In addition to physical health issues, people with IDD/MI are at risk for greater social isolation. They may lead lives that lack healthy stimulation and chances for employment. Their opportunities for varied social roles, contribution, and status are typically less than for others. They may have fewer options for spiritual outlets. Unfortunately, others expectations of them and for them may serve as more significant barriers than the effects of disorders. A person-centered perspective assumes that people with disabilities can lead healthy lives. It assumes they are the best managers of their own lives including aspects of health and wellness. However, they need help and support from others in order to do so.

The qualified DSP is knowledgeable about health and wellness in general. He/she supports a wellness oriented lifestyle for each person support that fits their unique needs and preferences. The DSP has a basic understanding of major developmental disabilities and mental health disorders. The DSP is knowledgeable about the effects of co-occurring disorders. He/she is familiar with basic medications and therapies used for mental health and other common health disorders. The DSP recognizes that health and wellness is a comprehensive and emerging field. He/she seeks fresh information on an ongoing basis.

The qualified DSP understands that supporting health and wellness for people with IDD/MI requires skill and effort. It requires a level of attention and care toward individuals. It requires an ability to set and support high standards and expectations for people despite social and services biases. It requires good ability to communicate, cooperate, and document. It requires an ability to focus on the person and help identify what is most important to them. It includes supporting regular opportunities for growth and new experiences over the life span for each person supported.
AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL

The following areas of knowledge and skill have been identified as benchmarks for satisfying Competency Standard 4 - Health and Wellness.

Benchmark 4A: Knowledge of Health and Wellness
Benchmark 4B: Knowledge Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health Disorders and Co-Occurring Disorders
Benchmark 4C: Use and Implications of Medication (psychotropic and others)
Benchmark 4D: Illness Management and Recovery
Benchmark 4E: Documentation and Communication Related to Health and Wellness

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

**Benchmark 4A: Knowledge of Health and Wellness**

The qualified DSP has skills in basic health support. He/she uses proper infection control procedures. The DSP recognizes and responds to signs and symptoms of illness. He/she helps people obtain preventative and responsive medical services as needed. The qualified DSP recognizes health and wellness as holistic. He/she supports activities, choices and lifestyles that lead happiness and satisfaction on the part of the person. The DSP supports overall quality of life despite barriers. The DSP helps people develop and maintain positive relationships, valued social roles, and new opportunities.

**Benchmark 4A Performance Indicators**

In the area of “health and wellness” the qualified DSP:

1. Uses effective infection control procedures when performing intimate care, cleaning, or when helping with food preparation or storage.
2. Recognizes signs and symptoms of infection or injury and responds appropriately.
3. Recognizes signs of seizure disorders and engages effective responses in the event of a seizure.
4. Recognizes signs of health crisis and obtains correct help in a timely way.
5. Identifies individual’s risks and strengths in the area of health and wellness and recovery.
6. Provides culturally appropriate support, consistent with the individual’s choices, perspectives, and expectations.
7. Identifies how stress, spirituality, grief and loss, trauma, social roles, and relationships influence the individuals and considers these components in planning and intervention strategies.
8. Incorporates the expectations of each individual’s identified support network in life planning.
9. Supports positive lifestyle options for good health, illness management and recovery (i.e. sufficient sleep, proper nutrition, regular physical activity, and stress management, etc.).

10. Encourages and assists individuals to be engaged in their own health maintenance in ways adapted to their abilities and understanding.

11. Provides health and wellness information and education to individuals as needed and adapted to needs and preferences.

12. Facilitates problem-solving and planning skills around life planning appropriate to the individual’s abilities.

13. Assists individuals with scheduling medical and health-related appointments.

14. Attends health related appointments as needed and requested.

15. Prepares for health related appointments with objective information regarding behavior, responses, and related treatment issues.

16. Expresses concerns regarding health trends and provides updates regarding treatment plans and outcomes to the appropriate treatment team.

17. Obtains critical information from professionals by asking questions, being receptive to professional advice, and incorporating recommendations into treatment plans as needed.

18. Serves as a liaison between the individuals and health professionals to support individuals in having an active in their health and recovery activities.

**Benchmark 4B: Knowledge Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health Disorders and Co-Occurring Disorders**

The qualified DSP demonstrates an understanding of the implications of common disorders. (i.e., intellectual, developmental, and mental health disorders.) He/she recognizes these disorders will have implications in many areas. These include behavior, health, physical capacity, communication, judgment, impulse control, and moods. It will also affect the person’s ability to self-manage. The DSP demonstrates knowledge about the specific impairments and needs among the individuals he or she supports. The DSP is knowledgeable regarding best practice in co-occurring disorders. He/she has an understanding of treatments, interventions and support for people supported as well as general knowledge.

*Benchmark 4B Performance Indicators*

In the area of “intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health and co-occurring disorders”, the qualified DSP:

1. Recognizes signs and symptoms of major mental health disorders (MI) including major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and borderline personality disorder.
2. Identifies the effects of common intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) including: down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, fragile X syndrome, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and unspecified or general intellectual disabilities.

3. Gives examples and describes ways in which a co-occurring IDD with MI and implications for services and supports.

4. Identifies for each individual he or she supports the effects of IDD/MI on their behavior, health, physical capacity, communication, judgment, impulse control, moods, and self-management.

5. Acknowledges and explores the role of trauma in the development or manifestation of mental health challenges.

6. Identifies a range of evidence-based treatment and support options for IDD or MI.

7. Implements best practice in support of people with IDD/MI.

8. Networks to locate practitioners who are knowledgeable and competent in the area of dual diagnosis and matches them with the individuals.

9. Recognizes a sudden appearance or increase in frequency, intensity, or duration of challenging behavior is often a sign of underlying physical or mental health problems and takes adequate steps to obtain assessment and care.

**Benchmark 4C: Use and Implications of Medication (psychotropic and others)**

The qualified DSP demonstrates knowledge about the effects of medications. He/she recognizes the risks and benefits of medication use in general and specific to medications used by people supported. The qualified DSP takes an active role in ensuring medications are used as prescribed. He/she maintains important information and documentation regarding medications. The qualified DSP recognizes that the use of medications is one treatment option. It is not a substitute for a holistic treatment plan. The qualified DSP administers medications in accordance with agency policy and state guidelines.

**Benchmark 4C Performance Indicators**

In the area of “medications” the qualified DSP:

1. Identifies the basic purpose and use of psychotropic medications.

2. Identifies critical issues concerning the use psychotropic medication (i.e. risks, benefits, appropriate use, side effects, adverse reactions, off-label use, polypharmacy, need for monitoring, etc.).

3. Can list and describe common health and metabolic disorders that may be caused by medications including diabetes, high or low blood pressure, obesity, movement disorders, heart conditions and risk of infection.
4. Is familiar with names of common psychiatric and seizure control medications, proper use and implications of misuse, signs of adverse reactions and side effects of these medications.

5. Knows the names, doses, and proper use and need for monitoring for each medications that is used by individuals supported (when part of duties).

6. Assists individuals in providing complete and accurate information to medical professionals regarding their medications as well as other potential substances that contribute to risk of medication interactions.

7. Uses positive behavior support and holistic recovery options as part of a whole treatment and life plan for individuals using psychotropic medication.

8. Educates people supported regarding their medications and issues related to the effects, side-effects, and adverse reactions of medications.

9. Monitors side effects and adverse reactions to medications and communicates concerns to the treatment team.

10. Supports individuals to advocate for an optimal balance with medications to maximize effects, reduce side effects and keep people from taking unhelpful medications.

11. Assists individuals to comply with the recommended lifestyle and medical requirements related to their use of psychotropic medication (i.e. regular blood draws, avoidance of certain foods, avoidance of suddenly discontinuing medications, avoidance of alcohol, effects of smoking and nicotine, etc.);

12. Assists individuals with learning medication management (i.e. name and dose, effects and side effects, and risks of misuse, etc.) and teaches according to their personal learning style, capacity, and needs.

13. Supports effective problem-solving and decision-making when a individual refuses to take prescribed medications.

Benchmark 4D: Illness Management and Recovery

The qualified DSP supports holistic illness management and recovery efforts. The qualified DSP is knowledgeable about the health risks related having a dual diagnosis of IDD/MI (i.e. increased risk for substance abuse, smoking, self-injurious or challenging behavior, poor diet, lack of motivation, social isolations, fewer options). The qualified DSP works with the individual to create a life plan that allows for a full life, despite disabilities and disorders. He/she models, encourages, and teaches healthy lifestyle practices. The DSP helps individuals participate in active self-care regarding nutrition, sleep, exercise, activities, and relationships.

Benchmark 4D Performance Indicators

In the area of “illness management and recovery” the qualified DSP:

1. Assists individuals to develop a person-centered recovery and illness management plan (e.g., WRAP).
2. Teach healthy coping skills such as boundary-setting, self-advocacy, stress management, emotional regulation, and frustration tolerance.

3. Assist individuals to take an active role in their treatment and recovery and identify barriers to motivation.

4. Supports the person in activities and relationships they find enriching, relaxing, and pleasurable on a regular basis.

5. Respects boundaries set by person and works to overcome obstacles or differences collaboratively.

**Benchmark 4E: Documentation and Communication Related to Health and Wellness**

The qualified DSP recognizes that for people with IDD/MI behavioral symptoms are often a key component to the diagnosis and treatment of health disorders. The DSP takes time to maintain accurate and complete documentation in accordance with agency/organizational guidelines. He/she organizes and communicates this information in useful ways. The DSP teaches skills to assist individuals in monitoring their symptoms and maintaining personal records.

**Benchmark 4E Performance Indicators**

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

1. Recognizes critical information to document and share with others.

2. Communicates information regarding health and behavior effectively and in a timely way to appropriate team members.

3. Follows the documentation requirements and guidelines of their state and agency/organization and records important information as it relates to individuals.

4. Maintains complete, objective and accurate documentation regarding current needs of each individual.

5. Monitors and records behavior patterns that are used to indicate signs of physical or mental health status.


7. Helps maintain a medical history that includes medications and treatments that have been ineffective or aversive.

8. Works with individual and families to develop medical and mental health advanced directives.