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Ten KSA Competency Areas for Youth Service Professionals

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Table 1: Synthesis of Competencies of Youth Service Professionals

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Baseline competencies for all youth service professionals are listed in the first column. These were synthesized from the work of The John J. Heldrich Center, the YDPA Program, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP), and others. The second column contains the additional competencies for youth service professionals working with youth with disabilities. These competencies are a combination of those suggested by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), the Center for Mental Health Services, the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), and others.

KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively

Competency Area #1: Knowledge of the Field

- Knowledge of youth development theory, adolescent and human development
- Understanding of youth rights and laws including labor, curfew, and attendance
- Knowledge of self as a youth development worker, including professional ethics and boundaries, confidentiality, and professional development needs and opportunities

Competency Area #2: Communication with Youth

- Respect and caring for all youth, including the ability to be open minded and nonjudgmental, develop trusting relationships, and maintain awareness of diversity and youth culture
- Ability to recognize and address need for intervention (e.g. drug or alcohol abuse, domestic abuse or violence, and depression)
- Ability to advocate for, motivate, recruit, and engage youth

Competency Area #3: Assessment and Individualized Planning

Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively

- Understanding of the values and history of the disability field
- Understanding of disability laws including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA)
- Knowledge of key concepts and processes including Individualized Education Program (IEP), Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), transition, due process procedures, parents' rights, informed choice, self determination, universal access, and reasonable accommodations
- Understanding of privacy and confidentiality rights as they relate to disability disclosure
- Knowledge of issues and trends affecting youth with disabilities (e.g. low expectations, attitudinal or environmental barriers, need for social integration)
- Understanding of disability awareness, sensitivity, and culture
- Understanding of how to communicate with youth with various physical, sensory, psychiatric, and cognitive disabilities

- Ability to facilitate person-centered planning, including the ability to assess goals, interests, past experience, learning styles, academic skills, assets, independent living skills, and needs (e.g. transportation, etc)
- Ability to involve youth in their own planning process by helping youth to set realistic goals and action steps, make informed choices, exercise self-determination, and actively participate in their own development (includes financial/benefits planning and educational requirements)
- Knowledge of various assessment tools and strategies and ability to administer assessments (or make referrals, as needed)
- Ability to track progress and change plans as needed
- Ability to ensure appropriate assessment of young peoples' disabilities (in-house or through referrals, as necessary)
- Understanding how to use information from assessments and records and recognize implications for education and employment, including any potential need for accommodations and assistive technology
- Ability to assess independent/community living skills and needs, including accommodations and supports
- Understanding of benefits planning, includes Social Security income and health benefits and their relation to working

Competency Area #4: Relationship to Family and Community

- Engage/build relationships with family members or other significant persons
- Resource mapping/ ability to connect youth to community institutions, resources and supportive adults
- Ability to engage youth in community service and leadership activities
- Involving families, guardians, and advocates, including connections to disabilities specific resources & groups
- Community resources, including disabilities specific resources and organizations

Competency Area #5: Workforce Preparation

- Ability to facilitate job readiness skill-building and assess employability strengths/barriers
- Ability to teach job search skills, including use of technology and the Internet
- Ability to coach youth, assist in job maintenance, and provide follow-up support
- Ability to match youth with appropriate jobs and careers, including job analysis and skills standards
- Ability to involve employers in preparation process
- Ability to conduct job analysis, matching, customizing, and carving for youth with disabilities, including accommodations, supports, and modifications
- Knowledge of support required to place youth in jobs, including what employers need to know about reasonable accommodations, undue burden, assistive technology, funding streams, and tax incentives

Competency Area #6: Career Exploration

- Knowledge of technology and online search skills
- Knowledge of tools and processes for career exploration
- Ability to engage employers in career exploration
- Knowledge of workplace and labor market trends
- Knowledge of workplace and labor market trends, including options for youth with disabilities such as supported employment, customized employment, or self-employment

Competency Area #7: Relationships with Employers & Between Employer and Employee

- Ability to develop relationships with employers
- Ability to communicate effectively with employers
- Ability to mediate/resolve conflicts
- Ability to engage employers in program design and delivery
- Ability to train employers in how to work with and support young people
- Customer service skills
- Ability to identify, recruit, and provide support to employers who hire youth with disabilities
- Ability to advocate for youth with disabilities with employers including negotiating job design, job customization, and job carving
- Ability to train employers and their staff in how to work with and support young people, including providing disability awareness training and information about universal access and design, reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services for youth with disabilities

Competency Area #8: Connection to Resources

- Ability to identify a range of community resources (people, places, things, & money) that can assist youth
- Ability to create relationships and network with other community agencies and potential partners
- Ability to market own program as a valuable resource to community and a viable partner
- Ability to build collaborative relationships and manage partnerships
- Knowledge about different funding streams for youth
- Knowledge of community intermediary organizations to assist with disability-specific supports and resources

Competency Area #9: Program Design and Delivery

- Knowledge of workforce development system, including technology of workforce development (service management, performance measures, and assessment)
 - Ability to work with groups, foster teamwork, and develop leadership and followership among youth
 - Ability to manage programs and budgets
 - Ability to design programs using best practices (considering age, stage, and cultural appropriateness)
 - Service management skills, including how to set measurable goals with tangible outcomes
 - Ability to evaluate and adjust programs based on outcome measurement and data
- Competency Area #10: Administrative Skills**
- Ability to complete referrals and service summaries using common reporting formats and requirements
 - Written and verbal communication skills
 - Time management skills
 - Strong interpersonal skills/ability to work within a team
- Ability to access resources from special education, vocational rehabilitation, community rehabilitation programs, disability income support work incentives, and other disability-specific programs
 - Knowledge of universal access and design, reasonable accommodation, auxiliary aids, and services
- Ability to complete disability-specific referrals and service summaries, such as IEP, transition plan, IPE, and In-service Work

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