

CORE COMPETENCIES RECOMMENDED FOR MASTERS-LEVEL LICENSED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COUNSELORS WHO TREAT OR PLAN TO TREAT CLIENTS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS OR CO-OCCURRING SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

Introduction

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The following competencies and criteria are recommended for all master's-level licensed behavioral health/mental health counselors who include or seek to include the treatment of substance use disorders (SUDs) and/or co-occurring SUD and mental health disorders (CODs) in their scope of practice. These recommendations have been developed by a multi-partner work group comprised of representatives from the NH Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services, the NH Alcohol and Other Drug Service Providers Association, the NH Training Institute on Addictive Disorders, and the NH Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors Association. The recommendations have been endorsed by the NH Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment and its Treatment Task Force as well as by the New Hampshire Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors Association.

Purpose

The purpose of these recommendations is to increase the capacity of the existing behavioral health profession to treat SUDs and CODs effectively within practitioners' scope of practice.

This capacity expansion is critically needed to deliver services to the growing number of New Hampshire residents who are experiencing problems with substance use disorders. This capacity expansion is also critically needed to deliver SUD and COD treatment to New Hampshire residents who are newly covered under the NH Health Protection Program (Medicaid expansion) that provides a robust SUD benefit at a higher reimbursement rate than traditional Medicaid's psychotherapy benefit.

Recommendations

Recommendations for knowledge and skill areas are provided on the following page. Training, coursework, or other means for knowledge and skill acquisition and development within each of these categories to achieve and/or sustain competency are strongly encouraged.

Please note that the multiple categories and topics on the following page are not intended to imply that full courses or all-day trainings are needed for each. It is anticipated that many trainings and courses are likely to cover several of the categories and topic areas. These recommendations, therefore, do not stipulate a number of hours of education for each area; rather they outline knowledge and skills needed. The recommendations also articulate the importance of clinical support through supervision, professional mentoring and/or peer collaboration networks to help practitioners apply newly acquired SUD and COD-specific knowledge and skills in clinical practice.

CATEGORIES OF COMPETENCE ¹	RECOMMENDED TOPICS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Data Collection & Diagnosis of SUDs*	✓ Assessment & differential diagnosis of SUDs and CODs
Initiating Treatment*	✓ ASAM ² criteria to determine appropriate level of care ✓ Treatment planning for SUDs/CODs
Crisis Response*	✓ Crisis intervention relative to SUDs/CODs (e.g., severe withdrawal, overdose, alcohol poisoning)
Counseling*	✓ Application of best practices to SUDs/CODs, including differential application of treatment modalities to patients with SUDs/CODs, including medication assisted treatment
Regulatory Issues*	✓ 42 CFR, Part 2 (federal law relative to patient privacy protection and confidentiality specific to SUD treatment that is more stringent than HIPAA) ✓ Ethical considerations specific to SUDs/CODs
Community Utilization*	✓ Awareness of community resources and recovery supports specific to SUDs/ CODs, including peer support meetings and common barriers to attending meetings and accessing supports
Alcohol and Drugs*	✓ Basic knowledge of alcohol, drugs, interactions, and medication assisted treatment
Sociological Factors* Physiological/Medical Factors* Psychological/Psychiatric Factors*	✓ Biopsychosocial factors in SUDs/CODs and the inter-relationship of biology, social environments, personality traits, life experiences, and other psychological factors
Treatment*	✓ Basic understanding and application of the continuum of care for SUDs/CODs ✓ Progression of SUDs, CODs and recovery ✓ Medication Assisted Treatment (e.g. buprenorphine, methadone, naltrexone or other medications)
Integrated Care	✓ Knowledge and skill development relative to integrated treatment of substance use disorders and mental health disorders.
Clinical Support	✓ Regular, on-going collegial mentoring, either through clinical supervision provided by a clinician with extensive experience treating individuals with SUDs/CODs, a professional mentor with such experience, peer collaboration groups supporting effective SUD and COD treatment, or similar means.

¹ The categories of competence noted here were established for licensure as a Master’s Level Alcohol and Drug Counselor (MLADC) in New Hampshire, based on the International Credentialing and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC accessible at internationalcredentialing.org).

*Indicates an MLADC Core Competency area

² American Society of Addiction Medicine

Opportunities & Resources

There are many resources available to mental health counselors who are interested in expanding their scope of practice to include the treatment of SUDs/CODs. Biannual continuing education requirements may provide an opportunity to gain training and coursework to build competency in SUD/COD treatment.

Training	Continuing Education Coursework	Clinical Support
<p><i>NH Training Institute on Addiction Disorders</i></p> <p>Trainings specific to licensure and certification for SUD and COD prevention, treatment and recovery support services www.nhadaca.org/NHTIAD.html</p>	<p><i>University of New Hampshire School of Social Work</i></p> <p>12-16 credit course certification track for SUD/COD treatment</p>	<p><i>Clinical Supervision</i></p> <p>Regular on-going clinical supervision provided by a Master's level clinician with extensive experience treating individuals with SUDs or CODs</p>
<p><i>NH Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors Association</i></p> <p>Training and practitioner support in effective service delivery www.nhadaca.org</p>	<p><i>Plymouth State University</i></p> <p>12-16 credit course and internship for certificate track congruent with core competencies recommended by NHADACA</p>	<p><i>Peer Collaboration Groups</i></p> <p>Practitioners meet regularly to discuss and problem-solve challenges to effective treatment of SUDs/CODs**</p>
<p><i>NH Health Protection Program behavioral health care management organizations</i></p> <p>Additional training and phone consultation for treatment practitioners Cenpatico clinicaltraining@cenpatico.com Beacon Health Strategies Nicholas.pfeifer@beaconhs.com</p>	<p><i>Other institutions of higher education</i></p> <p>Provide referral information on higher education institutions that offer coursework in SUD/COD treatment www.nhadaca.org/Resources.html</p>	<p><i>Professional Mentors</i></p> <p>Provide regular opportunities for clinicians to troubleshoot challenges in clinical practice relative to treating SUDs/CODs one-on-one with an experienced mentor</p>

** Please note: The NH Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors Association (NHADACA) has regional clinicians who may assist with finding peer collaboration groups or mentors. See contact info below.

For more information about opportunities to gain knowledge and skills, including very low-cost training opportunities, and for opportunities for clinical support through professional mentors or peer collaboration groups, please contact NHADACA at 603-225-7060, traininginstitute@nhadaca.org, or www.nhadaca.org.