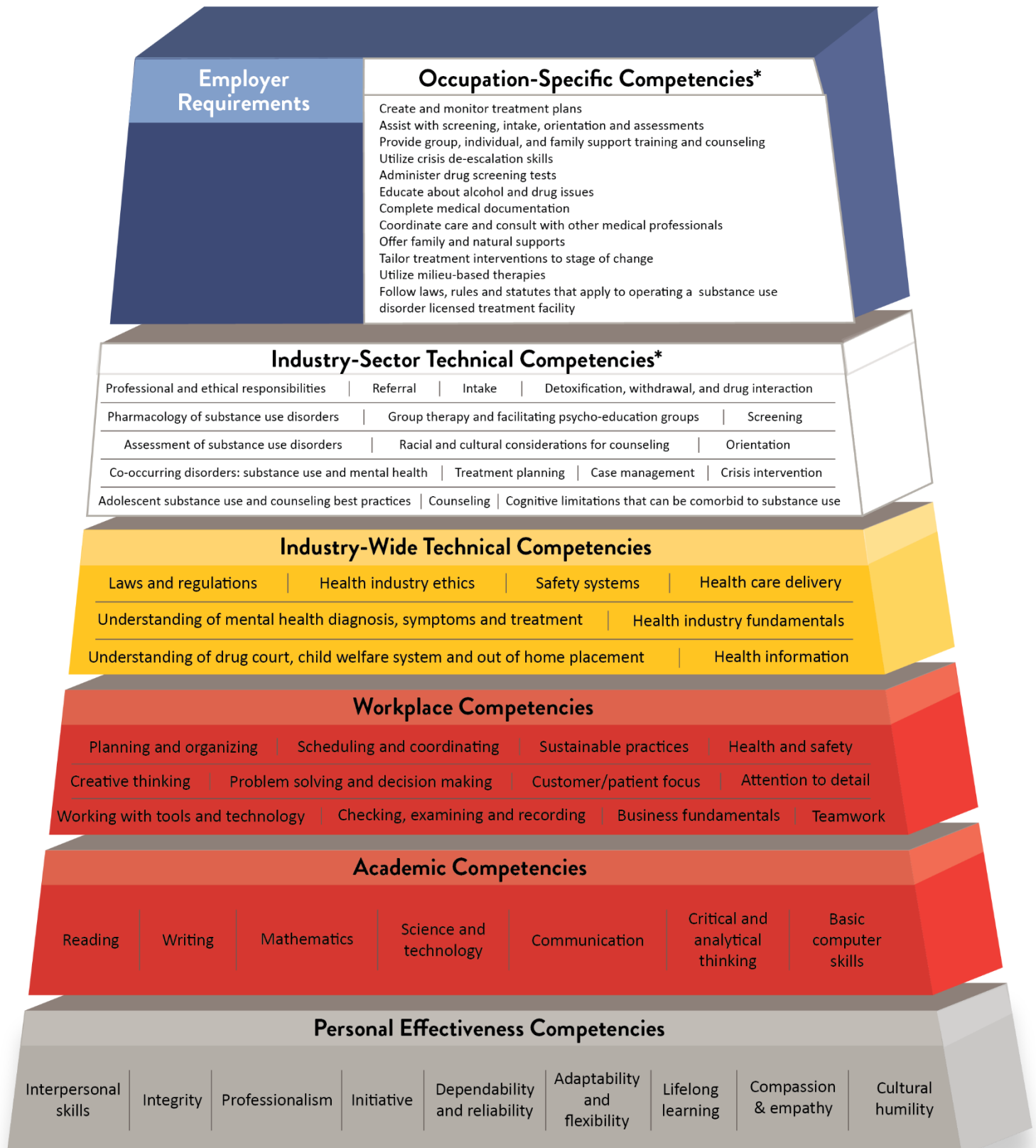


Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline

Competency Model for Health Care Services

Occupation: Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor



Based on: Fundamentals of Health Care Competency Model, Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor, February 2025. For more detailed information about competency model creation and sources, visit dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/health-care-services.



Competency Model for Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor

Licensed alcohol and drug counselor – An individual who provides counseling for people who experience addiction as well as other related behavioral problems. They provide treatment and support to help the client recover from addiction or modify problem behavior. An individual in this role must follow the rules and requirements for becoming a licensed alcohol and drug counselor as outlined in law and overseen by the Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy.

*Pipeline recommends the Industry-Sector Technical Competencies as formal training opportunities (provided through related instruction) and the Occupation-Specific Competencies as on-the-job (OJT) training opportunities.

Industry-Sector Technical Competencies

Related Instruction for dual training means the organized and systematic form of education resulting in the enhancement of skills and competencies related to the dual trainee's current or intended occupation.

- **Professional and ethical responsibilities** – Understand principles of medical ethics and how they apply in professional standards.
- **Referral** – Understand the needs of the client which cannot be met by the counselor or agency and assist the client to utilize the support systems and available community resources.
- **Pharmacology of substance use disorders** – Understand the dynamics of addiction and uses, effects, and types of actions of drugs.
- **Assessment of substance use disorders** – Understand the basic tools and techniques to properly identify and evaluate an individual's strengths, weaknesses, problems and needs to develop a treatment plan or make recommendations for level of care placement. Common practices for assessment include use of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), screening tools, motivational interviewing, etc.
- **Detoxification, withdrawal, and drug interaction** – Understand the symptoms and length of time of detoxification methods and the harmful interaction of varying substances.

- **Adolescent substance use and counseling best practices** – Understand the differences and issues involved with impact of substance abuse can have on an individual whose brain and body are not fully developed. Also understand how certain approaches involving family, youth culture, etc. will likely be different for adolescents than for adults.
- **Counseling** – Understand how to incorporate the utilization of special skills to assist individuals, families, or groups in achieving objectives through exploration of a problem and its ramifications; examination of attitudes and feelings; consideration of alternative solutions; and decision making.
- **Racial and cultural considerations for counseling** – Understand the intersection between cultural identity and the knowledge, skills and attitude necessary for addressing unique counseling issues for different culture groups.
- **Case management** – Understand how to conduct activities that bring services, agencies, resources or people together within a planned framework of action toward the achievement of established goals.
- **Crisis intervention** – Understand the services which respond to an alcohol or other drug user's needs during acute emotional or physical distress. This can involve short-term management techniques designed to reduce potential permanent damage to an individual affected by a crisis.
- **Co-occurring disorders: Substance use and mental health** – Understand the most common mental disorders, the interrelationship between mental disorders and substance abuse, and various counseling methods and treatment approaches for the dually disordered client.
- **Group therapy and facilitating psycho-education groups** – Understand the professional and practical issues involved with designing and facilitating effective counseling that takes place in a group setting. Best practices take into account factors such as ethical issues, privacy, intra and interpersonal dynamics of the group and more.
- **Screening** – Understand the process by which a client is determined appropriate and eligible for admission to a particular program.
- **Intake** – Understand the administrative and initial assessment procedures for admission to a program and to provide initial direction for treatment planning.
- **Orientation** – Able to describe to the client the general nature and goals of the treatment program, rules governing client conduct, the hours that services are available and the treatment costs to be borne by the client as well as the client's rights.

- **Treatment planning** – Understand how to create goals and treatment plans that will address the short term and long term issues associated with substance use disorders in a manner that bring healthy improvement to the patient/ client. Know how to work with the patient/ client to decide on a treatment process and the sources to be utilized.
- **Cognitive limitations that can be comorbid to substance use** – Understand that many individuals who develop substance use disorders are also diagnosed with mental health disorders and vice versa.

Occupation-Specific Competencies

On-the-Job Training is hands-on instruction completed at work to learn the core competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation. Common types of OJT include job shadowing, mentorship, cohort-based training, assignment-based project evaluation and discussion-based training.

- **Create and monitor treatment plans** – Understand how to create individualized plans containing client's goals, activities, and objectives of client care in a timely and professional manner.
- **Assist with screening, intake, orientation, and assessments** – Know how to provide appropriate screening for admission to addiction services. Participates in comprehensive bio-psycho-social assessment of patient. Assesses family dynamics and implications for successful treatment.
- **Provide group, individual, and family support training and counseling** – Ability to plan, guide, teach, and manage counseling efforts to ensure health objectives are met effectively.
- **Utilize crisis de-escalation skills** – Understand a variety of psychosocial techniques aimed at reducing violent and/or disruptive behavior.
- **Administer drug screening tests** – In some instances, the counselor may need to know how to personally implement and administer drug screening tests for the patient/ client.
- **Educate about alcohol and drug issues** – Know how to develop, prepare, and provide didactic and interactive education to assist clients, their families, and concerned persons in understanding the disease of addiction and other co-occurring mood, thought, or personality disorders. For client education, know how to provide information to clients who are receiving or seeking counseling concerning alcohol and other drug abuse and the available services and resources.

- **Complete medical documentation** – Provide appropriate authorizations of client needs, family needs, and agency requests. Understand how to conduct reporting and record keeping practices which means charting the results of the assessment and treatment plan and writing reports, progress notes, discharge summaries, and other client-related data.
- **Coordinate care and consult with other medical professionals** – Understand how to coordinate care with other recovery and community-based service providers, engage case management activity by sending referrals, completing documentation necessary to secure services, and maintain chart compliance. Know how to communicate with other professionals in regard to client treatment and services to assure comprehensive, quality of care for the client/ patient.
- **Offer family and natural supports** – Able to include family and natural supports in the client's treatment, per the client's preference.
- **Tailor treatment interventions to stage of change** – Know that clients can be at different levels of readiness in the behavior-change process. The model suggests that changing a person's health behaviors involves moving through five cognitive stages and provides direction on how to adapt treatment based on the client's current stage of change.
- **Utilize milieu-based therapies** – Understand and be able to employ milieu-based therapies as they are a safe, structured, group treatment method for mental health issues using everyday activities and a conditioned environment to help people in community settings.
- **Follow laws, rules, and statutes that apply to operating a substance use disorder licensed treatment facility** – Understand that there are specific laws that govern the ability to provide substance use disorder treatment.

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