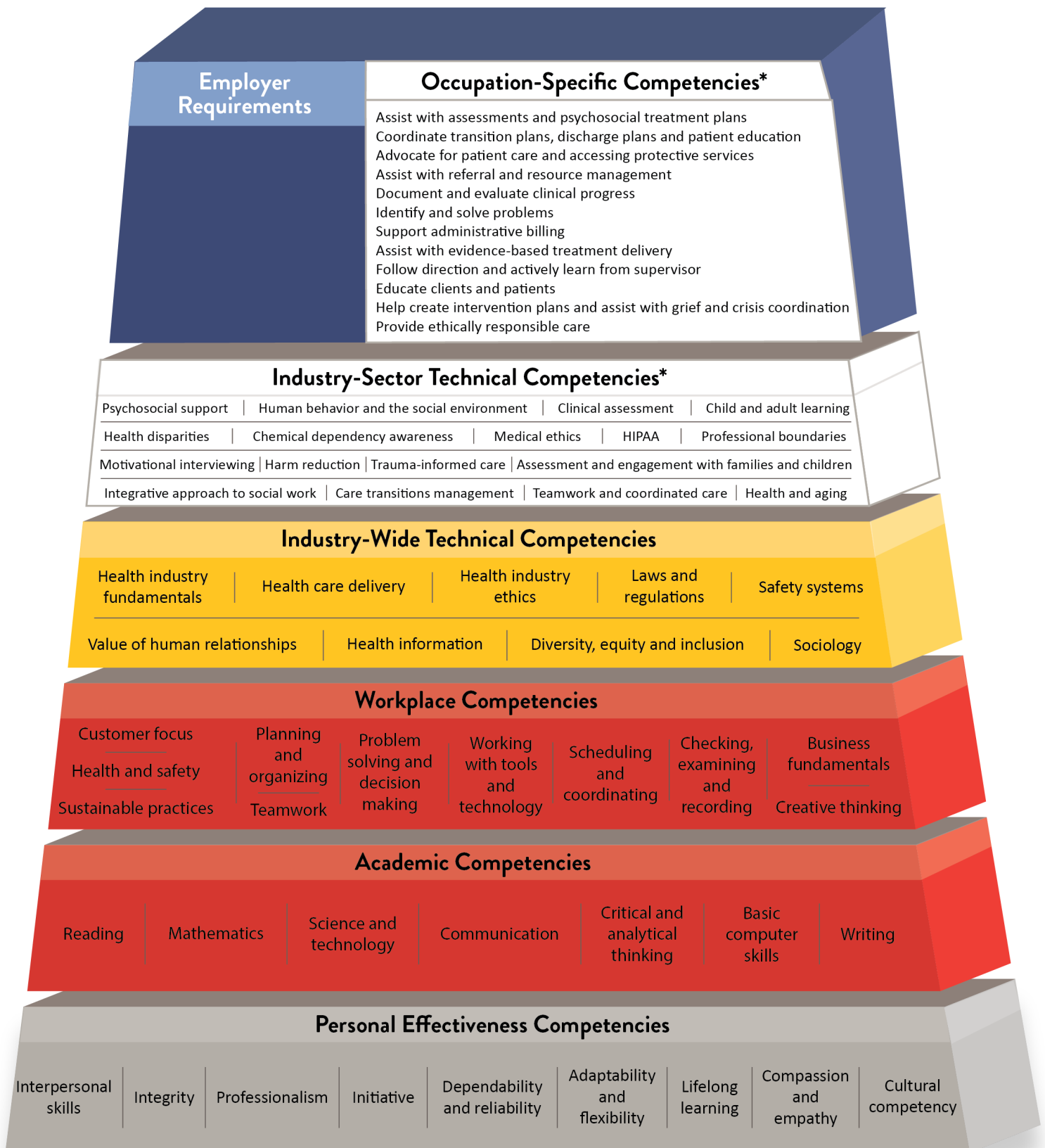


Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline

Competency Model for Health Care Services

Occupation: Healthcare Social Worker



Based on: Fundamentals of Health Care Competency Model, Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor, September 2018. For more detailed information about competency model creation and sources, visit dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/health-care-services.



Competency Model for Healthcare Social Worker

Healthcare Social Worker – A specialized professional within the field of social work who focuses on addressing the psychosocial and emotional aspects of healthcare. The individual in this role provides individuals, families, and groups with support – including emotional, financial, spiritual, and social support – needed to cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses. These individuals work in healthcare settings such as hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, hospice facilities, or rehabilitation centers. Individuals in this role must follow the rules of the Minnesota Board of Social Work regarding licensure.

*Pipeline recommends the Industry-sector Technical Competencies as formal training opportunities (provided through related instruction) and the Occupation-specific competencies as on-the-job 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.

- **Psychosocial support** – A range of services designed to help individuals considering their mental and emotional state contextualized in their environment and circumstances.
- **Human behavior and the social environment** – Understands that humans interact with their social environments in different ways. Knowledge of theories of the social environments and how they impact, and are impacted by, human behavior.
- **Integrative approach to social work** – Understands the use of a holistic approach in the practice of social work that informs the context for intervention on individual, environmental, and societal impacts.
- **Motivational interviewing** – Understands this client-centered approach used to change behaviors. The approach uses the basic interaction techniques and skills of open questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summary reflections.

- **Harm reduction** – Understands an evidence-based approach that emphasizes engaging directly with people who use drugs to prevent overdose and infectious disease transmission. Knows how to improve physical, mental, and social wellbeing and how to offer low barrier options for accessing healthcare services, including substance use and mental health disorder treatment.
- **Trauma-informed care** – Knowledge about how trauma impacts the physical, mental, behavioral, social, and spiritual areas for the patient and how to align care with the unique circumstances of the patient.
- **Care transitions management** – Understands how to work with other professionals in the health care setting and outside of the facility to set up, plan and implement care transitions for the patient or client.
- **Teamwork and coordinated care** – Coordinates referrals and resources to ensure access to services identified in a treatment plan by following established procedures, addressing gaps in care, accessing additional resources to maximize patient self-sufficiency for a holistic care approach.
- **Chemical dependency awareness** – Knowledge and experience with patients with chemical dependency and understanding of the impact to a patient’s mental and physical health.
- **HIPAA** – Understand the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) for standards for electronic health record transactions, privacy, and security.
- **Medical ethics** – Understand principles of medical ethics and how they apply in professional standards.
- **Assessment and engagement with families and children** – Demonstrates a mastery of interaction skills within the intake, assessment, treatment, evaluation, and termination process with children, adolescents and families.
- **Health and aging** – Ability to work with older adults to provide support to empower and enhance quality of life as they face mental health concerns on aging, long-term care and well-being.
- **Clinical assessment** – Understands the importance of case management and providing mental health supports that are customized to best suit the strengths and abilities of the individual or group.

- **Professional boundaries** – Understand what professional boundaries are and identify poor ones or a lack of boundaries. Learn how to create healthy boundaries from the very beginning and maintain them through the duration of the relationship.
- **Health disparities** – Understand that people’s health and emotional well being is impacted by access to health care services and that a lack of access can have negative impact on overall health.
- **Human behavior and the social environment** – Understand the contributors and characteristics of human behavior and how the social environment in which individuals live in society impacts and affects an individual’s behavior.
- **Child and adult learning** – Have basic understanding of how children and adults learn in order to provide education on a multitude of resources for patients and clients.

Occupation-Specific Competencies

On-the-Job Training (OJT) 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.

- **Assist with assessments and psychosocial treatment plans** – Assists with assessments that address bio-psycho-social issues for health-specific needs which results in the formation of individualized treatment plans of care.
- **Coordinate transition plans, discharge plans and patient education** – Provides support and information to patients and families regarding transition and discharge plans.
- **Advocate for patient care and accessing protective services** – Demonstrates awareness of patient rights and ethical decision making. Assures appropriate reporting of vulnerability or suspected abuse as mandated by law.
- **Assist with referral and resource management** – Understands and recommends prudent utilization of all resources available to the patient, families, and caregivers to help make informed decisions.
- **Help create intervention plans, and assist with grief and crisis coordination** – Able to help with formulating, developing and implementing interventions including grief and crisis intervention, individual, family and/or group therapies.

- **Document and evaluate clinical progress** – Understand team support of client progress and intervention while being able to keep record of intervention milestones and setbacks and record keeping that can assess how progress is or is not moving forward.
- **Identify and solve problems** – Able to identify a mental health problem, weigh alternative options for intervention and decide how to manage and implement a mental health solution, then evaluate the effectiveness of the solution over time.
- **Support administrative billing** – Depending on area of practice, may need to know how to help with coordinating documentation for Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance to bill properly and pay for procedures for patients/clients.
- **Assist with evidence-based treatment delivery** – Understand how to use research-based treatments that are tailored to meet people’s needs, preferences and cultural expectations.
- **Follow direction and actively learn from supervisor** – Able to actively listen, ask questions, respond respectfully and act on what is learned from supervisor.
- **Educate clients and patients** – Understand how to teach clients and patients about many different topics such as how to access community resources, healthcare best practices, disease prevention, healthcare promotion and improvement, etc.
- **Provide ethically responsible care** – Abide by the social work code of ethics which is a set of rules and guidelines that assist social workers in providing effective, respectful, and ethical services. This is crucial for maintaining the profession’s integrity and ensuring the well-being of the communities they serve.

Updated February 2025