

**SKILL COMPETENCIES FOR PROFESSIONALS AND
PARAPROFESSIONALS IN VIRGINIA SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS
WITH AUTISM ACROSS THE LIFESPAN**

DEVELOPED BY



Revised September 15, 2010

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To guide best practice in supporting individuals with autism across the state, the Virginia Autism Council developed the attached list of competencies for professional and paraprofessional staff in all fields of service delivery. These competencies are based upon consistent findings from the research community. Decades of research have provided a number of evidence-based strategies effective for the treatment, education, and support of individuals with autism in school and community-based settings. Additionally, as the research literature continues to expand, there are a number of emerging practices that have been identified. Therefore, these competencies are based on the best and most promising practices that have been identified through research as critical to address the needs of individuals with autism.

The Virginia Autism Council believes that paraprofessionals and professionals must respect the individual's and family's beliefs, traditions, values and cultures when supporting people with autism. It is imperative that hopes, dreams and desires drive program development. The Virginia Autism Council intends for the competencies to be used within a person-centered approach, keeping the individual at the center of all program planning and development.

In recent years, the term autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has been widely used and accepted. This term refers to autism spectrum disorders as identified in the DSM-IV-TR (previous to the proposed revisions to the DSM-V); as such, autism includes Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified. For the purpose of this document, the term "autism" will be used to refer to all the disability categories on the autism spectrum.

What are the skill competencies?

The skill competencies were developed to guide personnel development of professionals and paraprofessionals supporting individuals with autism and their families across the lifespan from early intervention through adult services in the Commonwealth of Virginia. These competencies focus on assessment of individual needs and program planning rather than on the diagnosis of autism. This list is not comprehensive of all competencies that professionals should have. Instead, the list includes those competencies that are specific, unique, and/or critical to successfully serving individuals with an autism spectrum disorder.

What is the intended use of the skill competencies?

The competencies can be used in several ways to:

1. assist providers in identifying their areas of need for professional development;
2. guide development of a program that would strictly address the needs of people who plan on working with children and adults with autism;
3. guide the development of university-based classes to augment existing programs;
4. serve as a framework to incorporate into existing programmatic instruction, if universities or others preparing paraprofessionals or professionals consider additional program or class development not practical; and
5. guide training and staff development for direct service staff that serve individuals with autism.

The skill competencies are intended to be referenced by their respective sections for specific programming and informational uses or as a comprehensive glance toward the professional development of professionals working with individuals with autism. Each section contains statements organized under a common focus area and can provide competencies on a variety of professional levels.

The eight competency areas are:

1. General Autism Competency Statements
2. Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competency Statements
3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements

4. Communication Competency Statements
5. Social Skills Competency Statements
6. Behavior Competency Statements
7. Sensory Motor Development Competency Statements
8. Independence and Aptitude Competency Statements

There are two types of competencies: those that are knowledge based and those specialized skills professionals and paraprofessionals need in practice. Some competencies require that the professional or paraprofessional have a particular knowledge unique to serving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders¹. Knowledge competencies are in bold type and have a /K/ immediately after the number of the competency. However, the majority of the competencies require specialized skills that the professional and paraprofessional must be able to demonstrate in practice. These competencies have an /S/ immediately after the competency number. The competencies are divided into eight areas and focus on quality beyond basic compliance standards. The competency statements include many strategies and identify many characteristics, but these strategies and characteristics are not exhaustive and there is not an expectation that each strategy and characteristic is pertinent to every individual with autism. Nevertheless, paraprofessionals and professionals who serve individuals with autism should be competent in all areas.

Who should demonstrate these skill competencies?

It is important to note that no competency area is deemed more important than another area. It is imperative that the competencies be considered as a whole and that all competencies are given equal weight when designing programs for teaching paraprofessionals and professionals about autism. However, the statements address essential competencies at four different skill and experiential levels. Within the education field paraprofessionals and other education professionals are most likely to work with individuals with autism and their families. The title of a direct service provider can denote any one of the many professional areas within the early intervention or adult service environments. For example, a direct service provider could be providing support similar to that of a paraprofessional in an on-site job location whereas another direct service provider could be responsible for programming and instructional organization for an individual similar to that of a master professional within the field of education. The four levels are:

1. _____
¹ Any reference to autism or autism spectrum disorders in this document refers to all of the Pervasive Developmental Disorders as described in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR). Currently, these include Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Asperger Disorder, Rett Syndrome, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder.

1. Paraprofessionals/Direct Service Staff - Refers to anyone directly supporting infants, children, or adults in a non-professional capacity. These might be respite providers, assistants in educational settings, or staff in community-based day or residential support programs.
2. Professional/Direct Service Staff - Refers to direct service professional staff within their first-to-third years of practice. These might be new teachers, counselors, psychologists, therapists, and others, as well as people experienced in their professions, but who have limited knowledge of autism.
3. Master Professional/Direct Service Staff - Refers to direct service professionals who have worked within their domain and with people with autism for more than three years. These might be teachers, counselors, psychologists, therapists, or others with experience and training in supporting people with autism.
4. Advanced Degree/Program Developer/Specialist - Refers to those individuals who have pursued additional certification or degrees (for example Sensory Integration Certification, Board Certified Behavior Analyst, etc.) and / or those who have extensive experience and training pertinent to supporting people with autism. These might include teachers, counselors, psychologists, therapists, behavioral specialists, and others. Expertise or specialization in one particular area such as sensory motor development is not indicative of expertise or specialization in all areas.

Transdisciplinary Teams

For the purposes of this document the term “team” refers to the transdisciplinary team as explained in this section. The transdisciplinary team is critical to the success of plan implementation. Transdisciplinary team members provide information, support each other’s efforts, and fill roles as needed. For example, an individual might need a communication system, but does not receive speech and language services. In this case the parents, special educator, and occupational therapist from the transdisciplinary team might work to develop a communication system. In this document, whenever there is a reference to a transdisciplinary team, we include all individuals who support and care for and about the individual with autism. We also intend that this be a general document that is applicable across contexts and includes all paraprofessional and professional staff who support individuals with autism.

The Virginia Autism Council strongly endorses the perspective that individuals with autism, their parents, and other family members be an integral part of the person’s life and need to be included as an ongoing, involved part of the collaborative and transdisciplinary program planning team. However, this document does not presume to provide competencies for family members, although we expect that professionals will communicate regularly with family members and will share and support the use of the strategies that have been found effective for individuals. Likewise, we hope that professionals accept the information regarding effective practices that families

have discovered outside of professional contexts. It should be noted that these statements might serve as a reference or checklist for parents and family members when working with collaborative teams of professionals and paraprofessionals.

Who developed these skill competencies?

The competency subcommittee of the Virginia Autism Council developed these competencies. This council is comprised of people in Virginia who are knowledgeable about autism from a personal and/or professional point of view. Members of the council represent:

- Commonwealth Autism Services (CAS),
- Virginia Autism Resource Center (VARC),
- the Training and Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC),
- the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE),
- Universities in Virginia (including George Mason University, Virginia Commonwealth University, The University of Virginia, and Mary Washington University),
- the Partnership for People with Disabilities,
- Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS),
- Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services,
- Virginia's Chapter of TASH,
- Some school divisions in Virginia including Chesterfield County Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools,
- Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP),
- Parents of children with autism,
- Individuals with autism.

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Review process

Numerous review processes were developed to consider feedback from experts within Virginia and from the greater community of autism experts. The entire Virginia Autism Council had the opportunity to contribute to and respond to the competencies. Additionally, experts in those areas reviewed each of the competency areas. For example, a registered occupational therapist (OT-R) reviewed the sensory-motor competency section and Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) reviewed the communication competency section. Below is a list of individuals who assisted us by providing feedback and reviewing this document:

Pasquale J. Accardo, M.D, Virginia Commonwealth University
Barbara Becker-Cottrill, Ed.D., Marshall University
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The following individuals provided feedback on this document through consultant groups across Virginia:

Bradford Hulcher, Parent of a person with autism; Jo Read, Ph.D., Director of Special Education; Jessica Philips, BCBA; Rachel Reynolds, SLP; Kate Besley, Public School Counselor; Amy B. Petin, Special Education Teacher; Jody Davieds, BCBA; Staci Carr, Executive Director, Private Agency; Amy McCarty, Instructional Assistant; John Rosch, Transition Specialist; Andrew Yusi; Sheri Leddy, Special Education Coordinator; Judy Ericksen, Occupational Therapist; Roger Younker, Staff Development Specialist, Mental Retardation Services; Tracey Bosanoe, Special Education Teacher; Cheryl Mendis, Autism Teacher; Nancy T. Harlan, Speech-Language Pathologist; MinnieTom H. Myer, Parent of person with autism; Bobbi Bartley, Occupational Therapist; Marcia Kennedy, Behavioral Consultant; Amy Schwiteboer, Transition Representative; Greg Jacob, Principal; Karen Jackson, Parent of a person with autism; Kay Oliver, Parent of a person with autism; Ron Bowers, Autism Teacher; Jessica Herd, Mental Retardation Case Manager;

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Resources

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AUTISM ACROSS THE LIFESPAN IN VIRGINIA**

DEVELOPED BY THE VIRGINIA AUTISM COUNCIL
Revised, September 15, 2010

General Autism Competencies

| 1. General Autism Competencies Statements | Para- professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1.1K Understands the characteristics and diagnosis of autism as defined by the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and definition/description of the Virginia Department of Education. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.1S Lists and explains the defining characteristics of autism (Communication, patterns of stereotypical behavior, socialization and social skill development) and the impact on the individual. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.2S Lists and explains the associated characteristics commonly present in autism (ex: difficulties in sensory processing, motor skills, theory of mind, and imitation) and the impact on the individual. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.3S Lists and explains the associated cognitive characteristics and learning styles commonly present in autism (ex: difficulties in executing functioning, attending, planning, abstract thinking, problem solving) and the impact on the individual. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.4S Describes typical child development (ex: communication, sensory motor, cognitive, behavior, and social skill development). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 1. General Autism Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1.1.5S Describes the continuum of Autism Spectrum Disorders and the basic differences between each including Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Asperger Disorder, Retts Disorder, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.6S Describes the range of possible behaviors across the lifespan. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.7S Describes potential courses of development and outcomes in individuals with autism from infancy to adulthood. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.1.8S Describes the current understanding of etiology and prevalence of autism. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.2K Understands the impact of common medical issues (ex: seizure disorders, chronic otitis media, chronic constipation or diarrhea) and treatments (ex. psychotropic medications and possible side effects, use of special diets) for persons with autism. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.2.1S Assesses and communicates critical health related information to team members, especially collaborating with parents and medical personnel. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.2.2S Identifies health-related resources available to persons with autism. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.2.3S Documents medications that individuals are taking and the side effects they might experience. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.2.4S Develops and teaches the use of communication tools to assist the person in self-reporting health related concerns. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.2.5S Differentiates between self-inflicted injuries and potential abuse/neglect related injuries. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 1. General Autism Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1.2.6S Suggests and requests adaptive equipment and assistive technology when appropriate. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.3K Understands the implications of ‘dual’ diagnoses (autism and any other diagnosis from the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and co-morbidity. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.3.1S Lists behaviors that could indicate the presence of an additional mental health or disability diagnosis. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.3.2S Discusses concerns and shares observations regarding possible additional diagnoses with team, which includes parents, when dual diagnosis is suspected. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.3.3S Implements behavioral and mental health recommendations given to the team by specialists such as psychiatrists or psychologists. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 1.3.4S Shares reports of behavioral and symptomatic changes to medical professionals who are supervising care for persons with autism and co-morbid disorder(s). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competencies

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1K Understands the importance of the environment and provides a setting that is safe, structured, and promotes independence. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.1.1S Provides safe environments that are free of hazards. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.1.2S Provides a positive climate that promotes respect for the individual. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1.3S Structures the physical environment and materials so the individual can complete activities and routines independently. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.1.4S Provides environments that are organized visually (ex: color coding, labeling, pictures) to assist the individual in understanding expectations. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.1.5S Provides a distinct space for the individual to engage in a quiet, calming, or sensory based activities. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2K Understands and implements a variety of visual supports and strategies to promote comprehension and independence. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.1S Designs and implements meaningful visual supports and strategies that cross all life settings and are based on individual assessment. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.2S Implements a variety of visual supports and strategies to communicate information and expectations and increase independence (ex: break cards, rule cards, narratives, and scripts). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.3S Implements a daily schedule of activities that is individualized by length (ex: full day, part day) and type (ex: objects, photos, icons, words). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.4S Implements mini-schedules to help the person participate in the environment and complete activities. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.5S Uses visual supports and strategies to help the individual prepare for and complete transitions. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.6S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement visual supports and strategies. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.2.7S Uses evidence based practices (ex: modeling, prompting, shaping, and cueing) to teach the individual how to use the visual supports. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2.3.1S Observes behaviors using objective measures and criteria, and records data. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| 2.3.2S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to promote communication skills in various settings. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|---|--|---|---|---|

Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competencies

| 3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 3.1K Understands how to assess an individual's strengths and weaknesses and determine appropriate goals. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.1S Identifies and uses appropriate formal and informal assessment tools to evaluate the individual's strengths, needs, interests, and learning style. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.2S Solicits information from all members of the individual's team. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.3S Integrates evaluation results from all areas to determine goal and program recommendations. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.4S Shares evaluation results with the individual, family, professionals, and paraprofessionals. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.5S Develops goals and objectives that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the individual's present level of performance • Observable and measurable • Age appropriate • Reflective of the desires of the individual and family | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.6S Develops goals that address core deficit areas related to autism (ex: social skills communication, attention, imitation, play/leisure, sensory-motor, and self-regulation). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 3.1.7S Develops goals that lead to the increase of positive behaviors and the reduction of problem behavior. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.8S Develops goals that lead to immediate and long term independence. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.9S Develops goals designed to target generalization and maintenance of skills across programs and community and school settings and also in the home. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.10S Considers and plans for transition needs of individuals (ex: early intervention to preschool, preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, high school to post secondary activities). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.1.11S Describes the need for early intervention and the provision of intensive and explicit instruction. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2K Understands and implements intervention strategies and supports to address the individual's goals. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.1S Selects and designs intervention strategies based on the abilities, learning style, and interests of the individual. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.2S Provides intervention through a full range of formats (ex: one-to-one, small group, school/community interactions, and peer-mediated interactions). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.3S Implements a wide variety of strategies and supports to effectively address the many needs of the individual. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.4S Implements strategies and supports that are evidence-based or promising practices. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 3.2.5S Uses strategies and supports that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet individuals’ academic and adaptive needs in the core curriculum • Promote the development of life skills across all domains • Promote communication and social interaction • Facilitate the development of healthy relationships • Encourage generalization and maintenance of skills across programs and settings | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.6S Implements prompting strategies and hierarchies that promote high rates of successful performance. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.7S Provides appropriate reinforcement contingent on behavior and emphasizes the use of naturally occurring reinforcement. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.8S Implements explicit instructional methods that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are clear and concise • Break skills into small teachable parts • Focus on systematic presentation of new skills | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.9S Implements instruction that promotes active engagement and maximizes opportunities for learning. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.10S Implements strategies and supports across all settings and with fidelity. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.11S Modifies and/or accommodates task requirements to address individual’s strengths and needs. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.12S Plans, communicates, and instructs family and professionals on strategies needed to access home, educational, work, and community environments. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.2.13S Implements adaptive equipment and assistive technology options needed (ex: picture symbols, computer, pencil grip, electronic devices). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 3.2.14S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement appropriate components of the intervention program. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and instruction. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.3.1S Assesses progress toward goals on a consistent and regular basis (ex: weekly) using objective measures and criteria. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.3.2S Analyzes and reviews data with the educational team. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.3.3S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify program content, presentation, and interventions. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4K Understands the need and benefit of a team to develop programs. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4.1S Shares useful and pertinent information with family regularly and provides opportunities for families to respond. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4.2S Respects the needs, desires, and interests of the individual and families and incorporates into goals and intervention. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4.3S Includes the individual as an active participant and contributor to program planning. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4.4S Collaborates with the team and has regularly scheduled meetings to address needs and problem solve using data as appropriate. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4.5S Implements and follows-up on team decisions and communicates results immediately. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 3.4.6S Provides appropriate support and training to paraprofessionals or direct service staff. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 3.4.7S Collaborates with the team to effectively plan for transition needs of individuals (ex: early intervention to preschool, preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, high school to post secondary activities). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Communication Competencies

*The specialist and team leader for communication competencies is typically a Speech/Language Pathologist.

| 4. Communication Competencies Statements* | Para-professional /Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 4.1K Understands components of communication and its impact on the day-to-day experience of an individual with autism and how to assess skills for intervention planning | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.1.1S Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze both receptive and expressive communication (ex: verbal, nonverbal, content, speech, semantics, and pragmatics). | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.1.2S Determines the functions (ex: request, comment, question, negate) and frequency of communication across all life environments. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.1.3S Determines the form of communication (ex: verbal, gestures, visuals) and considers augmentative communication options that are based on individual need and strengths. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 4. Communication Competencies Statements* | Para-professional /Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 4.1.4S Solicits information from all members of the individual’s collaborative program development team (anyone who supports, works with, or provides consultation). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2K Understands a variety of strategies to increase an individual’s communication abilities. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.1S Designs and implements a meaningful communication program that crosses all life settings and is based on individual assessment. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.2S Implements programs throughout all daily activities maximizing communication opportunities. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.3S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach communication (ex: modeling, prompting, shaping, NET and narratives). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.4S Implements environmental arrangement, routines, and motivational activities to teach communication. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.5S Supports vocabulary development within a contextual framework. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.6S Implements pragmatic skill strategies using the individual’s learning style. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.7S Provides opportunities for and offers choices across the day. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.8S Provides and is able to instruct others on the team how to provide adequate processing (“wait”) time when communicating. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.9S Supports development of receptive communication within a contextual framework. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 4. Communication Competencies Statements* | Para-professional /Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 4.2.10S Based on the function and frequency of communication, teaches individuals how to communicate for a variety of reasons, to a variety of people, and in a variety of settings. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.11S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement the communication program. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.2.12S Implements appropriate augmentative communication interventions such as object or picture exchange systems, voice output communication devices, gesture, signs, text, among others to promote or enhance communication. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.3.1S Observes communication behaviors using objective measures and criteria, and records data. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.3.2S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to promote communication skills in various settings. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4.3.3S Assesses and revises communication program to match factors such as contextual fit, values of team, affordability, and portability. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Social Skill Competencies

| 5. Social Skill Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional /Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 5.1K Understands social skill development and the unique social skill deficits and challenges associated with autism and how to assess skills for intervention planning. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.1.1S Assesses social skill strengths and needs across environments on an ongoing basis. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.1.2S Assesses skills related to understanding and regulating emotions (ex: identify emotions in self and others, self-management). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.1.3S Assesses skills related to social interactions and reciprocation (ex: joint attention, sharing, turn taking). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.1.4S Assesses play and leisure skills. | | | | |
| 5.1.5S Solicits information from all members of the individual's team. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2K Understands appropriate strategies to increase an individual's social skills. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.1S In collaboration with the individual with autism, uses circles of support or other techniques to identify their personal relationships (ex: family, friendship, acquaintance, romantic, and bullying). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.2S Develops social skills goals and objectives that are: appropriate, observable, measurable, and functional. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.3S Plans for generalization and maintenance of social skills in a variety of settings with a variety of people including other professionals, friends, and family members. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.4S Teaches positive social skills in natural environments, general education and community settings. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 5. Social Skill Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional /Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 5.2.5S Uses specialized social skills strategies (ex: anger and stress management techniques, social narratives, mentoring, shaping, natural environment teaching, video-modeling, integrated play groups, etc.) to teach social skills, and to foster social interest and interaction. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.6S Teaches individuals appropriate behavior for different social contexts and relationships across settings (ex: when interacting with strangers and intimate significant others). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.7S Implements age appropriate social skills for play, recreation, and community activities. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.8S Teaches individuals how to interact and reciprocate for a variety of reasons, with a variety of people, and in a variety of settings. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.9S Supports emotional understanding and development in a contextual framework. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.10S Educates and trains peers to interact appropriately and effectively with individuals with autism. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.11S Provides instruction, support, and guidance to the individual in identifying and dealing with manipulative, coercive, and/or abusive relationships. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.12S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals and family to implement specialized social skill strategies in a variety of settings. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.13S In collaboration with the family, teaches self-advocacy and awareness of autism. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.2.14S Educates paraprofessionals, professionals and family on the concepts of social integration and the characteristics of autism. | | | ✓ | ✓ |

| 5. Social Skill Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 5.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.3.1S Observes social behaviors using objective measures and criteria, and records data. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5.3.2S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to promote positive social skills. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Behavior Competencies

| 6. Behavior Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 6.1K Understands factors that influence behavior and the components of behavior analysis (antecedents, behavior, and consequences) and how to provide positive behavior intervention. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.1S Identifies and operationalizes target behaviors for assessment and intervention. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.2S Assists team members, including family, in prioritizing areas of concern. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.3S Observes and documents behaviors using objective measures and criteria. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 6. Behavior Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>6.1.4S Completes functional behavior assessment to determine function of behavior and maintaining antecedents and consequences. FBA should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect (structured interviews, checklists, rating scales) and direct (structured ABC data collection) measures of data collection • Analysis of collected data • Development and testing of hypothesis | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.5S Identifies individualized reinforcement preferences using indirect and direct measures on an ongoing basis. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 6. Behavior Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>6.1.6S Develops and implements multi-component intervention plans based on the results of the FBA that emphasize prevention and are socially valid. Plans should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of setting event and antecedent interventions (ex: proactive changes to prevent the behavior from occurring) • Teaching of alternative replacement, coping, and general skills • Implementation of positive consequences to increase the use of the new positive behaviors • Implementation of schedules of reinforcement and differential reinforcement to increase use of positive behaviors • Description of thinning of a reinforcement schedule as appropriate • Description of strategies for teaching and promoting desired behaviors • Implementation of reactive and crisis management strategies to support the individual if and when the problem behavior occurs | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.7S Implements all components of the behavior intervention plan with consistency in a variety of complex environments under natural circumstances. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.8S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals and family to implement the behavior intervention plan in a variety of settings. | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.1.9S Educates paraprofessionals, professionals and family on the concepts of factors that influence behavior and the components of behavior analysis. | | | ✓ | ✓ |

| 6. Behavior Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 6.2K Understands how to evaluate the effectiveness of a behavior plan reliably and effectively. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.2.1S Collects data to evaluate the plan's effectiveness in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreasing the problem behavior Increasing the alternative and positive behaviors Increasing quality of life outcomes Generalizing skills to new environments | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.2.2S Evaluates data and reports on the plan's effectiveness and revise as needed in consultation with the team. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6.2.3S Develops a plan to generalize behavior to other persons and settings. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Sensory Motor Development Competencies

*The Specialist in the sensory motor development area may be an occupational, physical, or speech therapist who has received continuing education in the area of sensory motor processing

| 7. Sensory Motor Development Competencies* | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 7.1K Understands the sensory systems, sensory processing, and sensory motor development. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.1.1S Describes the seven senses (visual, auditory, oral, olfactory, tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular) and the varying patterns of hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity to sensory input. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 7. Sensory Motor Development Competencies* | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 7.1.2S Describes the relationship between sensory motor systems and behavior (ex: demonstrating stereotypical behaviors such as rocking or hand flapping, or triggering fight, flight, or freeze responses). | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.1.3S Describes the relationship between sensory processing and functional performance in activities of daily living (ex: work, academic, and play/leisure activities). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.1.4S Describes the relationship between sensory processing and motor planning and coordination. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.2K Understands the implications or influences of sensory processing when developing a comprehensive plan. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.2.1S Identifies behaviors that might indicate the need for a sensory motor assessment. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.2.2S Observes and assesses sensory motor needs across environments. | | | | ✓ |
| 7.2.3S Solicits information from all members of the individual's collaborative program development team (anyone who supports, works with, or provides consultation). | | | | ✓ |
| 7.2.4S Develops a sensory motor intervention plan for all life settings that addresses difficulty with sensory processing and functional performance and is focused on proactive strategies. | | | | ✓ |
| 7.2.5S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and family how to implement the sensory motor intervention plan. | | | | ✓ |
| 7.2.6S Teaches individuals who need sensory supports to self-monitor/self-regulate sensory motor needs and request to have their sensory needs met. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.2.7S Implements sensory motor intervention plan across all environments with fidelity. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 7. Sensory Motor Development Competencies* | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 7.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.3.1S Observes behaviors and collects data using objective measures to evaluate the sensory motor intervention plan. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.3.2S Communicates findings regarding the effectiveness of the sensory motor intervention plan and collaborates with all team members. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7.3.3S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to address sensory motor needs. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Independence and Aptitude Competencies

| 8.Independence and Aptitude Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 8.1K Understands skills needed for short term and long term independence and how to assess skills for intervention planning. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.1.1S Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze functional and life skills related to caring for self, caring for home, participating in the community, and employment. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.1.2S Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze academic skills (ex: literacy, math, science, and social studies). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 8.Independence and Aptitude Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 8.1.3S Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze cognitive skills and learning profiles (ex: attention, processing, organization, problem solving). | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.1.4S Solicits information from all members of the individual's team. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.1.5S Determines generalization of skills across environments and ability to use functionally. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2K Understands a variety of strategies to increase an individual's short term and long term independence in functional and life skills. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2.1S Develops goals that maximize personal independence, meaningful participation in community environments, positive relationships with others, and successful employment. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2.2S Develops an intervention plan for all settings that targets functional and life skills related to caring for self, caring for the home, participating in the community, and employment with the team that directly targets individual needs. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2.3S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach functional and life skills (ex: modeling, prompting, shaping, discrete trial instruction, natural environment teaching, and task analysis). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2.4S Implements the intervention plan across all environments with fidelity. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2.5S Implements programs throughout all daily activities maximizing opportunities for learning. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.2.6S Supports development of functional and life skills within a contextual framework utilizing the natural environment. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 8.Independence and Aptitude Competencies Statements | Para-professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 8.2.7S Implements intervention to specifically teach personal awareness and self-monitoring. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.3K Understands a variety of strategies to increase an individual's cognitive and learning abilities. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.3.1S Develops an intervention plan targeting cognitive and learning skills with the team that is based on individual needs. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.3.2S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach skills needed to improve cognitive and learning abilities (ex: visual supports, narratives, prompting, shaping, and natural environment teaching). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.3.3S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement relevant components of the program. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.4K Understands a variety of strategies to increase an individual's short term and long term independence in academic skills. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.4.1S Develops an intervention plan targeting meaningful academic skills with the team that is based on individual needs. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.4.2S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach academic skills that address the individual's learning style (ex: modeling, prompting, shaping, discrete trial instruction, natural environment teaching, and task analysis). | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.4.3S Supports literacy and math concept development within a contextual framework utilizing real materials. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.4.4S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement relevant components of the program. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.5K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

| 8.Independence and Aptitude Competencies Statements | Para- professional / Direct Services Staff | Professional / Direct Service Staff | Master Professional / Direct Service Staff | Advanced Degree/ Program Developer/ Specialist |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 8.5.1S Observes behaviors using objective measures and criteria, and records data. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 8.5.2S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to promote communication skills in various settings. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |