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

DEVELOPED BY THE VIRGINIA AUTISM COUNCIL
REVISED DECEMBER 2020

SKILL COMPETENCIES FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS IN VIRGINIA SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM ACROSS THE LIFESPAN
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The Virginia Autism Council (VAC) is comprised of self-advocates, professionals, and family members who are passionate about working to advance knowledge and the understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is the only autism-focused interagency council of stakeholders in Virginia.

Introduction

To guide best practice in supporting individuals with autism across the state, the Virginia Autism Council developed this 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 education, and support of individuals with autism in inclusive school, community, and work 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-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. Individuals in schools may be eligible to receive special education services under the category of autism. These individuals may or may not have a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, but qualify for special education services due to impairments in social, communication, and restrictive and repetitive behaviors that have an adverse educational

impact. These skill competencies are not intended to limit the scope of individuals who may benefit from mastery of the skills. It is important to note that many of the skill competencies are valuable in creating supportive and inclusive environments for all people.

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 in the Commonwealth of Virginia; they encompass the lifespan from early intervention through adult services. 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 and guide training and staff development for direct service staff who serve individuals with autism;

2. Guide the development of person-centered services and supports;

3. Guide the development of university-based classes to augment existing programs, and serve as a framework to incorporate the skill competencies into existing programmatic instruction.

Each section contains statements organized under a common focus area and can provide competencies on a variety of professional levels. Strategies listed in the Skills Competencies are designed to support individuals in developing lifelong independence. Some of the wording has been revised from the previous skills competencies to reflect the importance of utilizing evidence-based practices to expand past simply supporting individuals into utilizing strategies to support *and* develop independence.

How are the competencies organized?

The eight competency areas are:
- General Autism Competency Statements
- Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competency Statements

- Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements
- Communication Competency Statements
- Social Skills Competency Statements
- Behavior Competency Statements
- Sensory Integration Development Competency Statements
- Independence 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 Disorders[1]. 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 a /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; however, 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 three 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 three levels are:

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[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-V). This includes individuals with a well- established DSM-IV diagnosis of autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified.

1. Paraprofessionals/Direct Service Staff - Refers to anyone directly working with infants, children, or adults in a paraprofessional 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, including people experienced in their professions, but who have limited knowledge of autism.

3. Master Professional/Program Developer/Specialist - Refers to individuals who have pursued additional certification or degrees or those who have extensive experience and training in supporting individuals with autism. Expertise in one particular area is not indicative of expertise or specialization in all areas. This individual may serve in a direct or supervisory role. Additionally, these professionals may be responsible for providing professional development related to autism and effective strategies.

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 planning and 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, it includes 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 Virginia Autism Council originally developed these competencies in 2010. VAC is comprised of people in Virginia who are knowledgeable about autism from a personal and/or professional point of view. Members of the 2010 council represented:

- 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,
- the Virginia Board 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),
- Autism Society of Central Virginia (ASCV)
- Parents of children with autism,
- Individuals with autism

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2010 Review

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:

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autism; Barbara Shult, Special Education Region Coordinator; Elisabeth T. Bivens, Disability Services Coordinator; Julia Artrip, Parent of a person with autism; and Elizabeth Brammer, Director of Early Childhood Intervention Services.

2020 Review

Resources

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Revised December 2020

General Autism Competencies

1. General Autism Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ 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 from the Virginia Department of Education.	✓	✓	✓
1.1.1S Explains the defining characteristics of autism (e.g., communication, patterns of stereotypical behavior, socialization and social skill development) and the impact on the individual.	✓	✓	✓
1.1.2S Explains the associated characteristics commonly present in autism (e.g., difficulties in sensory processing, motor skills, Theory of Mind, and imitation) and the impact on the individual.	✓	✓	✓
1.1.3S Explains the associated cognitive characteristics and learning styles commonly present in autism (e.g., difficulties in executive functioning, attending, abstract thinking, problem solving) and the impact on the individual.	✓	✓	✓
1.1.4S Describes typical stages of child development in the areas of communication, sensory motor, cognitive, behavior, and social skill development.	✓	✓	✓

1. General Autism Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
1.1.5S Describes the continuum of Autism Spectrum Disorders as outlined in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.	✓	✓	✓
1.1.6S Describes the current research in etiology and prevalence of autism.		✓	✓
1.1.7S In collaboration with the family, teaches self-advocacy and awareness of autism.	✓	✓	✓
1.1.8S Educates and coaches peers to interact appropriately and effectively with individuals with autism.	✓	✓	✓
1.2K Understands the impact of common medical issues (e.g., seizure disorders, chronic otitis media, gastrointestinal issues, sleep disruptions) and treatments (e.g., 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 (per HIPPA regulations) especially collaborating with parents/caregivers and medical personnel.		✓	✓
1.2.2S Identifies health-related resources available to individuals with autism.		✓	✓
1.2.3S Documents medications that individuals are taking, the side effects they might experience or are experiencing, and communicates with team members in accordance with HIPPA regulations.		✓	✓
1.2.4S Develops and coaches on the use of communication tools to assist the individual in self-reporting health-related concerns.		✓	✓

1. General Autism Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
1.2.5S Defines and differentiates between self-injurious behavior injuries and potential abuse/neglect related injuries.	✓	✓	✓
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).	✓	✓	✓
1.3.1S Lists behaviors that could indicate the presence of an additional mental health diagnosis.		✓	✓
1.3.2S Discusses concerns and shares observations with the family/caregiver and the team when dual diagnosis is suspected.		✓	✓
1.3.3S Implements behavioral and mental health recommendations given to the team by specialists (e.g., school counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, physicians).	✓	✓	✓
1.3.4S Shares reports of behavioral changes to medical professionals who are supervising care for the individual with autism.		✓	✓

Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competencies

2. Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
2.1K Understands the importance of the environmental structure 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 (e.g., color coding, labeling, pictures) to assist the individual in understanding expectations and increasing independence.		✓	✓
2.1.5S Provides a distinct space for the individual to engage in a quiet, calming, or sensory based activities and provides instruction to recognize the need, communicate the need and access space or activities independently.		✓	✓
2.2K Understands and teaches a variety of visual supports and strategies to promote comprehension and independence.	✓	✓	✓
2.2.1S Uses evidence-based practices (e.g., modeling, prompting, shaping, cueing) to teach the individual how to use the visual supports.	✓	✓	✓
2.2.2S Designs and teaches meaningful visual supports and strategies that cross all life settings and are based on individual assessment.	✓	✓	✓

2. Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
2.2.3S Teaches a variety of visual supports and strategies to communicate information and expectations and increase independence (e.g., break cards, rule cards, narratives, and scripts).	✓	✓	✓
2.2.4S Teaches a daily schedule of activities that is individualized by length (e.g., full day, part day) and type (e.g., objects, photos, icons, words).	✓	✓	✓
2.2.5S Teaches mini-schedules to help the person participate in the environment and complete activities.	✓	✓	✓
2.2.6S Uses visual supports and strategies to help the individual prepare for and complete transitions.	✓	✓	✓
2.2.7S Coaches paraprofessionals and families to implement visual supports and strategies.		✓	✓
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 Recognizes and communicates trends in data	✓	✓	✓
2.3.3S Uses data and ongoing assessments to inform the team and modify strategies as needed to promote skills in various settings.		✓	✓

Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competencies

3. **Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements**	**Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff**	**Professional/ Direct Service Staff**	**Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist**
3.1K Understands how to assess an individual's strengths and opportunities for growth as a means to determine person-centered goals.		✓	✓
3.1.1S Identifies and uses appropriate formal assessment tools to evaluate the individual's strengths, needs, interests, and learning style.		✓	✓
3.1.2S Identifies and uses appropriate 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 service providers to determine goal and program recommendations.		✓	✓
3.1.4S Shares evaluation results with the individual, family, professionals, and paraprofessionals to develop shared learning targets.		✓	✓
3.1.5S Develops standards-based goals and objectives that are: • Based on the individual's present level of performance; • Observable, measurable, and achievable; • Age-relevant; • Includes academic, social, and adaptive goals; • Reflective of the desires of the individual and family.		✓	✓

3. **Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements**	**Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff**	**Professional/ Direct Service Staff**	**Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist**
3.1.6S Develops standards-based goals that address core deficit areas related to autism (e.g., communication, joint attention, imitation, play/leisure, sensory-motor, and self-regulation).		✓	✓
3.1.7S Develops standards-based goals that address secondary deficit areas related to autism (e.g., executive functioning skills, working independently, social skills, and perspective taking skills).		✓	✓
3.1.8S Develops goals that lead to the increase of positive behaviors and the reduction of interfering behavior(s).		✓	✓
3.1.9S Develops standards-based and behavior goals that lead to greater immediate and maximum long-term independence.		✓	✓
3.1.10S Develops goals designed to target generalization and maintenance of skills across programs, community, school, and home settings.		✓	✓
3.1.11S Considers and plans for transition supports by incorporating student profiles based on interests, long-term goals, and needs across the lifespan: • Early intervention to preschool • Preschool to elementary school • Elementary to middle school • Middle to high school • High school to post-secondary activities		✓	✓

3. **Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements**	**Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff**	**Professional/ Direct Service Staff**	**Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist**
3.1.12S Describes the need for the provision of intensive and explicit instruction based on transition period: • Early intervention to preschool • Preschool to elementary school • Elementary to middle school • Middle to high school • High school to post-secondary activities		✓	✓
3.1.13S Designs an ongoing portfolio of an individual's needs and interests to support transitions across the lifespan (including, but not limited to: I'm Determined Tools, Discovery ME! Tools, Profile of a Virginia Graduate, Applied Studies Curriculum Map, Comprehensive Autism Planning Tool (CAPS)).		✓	✓
3.2K Understands and implements the Universal Design for Learning framework to plan for learner variability when selecting instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments.	✓	✓	✓
3.2.1S Identifies instructional and environmental goals that allow for high expectations and access to quality learning experiences.		✓	✓
3.2.2S Evaluates the instructional and environmental demands within the current learning or work environment to reduce or eliminate barriers.		✓	✓
3.2.3S Selects and implements multiple ways for engagement that incorporate an individuals' interests, providing a challenge where appropriate, and motivates them to learn new skills.	✓	✓	✓
3.3K Understands and implements evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and supports to address an individual's goals.	✓	✓	✓

3. **Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements**	**Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff**	**Professional/ Direct Service Staff**	**Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist**
3.3.1S Selects evidence-based strategies and supports based on the abilities, learning style, needs, and interests of an individual.		✓	✓
3.3.2S Customizes evidence-based strategies and supports based on potential areas of growth, learning style, interests, and needs to assist an individual in accessing their least restrictive environment.		✓	✓
3.3.3S Provides individualized interventions through a variety of formats: • Independent work activities; • Small group activities; • School/community membership opportunities; • Peer-mediated activities; • One-to-one activities; • Home-based activities.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.4S Uses strategies and supports that: • Meet an individuals' academic, social, and adaptive needs by implementing a selected core curriculum; • Promote independent and functional communication; • Promote independent and functional social interactions; • Promote the development of life skills across all domains; • Facilitate the development of healthy relationships; • Encourage generalization and maintenance of skills across settings and programs.	✓	✓	✓

3. Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
3.3.5S Implements individualized prompting strategies and hierarchies that promote high rates of independence across skills, people, and settings.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.6S Provides age-relevant, individualized reinforcement contingent on target behavior(s) and emphasizes the use of naturally occurring reinforcement.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.7S Implements explicit, data-driven instructional methods that: • Are clear and concise; • Are systematically designed; • Break skills into small teachable parts; • Focus on systematic presentation of new skills; • Provide ongoing opportunities to practice and maintain learned skills.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.8S Implements instruction that promotes active engagement and maximizes opportunities for learning.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.9S Implements strategies and supports across all settings with documented fidelity.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.10S Modifies and/or accommodates learning targets to address an individual's self-identified needs, strengths and preferences.	✓	✓	✓
3.3.11S Plans, communicates, and coaches the family and other professionals on strategies needed to independently access home, educational, work, and community environments.		✓	✓

3. **Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements**	**Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff**	**Professional/ Direct Service Staff**	**Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist**
3.3.12S Provides access to needed adaptive equipment and assistive technology options allowing full participation in home, educational, work, and community activities (e.g., communication devices, visual supports, voice to text, text to speech, low to high tech options).	✓	✓	✓
3.3.13S Coaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement components of an individualized intervention program based on settings and activities.		✓	✓
3.4K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and instruction.	✓	✓	✓
3.4.1S Evaluates an individual's progress toward goals on a consistent and regular basis using objective measures and criteria.	✓	✓	✓
3.4.2S Analyzes and reviews data with identified team members to make data-driven decisions.		✓	✓
3.4.3S Modifies an individual's goals, strategies, and interventions across settings, based on data collected from ongoing informal or formal assessments conducted by various team members.		✓	✓
3.5K Understands the need and benefit of a team to develop a collaborative plan for an individual.	✓	✓	✓
3.5.1S Shares useful, pertinent information regularly with family members.		✓	✓
3.5.2S Includes the needs, desires, and interests of an individual and the family members by incorporating feedback into goals and interventions.		✓	✓
3.5.3S Includes the individual as an active participant and contributor to their program planning.		✓	✓

3. **Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competency Statements**	**Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff**	**Professional/ Direct Service Staff**	**Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist**
3.5.4S Schedules regular meetings with team members to review data as a means to problem solve and make changes to individual goals and interventions.		✓	✓
3.5.5S Implements the team decisions and communicates data-driven results immediately to ensure continued measurable progress.	✓	✓	✓
3.5.6S Develops data-based training protocols to support, train, and re-train paraprofessionals or direct service staff, as needed.		✓	✓
3.5.7S Collaborates with the team to effectively plan for transition needs of individuals: • Early intervention to preschool • Preschool to elementary school • Elementary to middle school • Middle to high school • High school to post-secondary activities	✓	✓	✓

Resources:
Virginia's Assistive Technology Consideration Guide
Virginia Assistive Technology Resource Guide
Assistive Technology Tools in Schools

Communication Competencies

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

4. Communication Competencies Statements*	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
4.1K Understands the purpose and functions of communication and their impact on the day-to-day experience of an individual with autism and how to assess communication skills for intervention planning.		✓	✓
4.1.1S Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze both receptive and expressive communication (e.g., verbal, nonverbal, content, speech, semantics, and pragmatics).			✓
4.1.2S Determines the functions (e.g., request, comment, question, negate) and frequency of communication across all life environments.		✓	✓
4.1.3S Determines the form of communication (e.g., verbal, gestures, visuals) and assesses the need for augmentative communication options that are based on individual needs and strengths.		✓	✓
4.1.4S Solicits information from all members of the individual's collaborative 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. Communication Competencies Statements*	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
4.2.2S Implements programs throughout all daily activities maximizing communication opportunities.	✓	✓	✓
4.2.3S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach communication (e.g., modeling, prompting, shaping, Natural Environment Teaching and narratives).	✓	✓	✓
4.2.4S Strategically arranges the environment, routines, and motivational activities to teach communication.	✓	✓	✓
4.2.5S Supports vocabulary development within the context of daily schedules and activities.	✓	✓	✓
4.2.6S Supports different uses of communication based on various social situations.	✓	✓	✓
4.2.7S Embeds opportunities for communication across the day.	✓	✓	✓
4.2.8S Coaches others on how to provide adequate processing ("wait") time when communicating.	✓	✓	✓
4.2.9S Supports the development of receptive communication within the context of daily schedules and activities.	✓	✓	✓
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 Coaches paraprofessionals, professionals, community members, and families to implement the communication program.		✓	✓
4.2.12S Implements appropriate augmentative communication interventions (e.g., object or picture exchange, voice output communication devices, language acquisition through motor planning, gestures, signs, texts) to promote or enhance communication.	✓	✓	✓

4. Communication Competencies Statements*	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
4.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies and systems.	✓	✓	✓
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 programs and systems to match the individual's changing needs (e.g., environments, communication partners, portability, functionality).		✓	✓

Social Skill Competencies

5. Social Skill Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
5.1K Understands the social challenges associated with autism and how to assess for intervention planning.		✓	✓
5.1.1S Explains how social challenges impact the individual's life.		✓	✓
5.1.2S Assesses social skills across environments regularly.		✓	✓
5.1.3S Assesses skills related to identifying, understanding, and regulating emotions as they pertain to social interactions.		✓	✓

5. Social Skill Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
5.1.4S Assesses skills related to social reciprocity (e.g., joint attention, perspective-taking, sharing, turn-taking).		✓	✓
5.1.5S Assesses play and leisure skills to identify opportunities for skill development or practice.		✓	✓
5.2K Understands appropriate strategies to improve/enhance an individual's social skills.	✓	✓	✓
5.2.1S Develops social skills goals and objectives that are functional, appropriate, observable, and measurable.		✓	✓
5.2.2S Plans for generalization and maintenance of social skills in a variety of settings with a variety of people.		✓	✓
5.2.3S Creates opportunities to promote positive social skills across all environments.	✓	✓	✓
5.2.4S Coaches the individual on how to interact for a variety of reasons, with a variety of people, and in a variety of settings.	✓	✓	✓
5.2.5S Coaches the individual about appropriate behavior for different social contexts and relationships across settings (e.g., when interacting with strangers and intimate significant others).	✓	✓	✓
5.2.6S Implements age appropriate social skills for play, recreation, and community activities.	✓	✓	✓
5.2.7S Teaches social skills strategies to foster social interest and interaction (e.g., social narratives, video-modeling, natural environment teaching, anger and stress management techniques, mentoring, integrated play groups).	✓	✓	✓
5.2.8S Uses strategies to help the individual identify personal relationships (e.g., family, friendship, acquaintance, romantic).	✓	✓	✓

5. Social Skill Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
5.2.9S Provides instruction, support, and guidance to the individual in identifying and dealing with manipulative, coercive, bullying, and/or abusive relationships.	✓	✓	✓
5.2.10S Coaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and the family to implement specialized social skill strategies in a variety of settings.		✓	✓
5.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of social skills strategies.	✓	✓	✓
5.3.1S Observes and records social behaviors using objective measures, criteria, and data collection methods.	✓	✓	✓
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	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ 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 supports and intervention.	✓	✓	✓

6. Behavior Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer Specialist
6.1.1S Identifies and operationalizes target behaviors for assessment and intervention.		✓	✓
6.1.2S Collaborates with team members to prioritize areas for intervention.	✓	✓	✓
6.1.3S Observes and documents target behaviors using objective measures and individualized criteria.	✓	✓	✓
6.1.4S Identifies individual preferences, strengths, and interests, using indirect and direct measures on an ongoing basis.	✓	✓	✓
6.1.5S Completes functional behavior assessment (FBA) process to determine function of behavior, including maintaining antecedents and consequences. The FBA should include: • Indirect (structured interviews, checklists, rating scales) measures of data collection; • Informally or formally assess current functional communication system (e.g., utility, durability, functionality); • Direct (structured ABC data collection, choice assessments, preference assessments, reinforcement assessments) measures of data collection; • Analysis of newly collected data to provide meaningful interpretations of the data; • An hypothesis that aligns interventions to support the hypothesis.		✓	✓

6. Behavior Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer Specialist
6.1.6S Develops individualized, multicomponent behavior intervention plans based on the results of the FBA that emphasize evidence-based prevention techniques, replacement skills, and are socially valid. Plans should include: ● Identify setting event and antecedent interventions (e.g., proactive changes to prevent the behavior from occurring); ● Identify replacement, coping, and general skills to increase prosocial behaviors; ● Identify positive consequences to increase the use of the new prosocial behaviors; ● Identify schedules of reinforcement and differential reinforcement to increase use of positive behaviors; ● Describe strategies for teaching and promoting desired behaviors (e.g., functional communication system); ● Describe reactive and crisis management strategies to support the individual if and when the problem behavior occurs; ● Develop data collection system to ensure fidelity of implementation of intervention strategies across professionals and settings.		✓	✓
6.1.7S Teaches team members to implement the behavior intervention plan as designed.			✓
6.1.8S Implements all components of the behavior intervention plan with consistency in a variety of complex environments under natural circumstances.	✓	✓	✓

6. Behavior Competencies Statements	Paraprofessional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Services Staff	Master Professional/ 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: ● Increasing the alternative and positive behaviors; ● Decreasing the problem behavior; ● Increasing quality of life outcomes; ● Generalizing skills to new environments.	✓	✓	✓
6.2.2S Evaluates data, reports on the plan's effectiveness, and revises as needed, in collaboration with the team.		✓	✓
6.2.3S Develops and executes a plan to generalize behavior to other persons and settings.		✓	✓
6.2.4S Develops a plan for an individual to self-monitor prosocial behaviors and access reinforcement independently.		✓	✓
6.2.5S Solicits feedback from all team members regularly to identify practical use of the behavior supports and interventions.	✓	✓	✓

Sensory Integration Development Competencies
*The specialist in the sensory integration development area may be an occupational, physical, or speech therapist who has receive continuing education in the area of sensory motor processing

7. Sensory Integration Development Competencies Statements*	Para-professionals/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
7.1K Understands the sensory systems, sensory processing and integration, and sensory motor development.	✓	✓	✓

7. Sensory Integration Development Competencies Statements*	Para-professionals/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
7.1.1S Describes the seven senses (e.g., visual, auditory, oral, olfactory, tactile, proprioceptive, vestibular) and the varying patterns of sensory modulation difficulty including sensory over-responsivity and under-responsivity.	✓	✓	✓
7.1.2S Describes the relationship between sensory integration, motor systems and behavior (e.g., demonstrating stereotypical behaviors such as rocking or hand flapping, or triggering fight, flight, or freeze responses).	✓	✓	✓
7.1.3S Describes the relationship between sensory integration and functional performance in academic and daily activities (e.g., focus and participation in group and independent tasks, organization, literacy and math, work skills, play and leisure activities).	✓	✓	✓
7.1.4S Describes the relationship between sensory integration and motor planning and coordination.	✓	✓	✓
7.2K Understands the implications or influences of sensory needs when developing a comprehensive plan.	✓	✓	✓
7.2.1S Identifies behaviors (e.g., tactile defensiveness, running, self-injurious, chewing on clothing) that might indicate the need for a sensory processing assessment.	✓	✓	✓
7.2.2S Observes and assesses sensory needs across environments, activities, and times of the day.	✓	✓	✓
7.2.3S Collaborates with others to gather information from all members of the individual's program development team (e.g., anyone who supports, works with, or provides consultation, including family members).		✓	✓

7. Sensory Integration Development Competencies Statements*	Para-professionals/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
7.2.4S Assesses sensory processing and integration patterns using a reliable and valid scale and/or measure.			✓
7.2.5S Develops a sensory intervention plan that addresses difficulty with sensory processing and functional performance and is focused on proactive strategies across environments.			✓
7.2.6S Coaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families on how to implement the sensory intervention plan.		✓	✓
7.2.7S Coaches individuals who need sensory supports to self-monitor, self-regulate, and request sensory-based supports to have their sensory needs met.	✓	✓	✓
7.2.8S Implements the sensory intervention plan across all environments, activities and times of the day with fidelity.	✓	✓	✓
7.3K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.	✓	✓	✓
7.3.1S Observes an individual's behaviors and collects data using objective measures to evaluate the sensory intervention plan.	✓	✓	✓
7.3.2S Communicates findings regarding the effectiveness of the sensory motor intervention plan and collaborates with all team members to determine if adjustments are needed.	✓	✓	✓
7.3.3S In consultation with the team, uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to address sensory needs.		✓	✓

Resources:
Addressing Sensory Integration and Sensory Processing Disorders Across the Lifespan: The Role of Occupational Therapy
Occupational Therapy Using a Sensory Integration–Based Approach with Adult Populations

Independence Skill Competencies

8. Independence Skill Competencies Statements	Para-professional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
8.1K Understands skills needed for independence and how to assess skills for intervention planning.		✓	✓
8.1.1S Identifies and utilizes assessments and tools to determine student preferences, interests, strengths and goals.		✓	✓
8.1.2S Uses informal and formal tools to assess and analyze • social and communication; • functional and life skills related to caring for self, caring for home, participating in the community, and employment; • academic skills (e.g., literacy, math, science, and social studies); • cognitive skills and learning profiles (e.g., attention, processing, organization, problem solving).		✓	✓
8.1.3S Solicits information from all members of the individual's team.		✓	✓
8.2K Understands and implements a variety of evidence-based strategies to increase an individual's independence and generalization of skills across environments.	✓	✓	✓
8.2.1S Develops goals and interventions that include the student's voice, strengths, and preferences.		✓	✓
8.2.2S Develops goals that maximize personal independence, meaningful participation in community environments, positive relationships with others, and successful employment.		✓	✓

8. Independence Skill Competencies Statements	Para-professional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
8.2.3S Aligns intervention plans for relevant settings that target functional and life skills related to caring for self, caring for the home, participating in the community, and employment with the team that directly target individual needs.		✓	✓
8.2.4S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach functional and life skills (e.g., modeling, prompting, shaping, discrete trial instruction, natural environment teaching, task analysis, self-monitoring).	✓	✓	✓
8.2.5S Supports the implementation of intervention plans across environments.	✓	✓	✓
8.2.6S Supports development of functional and life skills within a contextual framework utilizing the natural environment.	✓	✓	✓
8.2.7S Implements interventions to teach personal awareness and self-management.	✓	✓	✓
8.3K Understands a variety of strategies to increase an individual's access to general curriculum and least restrictive environment	✓	✓	✓
8.3.1S Develops an intervention plan targeting meaningful academic skills with the team that is based on individual needs and long-term (post-secondary) goals.		✓	✓
8.3.2S Implements effective strategies and supports to teach academic skills that address the individual's learning style (e.g., modeling, prompting, shaping, discrete trial instruction, natural environment teaching, task analysis).	✓	✓	✓

8. Independence Skill Competencies Statements	Para-professional/ Direct Services Staff	Professional/ Direct Service Staff	Master Professional/ Program Developer/ Specialist
8.3.3S Describes academic supports and accommodations with the individual's team (e.g., family members, individual, paraprofessional, therapists, general education teachers)	✓	✓	✓
8.3.4S Teaches paraprofessionals, professionals, and families to implement relevant components of the program.		✓	✓
8.4K Understands how to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.	✓	✓	✓
8.4.1S Observes behaviors using objective measures and criteria, and records data.	✓	✓	✓
8.4.2S Uses data and ongoing assessments to modify strategies as needed to promote skills in various settings.		✓	✓

Appendix XX
Glossary of Terms by Competency Area

Introduction

- **Competencies:** knowledge and skills that guide best practices in supporting individuals with autism across the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- **Person-centered:** a team-based approach to actively problem solve with an individual about short-term, long-term, and immediate goals that support greater independence. The focus of this approach is involving the individual in decision-making and producing strengths-based solutions to enhance overall quality of life.
- **Transdisciplinary Team:** team that includes all who support and care for and about the individual with autism.
- **Virginia Autism Council (VAC):** comprised of self-advocates, professionals, and family members who are passionate about working to advance knowledge and the understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is the only autism-focused interagency council of stakeholders in Virginia.

General Autism Competencies

- **Adaptive equipment**: devices that are used to assist with completing activities of daily living.
- **Adaptive needs/behaviors**: collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills learned by people to enable them to function in their everyday lives.
- **Core curriculum**: a set of courses that are considered basic and essential for future class work and graduation. Math, science, English, history and geography are examples of **core curriculum** in middle school or high school.
- **Executive functioning:** the higher-level cognitive skills you use to control and coordinate your other cognitive abilities and behaviors.
- **Intervention:** the action or a process taken to improve a situation.
- **Stereotypic behavior:** ritualistic movements, postures or utterances. Often called "stimming" because it is believed to be a part of self-stimulation.

Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Competencies

- **Cueing**: action intended to encourage an individual to initiate or continue a task he or she has previously performed.
- **Data trends:** the direction the data is going.

- **Evidence-based practices:** an evidence-based practice is an instructional/intervention procedure/intervention procedure or set of procedures for which researchers have provided an acceptable level of research that shows that practice produces positive outcomes for children, youth and/or adults with ASD. (NPDC on ASD)
- **Modeling:** an instructional strategy in which the teacher demonstrates a concept or approach and the individual learns by observing.
- **Prompting:** instructions, gestures, demonstrations, touches, or other things that increase the likelihood that individuals will make correct responses.
- **Shaping:** a process used in teaching in which a behavior or skill is gradually taught by differentially reinforcing successive approximations to the behavior that the teacher wants to create.
- **Visual supports:** Visual supports are concrete cues that are paired with, or used in place of, a verbal cue to provide the learner with information about a routine, activity, behavioral expectation, or skill demonstration. Visual supports might include: pictures, written words, objects, arrangement of the environment, visual boundaries, schedules, maps, labels, organization systems, timelines, and scripts. The various types of visual supports can be divided into three categories: visual boundaries, visual cues, and visual schedules. Examples include:
  - Schedule
  - Mini schedule
  - Break Cards
  - Rule Cards
  - Narratives
  - Scripts

Comprehensive Instructional Programming Competencies

- **Age-relevant:** a skill or goal that is important or significant to an individual's quality of life; relevant instruction that assists an individual with participating with their same-aged peer group.
- **Collaborative planning:** involves school or community agency team members actively problem solving and learning the needs/supports of an individual in order to plan/design curriculum, lessons, or service plans. These team members collaboratively analyze state-level, grade-level, and functional skills.
- **Comprehensive instruction**: considers a person-centered approach to supporting the academic, social, adaptive, behavioral, and functional needs of each individual by providing thoughtful, explicit, and systematic instruction. Systematic instruction can include teaching socially significant skills to an individual in collaboration with other service providers to ensure generalization and increased independence across the individual's lifespan.

- **Data-based training protocols**: a protocol developed to identify the key training components for coaching others to implement a plan or program. These training protocols are often developed to measure the fidelity of implementation. The measure of fidelity ensures that everyone is following the plan to meet a specific criteria, at least 80% of the time. Without fidelity or a data-based training protocol, the team cannot determine if the plan is working, and make informed decisions on what components of the plan need to be changed.
- **Fidelity**: the degree to which a team member can follow the instructional plan components as designed. Often, the team will develop a fidelity checklist to determine the degree to which the team member implements the plan. When the fidelity of the implemented plan is low, the success of an individual is negatively impacted.
- **Functional communication**: the extent to which individuals communicates effectively, efficiently, independently, and spontaneously using their preferred mode of communication. The form of communication is not the focus, but that the communication modality or system is functional, i.e., effective and more efficient than interfering behavior or other maladaptive behaviors.
- **Generalization:** the act of using a mastered skill with different people, in different settings, and in different situations. This is the goal of teaching an individual any new skill.
- **Learner variability:** all individuals are unique in how they learn and how they express what they know and how they know it. The Universal Design for Learning framework asks that educators embrace the idea of learner variability as an asset when thinking about their students and their curriculum (Reference: CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from http://udlguidelines.cast.org).
- **Maintenance:** the ability of the individual to continuously demonstrate an acquired skill over time with self-administered reinforcement.
- **Person-centered:** a team-based approach to actively problem solve with an individual about short-term, long-term, and immediate goals that support greater independence. The focus of this approach is involving the individual in decision-making and producing strengths-based solutions to enhance overall quality of life.
- **Standards-based goals**: the student's goals are aligned with and based on the state's grade-level and age-relevant standards to create a student who is proficient in state-level standards. Additionally, the functional and/or behavioral needs of the student need to be addressed, as needed, alongside grade-level standards (Reference: VDOE (2020). Standards-based IEP. Retrieved from, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/iep_instruct_svcs/stds-based_iep/).
- **Universal design for learning (UDL)**: is a framework based on evidence-based practices. The framework aims to proactively address the needs of any and all learners. In using this framework, the practitioner must assume that environmental design creates barriers to learning, not that the student does not fit within the environment. The framework accounts for the variability of learner's needs such as motivation, different learning styles, and differentiated ways for learners to show what

they know. (Reference: CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from http://udlguidelines.cast.org).

Communication Competencies

- **Assistive technology:** any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.
- **Augmentative communication:** includes all of the ways we share our ideas and feelings without talking. We all use forms of AAC every day. You use AAC when you use facial expressions or gestures instead of talking.
- **Expressive communication:** the ability to express one's wants and needs through verbal or nonverbal communication. Refers to the "output" of language.
- **Functions of communication:** the functions of communication refer to the variety of reasons we use to communicate: to request something; to get attention; to refuse/reject; to comment; to give information; to express feelings; to be part of a social routine; to influence; to persuade.
- **Natural Environment Teaching:** Natural Environment Teaching leads to an individual being able to learn skills in one environment and generalizing them to other environments.
- **Naturally occurring reinforcement:** a stimulus or circumstance, such as food or water, that is inherently reinforcing and does not depend on learning to become desirable.
- **Modeling:** an instructional strategy in which the teacher demonstrates a concept or approach and the student learns by observing.
- **Pragmatics:** how we use language in different situations and with different people.
- **Receptive communication:** ability to understand information. It involves understanding the words, sentences, gestures/signs and meaning of what others say, or what is read.
- **Semantics:** the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence, or text.
- **Shaping:** a process used in teaching in which a behavior or skill is gradually taught by differentially reinforcing successive approximations to the behavior that the teacher wants to create.

Social Skills Competencies

- **Circles of Support:** A social and language skills program that provides valuable support to students with special needs. Sometimes called a circle of friends. Circles were developed to support individuals to become connected in the community, and to make friendships and relationships.
- **Cognitive skills:** brain-based skills needed to carry out tasks.
- **Functional:** practical and useful.
- **Generalization:** the act of using a mastered skill with different people, in different settings, and in different situations. This is the goal of teaching an individual any new skill.
- **Integrated play groups:** an intervention designed to facilitate the development of meaningful peer relationships and appropriate play and social-communication skills in children with autism spectrum disorders through adult-supported peer interactions.
- **Joint attention:** when there is the shared focus of two individuals on an object. It is achieved when one individual alerts another to an object by means of eye-gazing, pointing or other verbal or non-verbal indications. Sometimes known as "shared attention."
- **Maintenance:** the act of using a mastered skill with different people, in different settings, and in different situations. This is the goal of teaching an individual any new skill.
- **Natural Environment Teaching:** Natural Environment Teaching leads to an individual being able to learn skills in one environment and generalize them to other environments.
- **Natural environments:** settings and activities that are typical for an individual's same-age peers in the individual's community who have no disabilities or developmental delays. It is the place and/or event where the individual would likely be or engage if the individual did not have a disability or delay.
- **Regulating emotions:** ability to exert control over one's own **emotional** state. It may involve behaviors such as rethinking a challenging situation to reduce anger or anxiety, hiding visible signs of sadness or fear, or focusing on reasons to feel happy or calm.
- **Self-advocacy:** a skill that enables individuals to understand their strengths and weaknesses, know what they need to succeed, and communicate that to other people.
- **Shaping:** a process used in teaching in which a behavior or skill is gradually taught by differentially reinforcing successive approximations to the behavior that the teacher wants to create.
- **Social narratives:** social narratives give objective statements about a variety of social situations.
- **Stress management techniques:** relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response.
- **Turn-taking:** when individuals speak one at a time in alternating turns, or take turns during play.

- **Video modeling:** a visual teaching method that occurs by watching a video of someone modeling a targeted behavior or skill and then imitating the behavior/skill watched.

Behavior Competencies

- **Antecedents**: a person or event that happens prior to a behavior.
- **Applied behavior analysis**: a science that uses the principles of behavior to improve behavior and socially significant outcomes for individuals across the lifespan.
- **Behavior**: the way in which an individual reacts in response to a particular situation or signal/cue.
- **Consequences**: an event that happens after the behavior occurs that increases or decreases the likelihood that an individual will engage in a response or behavior in the future.
- **Differential reinforcement:** reinforcing one behavior while withholding reinforcement from the other behavior you want to reduce or diminish.
- **Direct assessments**: observing an individual in a naturalistic setting and collecting data on antecedents, behaviors, and consequences; or, asking an individual to pick between two choices or preferences and collecting data on the allocation of an individual's time with a specific activity or preference.
- **Functional behavioral assessment**: a continuum of indirect, direct, and experimental assessments that are conducted based on the needs of an individual. It is a process that assists a team in developing a systematic behavior plan to increase positive behaviors and reduce interfering behaviors that impact access to daily activities.
- **Indirect assessments**: gathering information on an individual to support the development of a behavior plan. Examples include: record reviews, interviews, surveys, checklists, or inventories.
- **Positive behavior supports:** is a person-centered approach used to establish a supportive environment and supports to increase an individual's positive skills and behaviors. There is a focus on teaching replacement skills for interfering behaviors that are effective and functional for the individual.
- **Preference assessments**: a structured process used to identify a hierarchy of items or activities that an individual prefers that can potentially be used as reinforcement.
- **Replacement skills**: an appropriate skill that is taught and maintained by the same consequence as the interfering behavior.
- **Schedules of reinforcement**: the parameters, as outlined in the individual's behavior intervention plan, for when to deliver reinforcement after a desired behavior/response to assist with increasing or maintaining the use of the desired behavior.

- **Setting events**: internal or external events that happen prior to the behavior that increase the likelihood a behavior might occur provided a trigger. An example is not getting a good night sleep (setting event), a person asking an individual to complete a difficult chore (antecedent), and the student saying no, I am tired (behavior).
- **Socially valid**: acceptability and satisfaction with intervention procedures, usually assessed by soliciting opinions from the people who receive and implement the behavior intervention procedures.

Sensory Integration Competencies

- **Proprioception**: the ability to sense stimuli arising within the body regarding position, motion, and equilibrium (joint/muscle sense).
- **Sensory defensiveness**: a negative reaction to one or more types of sensations (e.g., touch, movement, sound, taste/texture, or smell), often requiring you to control the individual's daily routine to avoid such things.
- **Sensory integration**: neurological process that organizes sensation from one's own body and from the environment and makes it possible to use the body effectively within the environment.
- **Sensory modulation:** the ability to respond appropriately to sensory information and remain at an appropriate level of alertness for daily activities.
- **Sensory over-responsivity**: an exaggerated, intense, or prolonged behavioral response to ordinary sensory stimuli.
- **Sensory processing**: the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into responses.
- **Sensory under- responsivity**: under-responsive to sensory stimuli are often quiet and passive, disregarding or not responding to stimuli of the usual intensity available in one's sensory environment.
- **Vestibular**: movement and balance sense; provides information about where the head and body are in space and in relation to the earth's surface.

Independence Competencies

- **Discrete trial instruction:** breaking instruction down into small (discrete) steps.
- **Natural environment teaching**: instruction that is driven by the individual's motivation and occurs in the natural environment.
- **Task analysis:** breaking a skill down into smaller chunks.
- **Self-monitoring:** the act of measuring one's own target behavior and comparing it to a goal.
- **Contextual framework:** guide on how an educational program is organized.
- **Post-secondary goals:** goals that a student hopes to achieve after leaving secondary school.

- **Accommodations**: supports and services that are provided to help a student access the general education curriculum.
- **Learning profile**: refers to a wide variety of ways in which learners vary in how they prefer to deal with content, process, and product.