

# **TRAINER COMPETENCIES**

## ***CORE COMPETENCIES***

### **Competency-Based In-Service Training**

1. The trainer understands the role and function of in-service training as a management strategy to help the organization achieve its mission, and knows how competency-based training can promote "best practice" throughout the service system.
2. The trainer knows the components of a competency-based in-service training system and the proper sequence of steps in the system's development.
3. The trainer understands how the Universe of Competencies is developed, and how it is used as the criterion for individual training needs assessment, trainer assessment and selection, and curriculum development.
4. The trainer understands his or her role as a member of the training development and delivery team, and knows how and when to collaborate with training managers and agency staff to ensure that training addresses identified needs.
5. The trainer can differentiate between training needs and other types of employee performance problems, and knows the training system's proper role in addressing performance problems.

### **Adult Learning**

1. The trainer understands and can apply principles of adult learning to training development and delivery. This includes engaging learners in identifying their own learning needs, helping trainees set personal learning objectives, drawing on and incorporating trainees' past experiences and expertise, using experiential and interactive training techniques, helping trainees apply training content to their jobs, and creating practice opportunities during the training session.
2. The trainer can create and orient trainees to a comfortable physical learning environment, including preparing the training room, greeting and engaging trainees, and attending to the social, emotional, and comfort needs of the learners.
3. The trainer knows the conceptual frameworks for describing learning styles, can recognize differences in trainee learning preferences and styles, understands how individual development and cultural background can impact learning preferences, and can develop and use training strategies that address a variety of learning styles and preferences.

4. The trainer understands the typical stages in the development and mastery of new knowledge and skills, understands the adult learning paradigms that represent these steps (e.g., levels of learning or, conscious/unconscious competence), and can develop training materials that promote sequential development.

### **Training Delivery Skills**

1. The trainer recognizes the impact of the physical training environment in facilitating or impeding learning; can arrange the training room to promote comfort, interaction, and group development; and can assure that training facilities are easily accessible to persons with disabilities.
2. The trainer can use a variety of self-management strategies to reduce personal stress and stage fright associated with public speaking.
3. The trainer understands the impact of personal appearance and dress, physical positioning in relation to trainees, hand and body movements, positioning of a podium or tables, and tone of voice, on both the quality of the presentation and receptivity by trainees.
4. The trainer knows how to use name tags/name tents, "ice-breaker" exercises, introductions, and other activities at the beginning of a session to create a positive group climate and begin the engagement process.
5. The trainer knows the importance of speaking clearly at an appropriate volume; can vary volume, pace, tone, and inflection to maintain trainees' attention; and can avoid unnecessary and distracting vocalizations (e.g., "uh," "ummm," "you know," "like," "I mean").
6. The trainer can adjust his or her presentation methods, use of language, and group management style to achieve the optimal level of formality for the group, or to match learners' level of expertise.
7. The trainer understands the potential impact of having been mandated to attend training, and can use supportive engagement strategies to help trainees identify personal learning objectives and develop an investment in the training.
8. The trainer understands the stages of group development and knows a continuum of training strategies appropriate for groups at different stages of development.
9. The trainer can use reflective listening and feedback to encourage group involvement, to clarify and expand upon trainee contributions, to guide the direction of the discussion, and to enhance trainees' understanding of the content and concepts.

10. The trainer can use verbal enhancers that more fully communicate and explain essential concepts and information, including examples and illustrations, creative phrasing, analogies, quotations, rhetorical questions, and comparing and contrasting concepts.
11. The trainer can use summarization, bridging, and segue to help preserve continuity when moving between segments of the training.
12. The trainer knows strategies to keep the group focused, on task, and within established time frames, while remaining responsive to group needs and concerns.
13. The trainer knows strategies to engage and involve trainees who display resistance or a lack of involvement, or who exhibit disruptive behaviors that interfere with the development of constructive group process.
14. The trainer can use information from written participant evaluations, evaluation summaries; and feedback from trainees and appropriate agency staff to identify opportunities for improving the training.

## **Culture and Diversity**

1. The trainer understands how his or her own cultural background can impact communication style, choice of words, body language, and mannerisms, and how these may affect trainees from different cultural backgrounds.
2. The trainer understands how his or her own cultural background affects values, attitudes, and beliefs, and recognizes ways in which an "ethnocentric" perspective may affect his or her ability to train and relate to trainees from different cultural groups.
3. The trainer can model an approach to cross-cultural encounters characterized by an open mind, a willingness to learn from each other, mutual respect, objectivity, and rational critique, and can create a training environment that values and encourages the expression of cross-cultural content and constructive dialogue about it.
4. The trainer can incorporate content and examples that enhance trainees' understanding of and comfort with the cultural issues inherent in the topic area being trained.
5. The trainer can differentiate stereotyping from culturally relevant information, can facilitate discussions of stereotyping and its negative impact on cultural interactions, and can incorporate culturally relevant information into the training.
6. The trainer understands the stages in the development of cultural competence and can incorporate content and activities that promote continued development of cultural competence by trainees at various developmental levels.

7. The trainer can identify when cultural misunderstanding may be contributing to interpersonal conflict in the training and can use a variety of strategies to explore and resolve conflicts.
8. The trainer can stimulate and facilitate discussion of emotionally charged topics and issues during the training, and can monitor and manage the emotional level of the group to maintain a safe, objective, and comfortable training environment.
9. The trainer understands, can articulate, and can promote open discussion in the training environment about ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, cultural pluralism, overgeneralization, discrimination, and "isms," such as racism, ageism, sexism, anti-semitism, and homophobia, and can constructively deal with expressions of prejudice and discrimination during the training.

### **Transfer of Learning**

1. The trainer understands the concept of learning as " a process rather than an event" and can identify opportunities and activities to promote transfer before, during, and after the training event.
2. The trainer understands the roles of agency managers, supervisors, training managers, trainers, and learners in promoting transfer; knows the importance of supervisory intervention with learners both before and after training; understands how organizational barriers can prevent transfer; and can work collaboratively with others to design and implement effective transfer of learning activities.
3. The trainer understands the impact of individual learning preferences and culturally based learning styles, and can design a variety of teaching and transfer strategies that address different styles.
4. The trainer can give relevant examples and encourage critical assessment of how new learning can be applied to trainees' jobs, can elicit examples of practice dilemmas and successes, and can help trainees identify and resolve barriers to application of new learning in the workplace.
5. The trainer knows the sequence and stages in acquiring and mastering new knowledge and skills, and knows how and when to use mentoring, coaching, and other on-the-job training activities to promote continued trainee development.
6. The trainer understands the importance of collaborating with supervisors, managers, and team leaders to promote transfer of learning, and can design post-training on-the-job learning activities that promote continued skill development by trainees.

7. The trainer can help assess and provide feedback regarding trainees' acquisition of knowledge and skill at the completion of training, and can recommend additional self-development or training activities to promote skill development.
8. The trainer knows a variety of assessment methods to be used before, during, and after training to measure the impact of training, and can collaborate with training managers to implement comprehensive evaluations of training effectiveness.
9. The trainer can incorporate a variety of classroom activities that support transfer, such as idea catchers, action planning, supervised practice, and rehearsal.

### **Professionalism and Ethics**

1. The trainer understands the importance of maintaining a professional demeanor in the training environment, including maintaining standards for dress, adhering to preset time frames for the training, and being well-organized and fully prepared for the training.
2. The trainer knows the values, ethics, and standards of the social work profession and the practice field in which trainees work, and can address and reinforce these in all training activities.
3. The trainer understands and can model standards for adult learning and professional development, including: respect for trainees; supporting trainees' self-determination; and maintaining appropriate confidentiality, privacy, and self-disclosure.
4. The trainer fully understands the liabilities of attempting to train in competency areas in which the trainer lacks sufficient knowledge, skill, or a firsthand experience.
5. The trainer understands the importance of keeping current on laws, state mandates, and practice changes in the field of specialty, and can incorporate up-to-date information into training curricula.
6. The trainer knows the laws regarding copyright and plagiarism, and knows how to fully and accurately cite sources for materials used in the curriculum.
7. The trainer understands the importance of working jointly with the training manager prior to the training by submitting content outlines, handouts, and equipment checklists in a timely manner, and by learning and incorporating agency-specific or region-specific terminology and information into the training.

## ***SPECIALIZED PRACTICE SKILLS***

Specialized practice skills for trainers should be developed individually for each competency area a trainer is approved to teach. Specialized practice skills generally reflect the application of generic practice competencies to very specific service areas. Specialized practice competencies ensure that trainers are sufficiently informed about the practice field in which trainees work to promote a high degree of relevance in the training, and the ability to help learners appropriately apply training content to their jobs. The following competencies provide a generic list of specialized practice competencies for trainers.

1. The trainer knows the core philosophy and values that underlie the social work profession and trainees' fields of practice (e.g., child welfare, adult services, public human services); and can integrate this information throughout the training.
2. The trainer can articulate the mission of the service system and knows the unique role and responsibility of the trainees' agencies and staff.
3. The trainer knows the "best practice" standards that apply to the field of practice and competency area she or he trains.
4. The trainer understands how the trainees' agency or service system is structured and organized, and how it interfaces with other agencies and service systems, both locally and at the state level.
5. The trainer knows the federal, state, and local legislation, rules, and policies relevant to the competency areas she or he teaches; understands the impact of these on direct practice; and can use a variety of strategies to help trainees integrate theory, concepts, rule, and policy.
6. The trainer understands the personal, agency, and community barriers that interfere with achievement of "best practice," and can teach and model effective strategies to overcome these barriers.

## ***RELATED SKILLS***

### **Curriculum Development**

1. The trainer understands the unique attributes of a training curriculum for use in an in-service training system.
2. The trainer understands basic principles of human cognition and learning, and can apply these principles to the development of training curricula.

3. The trainer can identify the structural elements of a training curriculum, and knows the principles in the development of each element.
4. The trainer can formulate specific learning and application objectives for each section of a curriculum, and can demonstrate how these objectives together achieve the competencies the curriculum is to address.
5. The trainer knows how to research and validate curriculum content to address the particular competencies the curriculum is being designed to teach.
6. The trainer knows the principles of curriculum sequencing and organization, and knows how to sequence content and design activities to achieve a coherent and integrated curriculum.
7. The trainer is able to identify and incorporate the most appropriate training methods to achieve the learning objectives of a particular section of the curriculum.
8. The trainer can design and include a variety of strategies to be implemented before, during, and after the training, that promote application of new learning back on the job.
9. Trainees will be able to assess written curriculum resources and determine their adherence to principles of learning and curriculum organization.

### **Experiential Learning**

1. The trainer understands how the proper use of experiential exercises can increase awareness, modify attitudes, challenge misconceptions, and facilitate learning and mastery of both knowledge and skills.
2. The trainer understands the detrimental outcomes of using experiential exercises inappropriately or placing them improperly in the curriculum sequence.
3. The trainer can design and develop a variety of individual, small-group, and large-group experiential exercises and activities that enhance learning and application.
4. The trainer can facilitate experiential activities by clearly and concisely explaining instructions, providing ongoing direction and feedback to trainees, helping process and draw conclusions about the exercise, and engaging in problem solving when the activity is not progressing or accomplishing learning objectives.
5. The trainer knows how to elicit information to evaluate the effectiveness of experiential activities in achieving objectives, and can make needed modifications.

## **Group Facilitation and Management**

1. The trainer can help the group members clarify, negotiate, reach consensus, and adhere to norms or ground rules for the training session, and can enter into a verbal contract that establishes the trainer's role in supporting and enforcing these norms.
2. The trainer can clearly and accurately communicate the goals and objectives of the training, can help trainees identify unrealistic expectations for the training and can negotiate to achieve consensus about the desired outcomes for a training session.
3. The trainer knows group facilitation strategies that promote the development of a safe, learner-centered environment, group cohesion, comfort with risk taking, and commitment to common learning objectives.
4. The trainer knows how to determine the training strategy best suited to meet a particular learning objective and knows how to integrate a variety of strategies to address different learning styles and how to keep the training from becoming repetitious or boring.
5. The trainer can recognize nonverbal cues from trainees, can use active listening and reflection to determine their meaning, and can elicit feedback to clarify points and to determine the level of understanding or agreement.
6. The trainer understands the factors that can create resistance and dissension within training groups, including a lack of pretraining preparation, forced attendance at training, pre-existing interpersonal conflict among group members, problems in the work environment, and personal, social, and emotional factors of trainees.
7. The trainer knows a variety of group-management strategies, and can intervene to manage problematic behaviors without alienating either the individual or group.
8. The trainer can provide timely, sensitive, and relevant feedback to the group, and can challenge ideas in a manner that stimulates creative thinking and promotes growth, while maintaining trainees' self-esteem.
9. The trainer can recognize, process, and understand trainees' emotional responses to training content or exercises; can acknowledge and normalize feelings; can help the group identify constructive ways to deal with feelings; and can intervene to help individual trainees deal with acute emotional distress.
10. The trainer can effectively handle confrontation and conflict with and between trainees and can use a series of verbal and nonverbal interventions to de-escalate the conflict, explore and clarify the issues, and facilitate resolution, while discouraging disruptive behavior and preventing emotional withdrawal.

## **Mentoring Other Trainers**

1. The trainer can engage a mentoree into a productive mentoring relationship and jointly set the goals, objectives, and norms for the mentoring process.
2. The trainer can engage a mentoree in assessing his or her own developmental needs in the areas of training preparation, curriculum development, training delivery, managing group dynamics, transfer of learning, cultural competence, establishing a learner-centered environment, or professional ethics, and in jointly developing a plan to develop the mentoree's skills in needed areas.
3. The trainer understands the developmental nature of the mentoring process and knows how to select mentoring and coaching strategies that are most appropriate for the mentoree's level of development.
4. The trainer can conceptualize and explain the rationale for specific training interventions, including: the design and sequencing of a curriculum, adjusting a curriculum for groups at different developmental levels, the most appropriate uses of individual training strategies, individual and group management strategies, and strategies to manage time.
5. The trainer understands the potential impact of cultural differences on his or her relationship with the mentoree, and can establish a relationship that encourages dialogue about cultural differences and issues.
6. The trainer can assess the accuracy of the mentoree's curriculum content, the quality and appropriateness of training strategies, and the mentoree's effectiveness in managing group dynamics, and can provide a sensitive and accurate critique of the mentoree's performance to the mentoree, training managers, or training supervisors.

## **Team Training**

1. The trainer understands the most appropriate uses of team training and knows the benefits and limitations of team training, both for trainers and the training group.
2. The trainer knows how to select a training partner to achieve the best mix of content expertise, previous experience, trainer style, and personal strengths and weaknesses, to best achieve the training objectives.
3. The trainer understands the importance of developing clear roles and responsibilities for each member of the training team, and the importance of developing mutual expectations for the partnership.

4. The trainer can develop a training delivery plan that makes the best use of the content expertise, delivery styles, strengths, and personalities of each trainer on the team.
5. The trainer knows how to constructively manage the challenges of team training, including: managing verbal and nonverbal communication between trainers; sharing responsibility and authority; responding to cues from the group when the partner is leading; respecting the partner's lead, while concurrently providing needed support and validation; dealing constructively with differences in opinion between trainers; and assuming full responsibility for the training when needed.
6. The trainer can assess, negotiate, and resolve conflicts in the team training relationship.

### **Developing and Using Technology**

1. The trainer can design, develop, and incorporate a variety of audio-visual materials, including flip charts, posters, PowerPoint, overhead transparencies, computer-generated visuals, handouts, slides, videos, and audiotapes, to enhance the training and reinforce learning.
2. The trainer knows how to select and incorporate technological resources that best support the content being presented.
3. The trainer knows how to design, produce, and distribute handouts in a logical and organized manner.
4. The trainer can operate, disassemble, and make emergency repairs to audio-visual equipment, including flip chart stands, overhead projectors, TV/VCRs, video recording equipment, cassette/CD players, slide projectors, LCD projectors and computers and classroom performance system.
5. The trainer can use a contingency plan with alternative instructional methods in the event of equipment failure or unexpected emergency, or to accommodate trainees with visual or auditory disabilities.

### **Computer and Distance Learning Technology**

1. The trainer knows how to integrate computerized training aids to enhance training, and can design and develop presentations and demonstrations using software such as Power Point and Classroom Performance System.

2. The trainer understands the range and types of knowledge and skills that are most effectively acquired using self-directed, computerized learning (e-learning), and knows how to integrate interpersonal and trainer-directed strategies that support and augment computer-based and self-directed learning activities.
3. The trainer knows how to use computer-based communication strategies, such as group e-mail, chat rooms, and list serves, to promote dialogue and interaction among learners.
4. The trainer knows how to use computer applications and communication strategies to promote transfer of learning and skill building by preparing trainees to attend training, and by providing regular opportunities for follow-up and coaching after training.
5. The trainer understands the strengths, benefits, and limitations of distance learning technologies, such as videoconferencing.
6. The trainer can make necessary modifications in presentation methods for videoconferencing, including: proper placement of equipment; positioning oneself relative to the camera and trainees; modulating volume and tone of voice; responding to questions and comments from group members, both on-and off-site; modifications in pace and style to accommodate concurrent language translation; the use of off-site facilitators; and training strategies that avoid "talking heads."
7. The trainer can address and resolve technical problems in computer or videoconferencing equipment during training sessions.
8. The trainer can demonstrate the application of concept, policy, or procedure to a family case by accessing and operating the agency's computerized database system during the training.
9. The trainer knows how to use computer hardware, software applications, and agency-specific databases that are relevant to the content area the trainer is teaching.