

## COMPETENCIES

Competencies, are the underlying personal characteristics and behaviours of an individual that are important contributors to predicting outstanding performance in a job within a particular organization. They mark the difference between average job performance and outstanding performance.

All employees working in Developmental Services are expected to possess the **THRESHOLD COMPETENCIES** in order to work effectively in this sector.

If you are preparing for an interview with MVACL, please familiarize yourself with these competencies and prepare examples of how you demonstrate these competencies.

The 4 Threshold Competencies are:

- SERVICE ORIENTATION
- SELF CONTROL
- VALUES & ETHICS
- FLEXIBILITY

As a Direct Support Professional, (DSP) you will work toward meeting the target levels of the Core Competencies, if you do not yet possess them.

The 7 Core Competencies of a Direct Support Professional are:

- ADVOCATING FOR OTHERS
- COLLABORATION
- CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING & DECISION MAKING
- FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE IN OTHERS
- INITIATIVE
- INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS & RESPECT
- RESILIENCE

The following pages include detailed descriptions of these competencies and the target level at which employees should meet.

If you would like more detailed information about Competencies in the DS sector visit the link below:

<http://www.ontariodevelopmentalservices.ca/sites/ontariodevelopmentalservices.ca/files/dictionary.pdf>

# THRESHOLD COMPETENCIES

## Flexibility (FLX)

### Definition

Flexibility is adapting to and working effectively within a variety of situations, and with various individuals or groups. Flexibility entails understanding and appreciating different and opposing perspectives on an issue or situation, adapting one's approach as the requirements of a situation change, and changing or easily accepting changes in one's own organization or job requirements.

### Why it's Important

Given the rapidly changing environment in which the sector finds itself, as well as the day-to-day challenges faced by employees, the ability to be adaptable, to be open to others' points of view, to juggle tasks and priorities, and shift gears in response to changing needs is a baseline competency.

### Level 1

Accepts need for flexibility

- Understands and respects differences in culture, working style and priorities, and tailors approach to deal with an issue/situation accordingly.
- Acknowledges that people are entitled to their opinions, and accepts that they are different.
- Demonstrates willingness to change ideas or perceptions based on new information or contrary evidence.
- Understands that other's point of view can be as valuable and as reasonable as one's own.
- Projects an open attitude when dealing with change.

### Level 2

Applies rules flexibly

- Alters normal procedures or guidelines to fit a specific situation to get a task done and/or meet goals (within acceptable boundaries).
- Temporarily altering procedures or guidelines is in contrast to changing processes in a more permanent way.
- Juggles multiple tasks, putting one or more on hold to handle an immediate need, and then returning to the original activities.
- Adjusts behaviour to meet changing demands.
- Exercises judgement to decide when special cases require flexibility in applying policies and procedures.

### Level 3

Adapts tactics

- Decides what to do or how to do something based on the situation.
- While maintaining the same overall goal or strategy, changes how to accomplish the goal.
- Acts to fit the situation or the person involved.
- Evaluates the situation and decides what approach to take based on the demands of the situation or the needs of the person.
- This may involve changing guidelines, processes, outcomes, etc., but would not include changing the overall strategy.

### Level 4

Adapts strategy

- Changes the overall plan or goal (i.e., what you're trying to accomplish) to fit the situation.
- Questions and revisits validity of own ideas and approaches, and changes strategy when existing approach proves ineffective.
- Makes organizational changes to meet the needs of a specific situation.

## Self-Control (SCT)

### Definition

Self-Control involves keeping one's emotions under control and restraining negative responses when provoked or when faced with opposition or hostility from others, or when working under conditions of stress. While anger and frustration may, at times, be justified, this competency is concerned with expressing or resolving it in an appropriate way that doesn't harm self or others, emotionally or physically.

### Why it's Important

This competency is a critical requirement given the nature of the work done by employees of this sector – dealing regularly with challenging situations – and is, therefore, a baseline competency, particularly for direct support roles.

### Level 1

Restrains emotional impulses

- Feels strong emotions (such as anger, frustration) and deals positively with them.
- Maintains composure in situations when one's opinions, recommendations or ideas are being challenged.
- Resists temptation to act immediately without thinking but does not take positive action.
- Asks for a "time-out" and removes self from the room or situation if necessary for safety of self or other; as appropriate and with consideration for other parties.
- Does not aggravate a situation.

### Level 2

Responds calmly in emotionally charged situations

- Knows personal reactions well and when capable of responding calmly.
- Maintains composure when challenged by others.
- Communicates with confidence, and produces explanation(s) calmly and reasonably to achieve desired results.
- Expresses divergent opinions and disagreements with tact.

### Level 3

Takes positive action to calm others

- Maintains composure when challenged unreasonably.
- Has the ability to intervene and strives to calm other party(ies) and find effective/acceptable solutions.
- Creates an atmosphere that puts others at ease during difficult times.
- Understands others' perspectives, builds consensus and negotiates effective solutions in difficult situations.
- May apply special techniques or plan ahead of time to manage emotions or stress.

### Level 4

Manages self in highly adverse situations

- Maintains self-control in the face of personally offensive provocation, and continues to work toward effective/acceptable solutions.
- Ensures own safety and safety of others.

## Service Orientation (SO)

### Definition

Service Orientation is about identifying and serving people who receive support, the public, colleagues, partners, coworkers and peers to best meet their needs. It is the ability to understand those underlying needs of others and to use this information to benefit those they serve/support – both those who receive support and others within the developmental services sector. Individuals demonstrating this competency are able to put him/herself into the mind of the people who receive support and understand needs from their point of view. It includes focusing one's efforts on discovering and meeting the needs of the people who receive support, including unexpressed and/or future needs, in order to develop a broad understanding of those they support.

### Why it's Important

Success requires a consistent focus on providing service to high standards. To provide quality service and support requires an ability to go the extra mile, to take accountability to help resolve issues, to seek to understand the underlying needs of the people who receive support, and provide the appropriate support and service, now and for the future.

#### Level 1 - Follows up

- Follows through on inquiries, requests, complaints from individuals, their families, community partners and others served by the agency.
- Keeps people up-to-date about all relevant information.

#### Level 2 - Maintains clear communication

- Maintains clear communication with individuals and families regarding mutual expectations, monitors satisfaction of those who receive support.
- Distributes helpful information to individuals and families.
- Ensures helpful, friendly service.

#### Level 3 - Takes personal responsibility

- Takes personal responsibility for resolving service issues.
- Responds to problems promptly and undefensively.

#### Level 4 - Takes action for the individual and/or families

- Makes self fully available, especially when individual and/or family is going through a critical period. For example, takes actions beyond normal expectations or may change the process to ensure accessibility to assistance or information.

#### Level 5 - Addresses underlying needs of the people who receive support

- Knows the individual's/family's issues/needs and/or seeks information about their real underlying needs, beyond those expressed initially.
- Matches these to available (or customized) support/services.

#### Level 6 - Uses a long-term perspective

- Uses a long-term perspective in addressing an individual's issues, needs, and problems.
- May trade off immediate costs for the sake of the long-term relationship.
- Looks for long-term benefits to the individual and/or family.
- Acts as a trusted advisor; involved in the individual's &/or family's decision-making process.
- Builds an independent opinion on their needs, problems, or opportunities and possibilities for implementation.
- Acts on this opinion (e.g., recommends approaches that are new and different from those requested by the individual and/or family).

## Values & Ethics (VE)

### Definition

Values and Ethics refers to depicting conduct, dispositions and viewpoints consistent with personal integrity, as well as concern for, and sensitivity to, the fundamental values and ethics of the agency/organization/sector and the profession. It includes the capacity for sound ethical judgment in an ethically complex work environment and in the face of pressures and constraints.

### Why it's Important

Those working within this sector are ambassadors for the sector as a whole. As such, their values and ethics can be construed as the values and ethics of the agency they represent. To maintain the respect accorded the sector it is essential that those working within it demonstrate high levels of integrity, and align one's behaviour to support the agency's and sector's values and ethics. This is essential to all roles, and is, therefore, a critical baseline competency.

**Level 1** - Demonstrates overall personal integrity and orientation towards fundamental values of the workplace

- Shows basic awareness of & concern for fundamental values & goals of the helping profession as a whole.
- Seeks guidance on details & norms of the profession and grasps the rationale behind them.
- Demonstrates evidence of character traits such as honesty, fairness, respect, tact, sensitivity to personal/professional boundaries and to personal differences, courage, equal concern for means and ends.
- Takes responsibility for one's own actions and for own mistakes once cognizant of them.
- Is able to avoid misbehaviour by following instructions, guidelines, procedures and policies. Is careful to understand his/her own limited knowledge and to act accordingly.

**Level 2** - Acts consistently with professional values and ethics

- Broadly understands professional values and ethics and the essential tensions among them.
- Seeks full understanding of facts and interests of all concerned when confronting ethical issues and dilemmas, and reflects upon all options in search of optimal solution (ethical judgment).
- Depicts a thorough understanding of the relevance of fundamental values and ethics of the profession to everyday work, and consistently attempts to apply them.
- Acts in support of an open and safe workplace atmosphere in which individuals feel encouraged to safely raise, discuss and address ethical issues.
- Openly acknowledges own errors of judgment without being prompted by others.

**Level 3** - Acts in accord with values and ethics when it is not easy to do so and promotes values and ethics in the profession

- Recognizes workplace practices and conventions that diverge from espoused professional ethics of the workplace and questions and challenges the discrepancies, occasionally at considerable risk to personal interests in the workplace.
- Practices and fosters in others ongoing, creative inquiry into the practical meaning of fundamental values of the profession.
- Demonstrates adherence to all ethical standards and encourages others to do the same.
- Promotes dialogue on relevance of ethics and values to daily issues and relevance of daily issues to the public good.

**Level 4** - Acts in accord with values & ethics when significant cost or risk is associated with doing so

- Challenges powerful (more experienced and senior) persons to act on espoused values and ethics.
- Actively and intensely challenges directives that do not align with professional values and ethics.
- Explains and develops ethical knowledge, standards and conduct in others.

# CORE COMPETENCIES

## Advocating for Others (AFO); Target Level 3

### Definition

Individuals demonstrating the competency “Advocating for Others” show through their behaviours an inclination to champion a cause or issue and try to get others to support it (i.e., trying to win the support of others).

### Why it’s Important

A core aspect of all roles is the demonstration of behaviours associated with advocating with impact – to champion a cause or issue, to speak up and draw the attention of others, and to direct decision makers towards a solution. Whether advocating in a direct support role, which is focused on “giving voice to others,” to individuals who cannot speak for themselves, or in a more senior leadership role, which is focused on advocating for the agency or the sector itself, demonstrating behaviours associated with advocating is critical.

### Level 1

States facts to persuade or motivate

- Uses direct persuasion in a discussion or presentation.
- May appeal to reason, data, and others’ self-interest.
- May use concrete examples, visual aids, demonstrations, etc.
- At this level, focuses on fact but makes no apparent attempt to adapt presentation to the interest and level of the audience (adapting presentation or language is level 3).

### Level 2

Takes multiple actions to encourage

- Makes two or more *different* arguments or points in a presentation or a discussion.
- Takes two or more steps to convince. Includes careful preparation of multiple sets of data for presentation (e.g. may use both statistics and actual examples).

### Level 3

Calculates impact of actions or words

- Adapts a presentation or discussion to appeal to the interest and level of others.
- Anticipates the effect of one’s words or actions on others’ perceptions of himself/herself.
- Takes a well-thought-out dramatic or unusual action in order to have a specific impact.
- Anticipates and prepares for others’ reactions.

## Collaboration (COLL); Target Level 3

### Definition

Collaboration is about communicating with others both within one's team as well as with individuals, agencies and organizations outside one's immediate work area or span of control (e.g., with community partners and stakeholders) to create alignment within and across groups. It is not only encouraging but expecting collaborative efforts and information sharing across agency/organizational lines toward shared outcomes.

### Why it's Important

This competency is about teamwork. Whether working with others within one's own team, cross-functionally, or in the community with community partners, the demonstrated willingness to collaborate effectively with others is critical to creating alignment within and across groups, and to providing high levels of service to those who are supported.

#### Level 1 - Collaborates/does own share of work

- Willingly accepts and quickly adapts to an assigned role as a member of a large or small team.
- Shares information with team members about actions or proposed changes that will affect them.
- Pitches in and works with others, in unusual circumstances or when necessary to get the job done.
- Shares expertise and insight with others (e.g., team discussions, brainstorming sessions).
- Clearly understands the goals of the team as well as the roles and responsibilities of each team member.
- Treats other team members with respect; recognizes that each person's contribution is valuable and essential to the overall success of the team.

#### Level 2 - Values others and solicits input

- Genuinely values others' input and expertise.
- Wants all members of a group to contribute to a process.
- Recognizes and builds on the good ideas of others and willingly seeks feedback on ideas.
- Willing to help and encourages others to learn new and different parts of their jobs by sharing knowledge, experience and information.
- Respects the expertise of others and takes advantage of opportunities to learn from them.
- Recognizes where strengths lie within and across departmental resources and taps into their expertise; makes best use of people's talents.
- Reinforces sharing of expertise between team members and among teams to achieve superior services/results.
- Values the diversity of talents, skills, cultures and backgrounds that others bring to joint team efforts.
- Builds positive relationships within and across teams.

#### Level 3 - Encourages others

- Credits others who have performed well.
- Encourages and empowers others, making them feel strong and important.
- Demonstrates own commitment to important initiatives by actively contributing to the efforts of a team and by recognizing the contributions of other team members.
- Is quick to provide guidance and support to new team members/other teams to facilitate learning.
- Encourages people to continue their efforts when they become discouraged.
- Objectively represents the needs of own work area in cross functional initiatives.

## **Creative Problem Solving & Decision Making (PSDM)**

### **Definition**

Creative Problem Solving and Decision Making is the demonstration of behaviours that enable one to identify and solve problems by understanding the situation, seeking additional information, developing and weighing alternatives, and choosing the most appropriate course of action given the circumstances. Problems can be solved by breaking the issue into smaller pieces or by identifying patterns or connections between situations that are not obviously related. It involves the willingness to and demonstration of behaviours associated with taking a creative approach to problems or issues. It includes “thinking outside of the box” to go beyond the conventional, and to explore creative uses of resources.

### **Why it's Important**

In this complex and rapidly transforming service environment, there is a need to be creative and innovative in solving problems and making decisions, for example, applying creative approaches to old problems, thinking about new and creative ways to deliver service as cost effectively as possible, etc. As the sector undergoes transformational change, it is increasingly important to be open to new approaches and ideas.

### **Level 1**

- Uses a common sense approach to solve problems
- Uses simple rules, common sense and past experiences to recognize problems.
- Responds to situations at face value.
- Identifies component parts of problems or situations.
- Breaks problems down into simple lists, activities or tasks, without assigning values or priorities.
- Sees single causal links between components of a problem/situation (e.g., “if this, then that” thinking).

### **Level 2**

- Is open to new ideas/solutions
- Is open minded when presented with a new perspective.
- Applies new information to work problems and situations.
- Recognizes when a situation calls for or can be improved by an approach different from the usual.

### **Level 3 Direct Support Professionals**

- Understands and acts on basic relationships
- Breaks down a problem/issue into its component parts.
- Identifies discrepancies, trends and interrelationships in data.
- Recognizes and acts on cause and effect relationships (A leads to B).
- Recognizes that problems may be multi-dimensional.
- Divides issues into categories (e.g., pros and cons).
- Looks behind the face value of a set of facts; understands less obvious implications.
- Uses knowledge and/or experience to understand, evaluate and solve problems/issues.



## **Fostering Independence in Others (FIO)**

### **Definition**

Fostering Independence in Others is about enabling others to be self-sufficient and to nurture self-determination. It is also the sharing of responsibility with individuals and groups so that they have a deep sense of commitment and ownership.

### **Why it's Important**

This competency is focused on empowering others – both staff and individuals whom we support – enabling them to be self-sufficient and nurturing self-determination. It is a critical competency both at the direct support level, in empowering individuals with developmental disabilities, and at the management level, in empowering employees to reach their potential.

### **Level 1**

- Provides encouragement
- Expresses positive expectations of others in terms of their potential (e.g., individuals, employees, families), speaks of them in positive terms.
- Shows respect for others' capabilities.
  
- Publicly credits others who have performed well, making them feel stronger, more capable, and able to function to the best of their abilities.

### **Level 2**

- Provides training and support
- Demonstrates how to accomplish tasks to acceptable levels, and provides them with the information, tools and resources to best function and enable them to complete tasks and/or make decisions.
- Maintains clear communication regarding mutual expectations.
- Provides instruction, guidance and support in a helpful and supportive manner.

### **Level 3**

- Delegates
- Gives routine tasks to individuals or employees.
- Demonstrates trust by recognizing and acknowledging that others have the skills and abilities necessary to achieve goals or desired outcomes.
- Supports others during the transition of responsibility.
- Monitors to ensure tasks are completed successfully and provides feedback as appropriate.

## Initiative (INT)

### Definition

Initiative is about taking action, proactively doing things and not simply thinking about future actions. The time frame of this scale moves from addressing current opportunities or problems (being reactive) to acting on future opportunities or problems (being proactive). People with this competency are action-oriented – they act in the present to create value in the future.

### Why it's Important

This competency is about being proactive – having a bias for action. Effective performance in direct support roles requires the ability to think and plan ahead, anticipate and prepare for problems versus reacting to them (i.e., “putting out fires”). At more senior levels, this is captured in the Strategic Thinking competency.

### Level 1

Addresses current opportunities or problems

- Recognizes and acts upon present opportunities or problems (usually within a one or two day timeframe).
- Takes the initiative – identifies a current problem and takes ownership of it, working on it until it is resolved.
- Takes action to overcome immediate obstacles/barriers to success.
- Is alert to opportunities for innovative solutions to problems and pursues them.
- Works independently, does his/her work without constant supervision.

### Level 2

Takes action under pressure

- Makes time-critical decisions even when only limited information may be available.
- Acts promptly and with confidence when a situation requires a quick decision.
- Proactively manages own time.

### Level 3

Thinks and plans ahead

- Thinks ahead and plans for contingencies and effectively prepares and organizes resources and activities (usually taking place within 3 months).
- Makes sure things aren't left to chance; sets up contingency plans to deal with last minute changes, ensures sufficient follow-up to check on progress, uncover potential problems and identify areas where support/assistance might be needed.
- Anticipates and prepares for problems that may interfere with work or attainment of results.

## Interpersonal Relations & Respect (IRR)

### Definition

Interpersonal Relations and Respect involves dealing with people in a respectful and sensitive manner. It implies truly listening, understanding, accepting and respecting the opinions, feelings, perspectives and motivations of others. It is also the demonstrated willingness to use this knowledge to shape one's own responses and to show a concern for the welfare, dignity and feelings of others.

### Why it's Important

This competency is focused on interpersonal understanding – communicating effectively, demonstrating empathy, and gaining a deeper understanding of others and their behaviour. Whether interacting with colleagues or people with developmental disabilities and their families, demonstrating high levels of interpersonal understanding is critical to effective relationship building and collaboration, and providing high quality service and support.

### Level 1

Listens respectfully to others

- Treats people with respect, dignity and courtesy in all situations.
- Listens respectfully to others; picks up clues to others' feelings or meanings, or listens when approached by others.
- Pays close attention to and accurately interprets behaviours of others (e.g., body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, nuances, questions).

### Level 2

Actively seeks to understand and responds appropriately

- Takes the time to draw out and understand the interests, concerns and objectives of others.
- Responds to people's concerns by altering one's own behaviour in a helpful, "responsive" manner.
- Respects others' values and goals.
- Shows concern, consideration and respect for others, including people with different values, background, culture and personalities.
- Able to gain the confidence of others and establish good working rapport with people from different backgrounds or cultures.

### Level 3

Effectively uses empathy

- Genuinely sees things from another person's perspective.
- Takes a careful read of the atmosphere to accurately anticipate how individuals and groups will react, and tailors approach accordingly, pushing forward or holding back, as necessary.
- Determines and uses the best response to calm irate, upset, or agitated individuals/people who receive support who find themselves in stressful or crisis situations (e.g., uses humour, empathic listening, explanations, etc.).
- Sincerely cares for what people are experiencing and acts accordingly.
- Consistently and effortlessly adjusts behaviours to current, unexpressed or poorly expressed thoughts, concerns, or feelings to enhance the relationship.
- Produces good results when working with others by displaying tact, cooperation, sensitivity and respect for the opinions and situations of others and their culture.

## **Resilience (RES)**

### **Definition**

Resilience involves maintaining stamina and performance under continuing stress, and to act effectively under pressure. It includes bouncing back from disappointments or confrontations, not letting them negatively influence ongoing performance. Resilient people consistently display determination, self-discipline and commitment in spite of setbacks or lack of support, and a willingness to take a stand when appropriate.

### **Why it's Important**

Those roles that provide service and support to people with developmental disabilities (i.e., Direct Support roles, Specialized Support Workers and Clinical Specialists) may experience significant work-related stress. For this reason, it is critical to be able to continue to consistently demonstrate high levels of performance – providing high quality service and support – to the people we support and their families.

### **Level 1**

Tries to maintain consistency of performance

- Accepts the need to perform monotonous and routine tasks and sees their value.
- Tries hard to maintain level of work effort as pressure increases.
- Tries to maintain a positive outlook as pressure increases.

### **Level 2**

- Performs well under normal pressure
- Maintains self-motivation in face of routine/repetitive tasks.
- Maintains high quality standards regardless of task performed.
- Maintains level of outputs as pressure increases.

### **Level 3**

Overcomes obstacles and/or distractions in specific situations (short to medium term)

- Focuses on how to successfully meet a challenge rather than on the obstacles or constraints.
- Persists with tasks and maintains output when barriers are perceived/encountered.
- Maintains positive demeanour and self-motivation under trying conditions.

### **Level 4**

Delivers results with a high level of consistency over a long period of time

- Demonstrates ongoing commitment to complete routine tasks over the long term.
- Persists (over a long period of time) with difficult tasks.
- Manages own stress effectively.
- Sticks with tasks despite meeting frequent and/or repeated rejection and/or frustration.
- Maintains positive demeanour and high levels of self-motivation whatever the circumstances.
- Remains steadfast and ensures service providers, agencies, community partners, etc., continue to deliver the level of service agreed upon.