

# BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES

for Canada's Substance  
Use Workforce v. 2

**Adapting the Proficiency Profiles**



Canadian Centre  
on Substance Use  
and Addiction

Evidence. Engagement. Impact.

## ADAPTING THE PROFICIENCY PROFILES

Organizations differ in staffing, workload, populations they serve, settings they work in and type of substance use they provide services for. Based on these factors, competency requirements may need to be modified from one organization to the next. Specifically, the generic Behavioural Competency Profiles table may need to be adapted to the needs of your organization.

The following steps provide a high-level overview on how to adapt a competency profile to appropriately reflect the competencies required for a specific job in a specific organization. A sample adapted profile follows.

1. **Review the job description** for the position you are profiling; for example, a counselling job description (see sample job description in the example that follows).
2. **Review the competency profile** for the occupational cluster relevant to the job available on CCSA's website.
3. **Review the Behavioural Competencies** to become familiar with the indicators at each proficiency level.
  - First look at the competencies and proficiency levels that are suggested in the profile to understand the scope already covered by the profile and how it is relevant to the position you are profiling.
  - Then review the other Behavioural Competencies to determine if additional or alternate competencies are required.

Some competencies are similar in nature due to the overlap of behaviours that one would expect to see demonstrated for them. This is an important consideration when determining which competencies should be included in the profile. It is not necessary to include two similar competencies if one of them sufficiently covers the critical requirements for the job. Ensure you read all the behaviour indicators for each competency to understand the distinctions among them.

The following list suggests some potential overlapping competencies:

Adaptability and Flexibility	← →	Self-motivation
Effective Communication	← →	Interpersonal Rapport
Continuous Learning	← →	Developing Others
Self-care	← →	Self-management
Collaboration and Networking Building	← →	Teamwork and Cooperation



4. For the Behavioural Competencies that are relevant, **confirm or adjust the proficiency levels** by comparing the job requirements as stated in the job description with the behaviour indicators in the competencies.
5. **Add or remove competencies or indicators** from the profile as appropriate, ensuring that core indicators such as culturally safe and anti-oppressive practice, sex, gender, equity, inclusion and diversity are preserved. For new competencies, select the relevant proficiency levels that most accurately reflect the job requirements. If you wish to include Technical Competencies in the profile, refer to the Technical Competencies document provided on CCSA's website.
6. **Record the revised competency** profile in the table provided below and use this profile in interviewing or performance management tools processes. See CCSA's website for additional tools related to competency-based interviewing and competency-based performance management.

A job competency profile includes only the critical competencies required for the job, not those that are “nice to have”—that is, not essential to performing the job successfully.

Preferably, each profile should have no more than 12 competencies.

7. **Validate the competency profile with subject-matter experts.** It is important to ensure that your revised competency profile is valid for use in human resources processes, such as performance management and recruitment. This means presenting it to and reviewing it with stakeholders and subject-matter experts such as job incumbents, their supervisors and managers, human resource representatives, and any union representatives, where applicable. During the review, to ensure consistency of competencies and proficiency levels, compare the job competency profile that you have developed to other profiles that have already been developed.
8. **Include sex, gender, equity, inclusion and diversity considerations in all job descriptions.** Sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA+) is relevant to all jobs in the substance use field. It is a process of analysis that examines how factors related to sex, gender and diversity affect substance use and addiction. This information needs to be integrated into all health services, programs, policies, recommendations, practices and job descriptions for the substance use field. To do so involves assembling relevant evidence, examining sex- and gender-related factors, and determining how they intersect with other diversity factors to inform programs, policies and services. SGBA+ analysis must inform job descriptions and performance management.

All people are impacted by these factors in some way, but some organizations work with populations highly impacted by them, such as, for example, formerly incarcerated men, pregnant women using opioids, individuals with intellectual disabilities using alcohol and so on. For these organizations, it is essential that proficiency profiles are adapted to assess for the knowledge and skills needed for working with these vulnerable populations. Adapting competencies and proficiency profiles to reflect work with such populations is a key way of integrating SGBA+ considerations. The following questions may be helpful for this process:

**Populations**

- How can you identify important populations?
- What is the socioeconomic status of these populations?
- What might be the issues related to sex, gender and equity experienced by these populations?
- How might you adapt the competencies and proficiency profiles to assess knowledge and skills for successfully working with these populations?

**Settings**

- What features of the setting will have an impact on interventions for each gender group?
- How do gendered features of the setting impact health outcomes?
- How are women, men and gender diverse people usually positioned in the setting?
- How might you adapt the competencies and proficiency profiles to assess knowledge and skills for successfully working in these specific settings?

**Substance**

- How do sex, gender, diversity and equity inform the use of this substance?
- What are the intersecting determinants experienced by each gender group?
- How has gender and equity typically been addressed?
- How might you adapt the competencies and proficiency profiles to assess knowledge and skills for successfully working with this type of substance use and the intersecting determinants experienced by groups using this substance?

Adapted from Worksheet on SGBA+ Portals prepared for CCSA by Galvanizing Equity Group. For more information on SGBA+, visit <https://www.ccsa.ca/sex-and-gender-based-analysis>.

Behavioural Competencies		Proficiency Level
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

## Sample Adapted Profile

The following example uses a substance use counsellor job description and the counselling profile to determine the revised profile for the position. The relevant competencies are highlighted to illustrate how the wording in the job description is closely linked to the competencies.

### Sample Job Description: Substance Use Counsellor

#### ROLE:

The main focus of this position is to provide specialized counselling, education and support services to individuals, families and the community. The substance use counsellor helps people understand and address substance use and related matters, including mental health concerns, sex, gender and intersectional factors, family and social relationships, and lifestyle changes. The counsellor is expected to work collaboratively with a multi-disciplinary team of professionals within the organization as well as people seeking services, families, caregivers and friends, and to establish and maintain partnerships with related community organizations. This position is non-supervisory and reports to the assigned clinical supervisor and program.

#### DUTIES:

##### Counselling

- Consult with people from diverse backgrounds to determine their needs and interest for participation in a particular program
- Conduct bio-psychosocial assessments and collaborate with people to design person-directed, gender-sensitive, strengths-based strategies, reflecting evidence-informed approaches, best practices and clinical experience
- Conduct individual, group, family and caregiver counselling sessions in a professional and ethical manner, following all recognized standards, legislation and guidelines relevant to clinical practice
- Counsel family members, caregivers and significant others to assist them in understanding and supporting people
- Respond to requests and crises in a responsible, timely and flexible way
- Develop discharge plans in consultation with people and related professionals and organizations
- Match services and interventions to people and their unique needs and circumstances

Person-directed Care

Effective Communication

Interpersonal Rapport

Effective Communication

Planning and Organizing

Culturally Safe and Anti-oppressive Practice

Ethical Conduct and Professionalism

Adaptability and Flexibility

##### Education, Training, Prevention

- Develop, implement and evaluate public education, treatment, prevention and health promotion programs related to substance use based on evidence-informed best practices, and in collaboration with related professionals, organizations and communities
  - Develop, implement and evaluate substance use programs within the organization
- Present self in an approachable and friendly manner as an ethical representative of a professional community organization

**DUTIES:**

**Community Consultation**

Collaboration and Network Building

Continuous Learning

- Establish and maintain professional working relationships and regular communication with community and other related organizations
- Participate on committees, teams or work groups at the local, provincial, regional and national levels
- Participate in knowledge exchange activities with related organizations by maintaining regular correspondence, sharing and inquiring about resources, and advocating for quality service delivery
- Coordinate referrals, admissions and discharges with related organizations

Teamwork and Cooperation

**Professional Development**

Continuous Learning

- Participate in ongoing professional development activities, and engage in reciprocal relationships of learning with colleagues to stay current in the field
- Participate in regular individual and team supervision meetings
- Implement related learning and professional development plans as discussed with supervisor
- Maintain professional credentialing, certification and continuing education requirements, on own initiative and in conjunction with organizational resources, where available

Teamwork and Cooperation

**Administration**

Ethical Conduct and Professionalism

- Maintain current and accurate confidential records of client files, and attend to related requests for documentation in a timely and consistent manner
- Follow the policy and procedures of the organization, and consult with supervisor as needed

Planning and Organizing

**EDUCATION AND SKILLS:**

Adaptability and Flexibility

- Bachelor's or master's degree in social work, psychology or a related discipline, or recognized community college diploma in the helping professions with two to four years' related experience
- Thorough knowledge of substance use cause and effects, evidence-informed models of treatment intervention and their application to diverse populations
- Knowledge of individual, family, group and crisis counselling methods
- Training in SGBA+ and culturally safe practices
- Ability to deal with life-threatening situations, including suicidal ideation or suicidality
- Flexibility to work evenings and respond to occasional crisis calls from colleagues and clients outside of working hours
- Comprehensive skills in case management, collaboration, program development and evaluation, and emergency response

The tables below show the comparison between the profile from the Behavioural Competency Profiles table and the revised behavioural competencies as identified from a review of the sample job description.

Behavioural Competencies for Counsellor Profile	Generic Proficiency Levels
1. Adaptability and Flexibility	3
2. Analytical Thinking and Decision Making	3
3. Continuous Learning	2
4. Culturally Safe and Anti-Oppressive Practice	3
5. Effective Communication	3
6. Ethical Conduct and Professionalism	2
7. Interpersonal Rapport	3
8. Person-directed Care	3
9. Self-care	3
10. Self-management	2
11. Teamwork and Cooperation	2

Behavioural Competencies for Sample Counsellor Position	Revised Proficiency Levels
1. Adaptability and Flexibility	3
2. Analytical Thinking and Decision Making	3
3. Continuous Learning	2
4. Culturally Safe and Anti-Oppressive Practice	3
5. Effective Communication	3
6. Ethical Conduct and Professionalism	2
7. Interpersonal Rapport	3
8. Person-directed care	3
9. Self-care	3
10. Teamwork and Cooperation	2
11. Collaboration and Network Building	2
12. Planning and Organizing	3

The revised profile should be validated by subject-matter experts and direct supervisors or managers of the role before it is implemented.