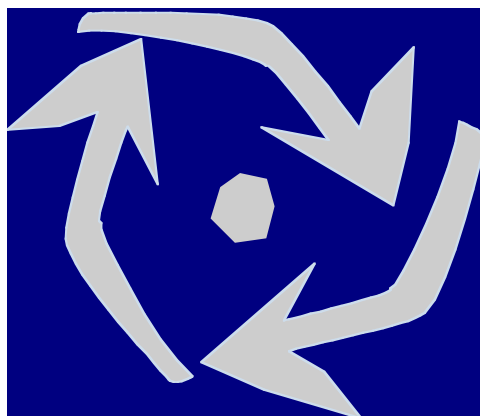


# A Competency Model for Adolescent Caseworkers

*Partnering with youth as they transition  
to independence*



**Institute for Public Sector Innovation**



**A Competency Model for Adolescent Caseworkers:  
Partnering with Youth as  
They Transition to Independence**

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**Institute for Public Sector Innovation  
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University of Southern Maine**

In January 1996, the University of Maine System approved the Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI) as one of the three institutes that make up the Research Programs of the Muskie School. IPSI grew out of two major collaborations with the Maine Department of Human Services under the State/University Partnership agreement: the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) (established in 1989) and the Department of Human Services Training Institute (DHSTI) (established in 1992). These projects continue to be major components of IPSI, along with expanded projects in collaboration with other State and Federal agencies such as the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services; Juvenile Justice and Corrections; Education; and Maine's Judiciary. IPSI activities now include areas such as strategic planning, organizational development, applied research, computer-based technology, information systems, cross-system collaboration, and performance management.

IPSI has a vision of competent and caring people in high performance organizations creatively working together to promote the public good. Recognizing the potential of people and organizations, IPSI serves the public good by promoting individual and organizational effectiveness and responsiveness in a climate of change. As a learning organization, IPSI functions within a set of core competencies that include flexibility, collaboration, independence, and commitment.

IPSI models and fosters a set of common values and action principles built on six unifying themes, including fostering self-responsibility, striving for excellence, valuing diverse perspectives, systems thinking, team learning, and modeling positive behavior.

## Acknowledgments

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Institute staff involved in the competency model development include:

Freda Bernotavicz, who directed the development of the model and the report;

Penny Jordan who coordinated the data-gathering process and production of the first draft;

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# I. OVERVIEW

## A. BACKGROUND

Each year over 20,000 young people, aged 18 and 19 leave foster care with no formal connection to their families. Many of them show high rates of homelessness, teen child bearing and delinquent or criminal behavior; or are targets of crime and physical abuse. In 1999, recognizing the scope and seriousness of this problem, Congress passed the Foster Care Independence Act and initiated the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program to provide states with increased funding and flexibility to help youth make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. The legislation also demonstrates a commitment to provide services to former foster youth, 18-21 years old, and to provide youth opportunities for active participation in their own transition to adulthood and accept personal responsibility for living up to their part of the program.

Independent living services and activities currently include educational and employment assistance, training in basic living skills (budgeting, housekeeping, food shopping, building and maintaining positive social relationships), counseling, case management and outreach services. The new legislation allows the use of funds for additional activities including room and board, age appropriate services to youth younger than 16 and post secondary educational assistance and preventive health activities.

In 2000, the Children's Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) funded twelve three-year projects to train child welfare practitioners to work effectively with youth transitioning out of foster care. The twelve projects address several common knowledge and skill areas within a competency-based framework that views the youth as a resource and active participant. In addition to shared goals, each project includes unique approaches for the development of its particular curriculum and subsequent training program. This Competency Model for Adolescent Caseworkers has been developed by the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine as the basis for competency-based training in the six New England states.

### *Competency Based Approach*

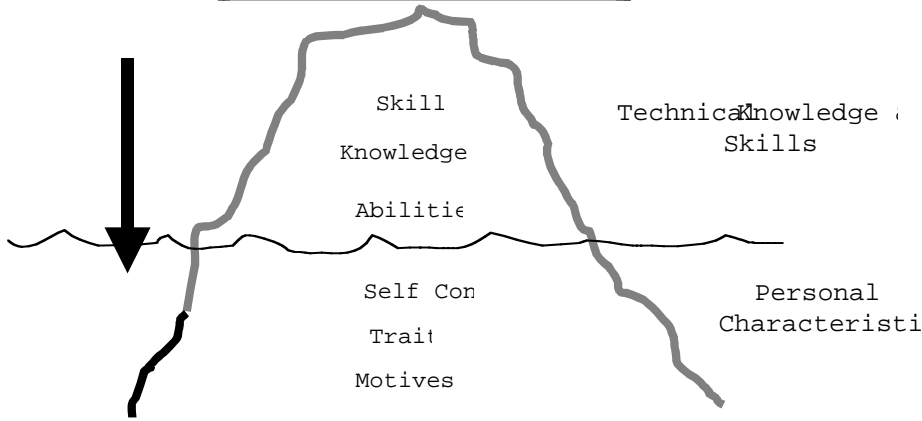
The approach to competency-based training represented by this model is based on a holistic view of the competencies needed for effective performance on the job which includes the specific job tasks, the individual performing the job, and the organizational context. Following is a brief rationale for a holistic approach to identifying the competencies needed for effective job performance.

**Tasks:** Jobs are more than a sum of the specific job tasks. Jobs are not static, but particularly in today's volatile work environment, made up of a variety of responsibilities that change in response to emerging needs of the organization. People do not perform tasks in a neat sequence, one at a time, but, in the real world of people, juggle several tasks at once, shifting gears and setting priorities in media res. Thus, anticipating new priorities, collaborating with others and managing the workload are all essential job functions in addition to the specific tasks that form the core responsibilities. The mechanistic view of jobs, as a listing of job duties that can be defined in a job description, is being replaced by a more organic view of jobs as a fluid set of responsibilities.

Further, new organizational patterns are promoting the concept of inclusion and participation, recognizing that to be effective an organization needs input from all levels. As we move towards these new organizational structures the concept of people performing specific tasks in isolation becomes less relevant. The concept of "contextual performance" recognizes that effective organizations need people who commit significant time and effort to extra-job activities such as volunteering on committees, mentoring new employees and supporting the organization's goals.

**Individual:** People at work are whole persons. Using the metaphor of an iceberg, above the surface, we can observe the knowledge skills and abilities (often called the KSAs) needed to perform the job tasks, but below the surface are a number of personal characteristics (their attitudes, values, traits, motives) that influence how well they do their job as a whole. This entire range of KSAs and personal characteristics make up the competencies needed for effective performance.

**INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES**



Studies have shown that the competencies which distinguish outstanding performers, the "waterwalkers" or "stars" in a particular job or role, tend to be the underlying personal characteristics such as flexibility or results orientation, rather than KSAs such as interviewing skills or the ability to

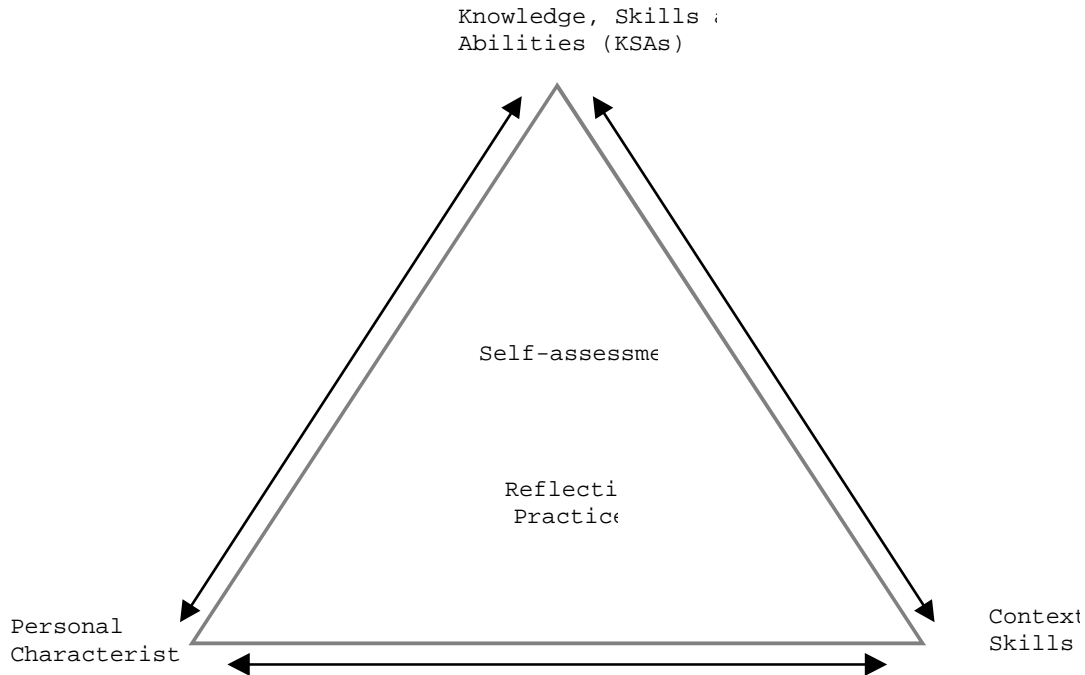
operate a particular piece of equipment. Because the underlying personal characteristics are more difficult to change, it makes sense to screen and hire for individuals with the necessary underlying personal characteristics and train for the KSAs once people are on the job.

**Context:** Jobs are not performed in a vacuum but in specific organizational settings. The mission and goals of the organization, its customers or clients, policies, procedures, structure, culture and climate all impact on how the job is defined and therefore what constitutes effective job performance. Therefore a holistic view of competencies also includes the contextual knowledge and skills needed to be effective in a specific organization.

Some of the necessary contextual knowledge and skills are readily acquired in an orientation program. For example, the specific policies and procedures of the organization, the standard operating procedures (SOPs), the specific software program or information system, the organizational structure and reporting relationship are all appropriate content for on-the-job training. Other contextual skills are less easy to acquire on the job. For example, the organizational culture of an organization may require a degree of conformity and deference to authority which an otherwise qualified individual may not be able to demonstrate. In these instances, it is appropriate to identify the necessary contextual skills and to screen for them in the hiring process.

**Holistic Approach:** A systems view of job performance suggests a continual, dynamic interaction among these three major components: the tasks or job duties, the individual performing the job, and the organizational setting or context.

## COMPETENCY MODEL COMPONENTS



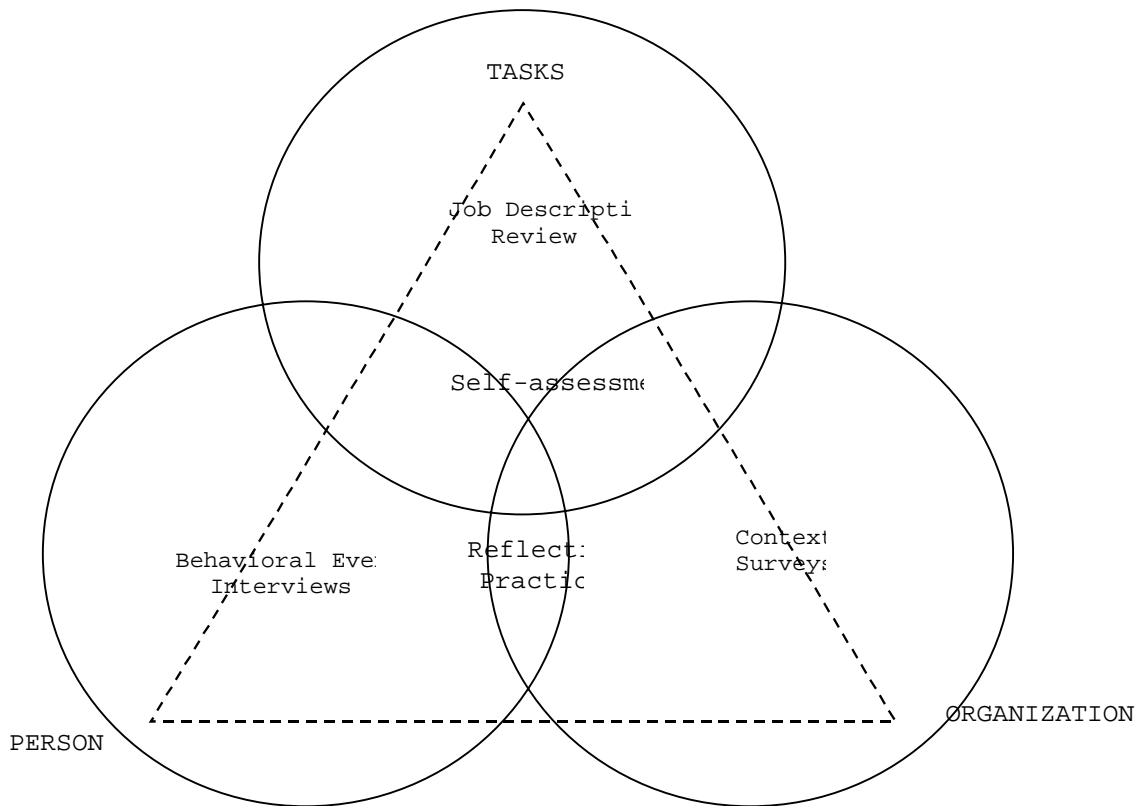
A holistic view of competencies includes all three components: the KSAs which are needed to perform the tasks; the underlying personal characteristics that distinguish effective performers (the attitudes, values, traits and motives which drive people to action); and the context skills and knowledge needed in the specific organizational setting.

### **B. DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC COMPETENCY MODEL**

Developing a holistic competency model requires combining several different approaches to the analysis of job performance and to the collection of data. This approach has been used by the Muskie School to develop a number of competency models including Child Welfare Caseworkers and Casework Supervisors, Adoptive and Foster Parents, Licensing and Out of Home Abuse Investigators and Child Support Enforcement Agents.

## COMPETENCY BASED CURRICULUM

### COMPETENCY MODEL COMPONENTS



**Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs):** The functional or task-related knowledge and skills are developed through task analysis using both on-site observation and expert opinion. Here the focus is on generating detailed listings of the job duties and then identifying what people need to know, or to be able to do, in order to perform these tasks. People familiar with the job (incumbents, supervisors or trainers), the so-called Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), are used to identify this information.

**Personal Characteristics:** The characteristics of outstanding performers are generated through a technique known as the Behavioral Event Interview. Using a structured approach, trained interviewers probe beneath the surface to articulate the underlying characteristics of individuals who have been identified as being outstanding in their particular job.

**Context Knowledge and Skills:** The identification of the context knowledge and skills requires yet another approach. Here the unit of analysis moves from the specific job tasks to the organizational setting. Some of this information is drawn from organizational data in policy and procedures manuals. Surveys or focus groups provide more in-depth information on the organizational culture and climate.

This holistic approach to competency identification results in a complete five categories:

- |     |                         |   |
|-----|-------------------------|---|
| (1) | Work Management Skills: | Performing effectively in the work context.     |
| (2) | Conceptual Skills:      | Using information effectively.                  |
| (3) | Interpersonal Skills:   | Relating to others effectively.                 |
| (4) | Self-Management Skills: | Effective use of self in the job.               |
| (5) | Technical Knowledge:    | Information necessary to perform the job tasks. |

Each category contains a list of competencies with specific indicators that demonstrate performance.

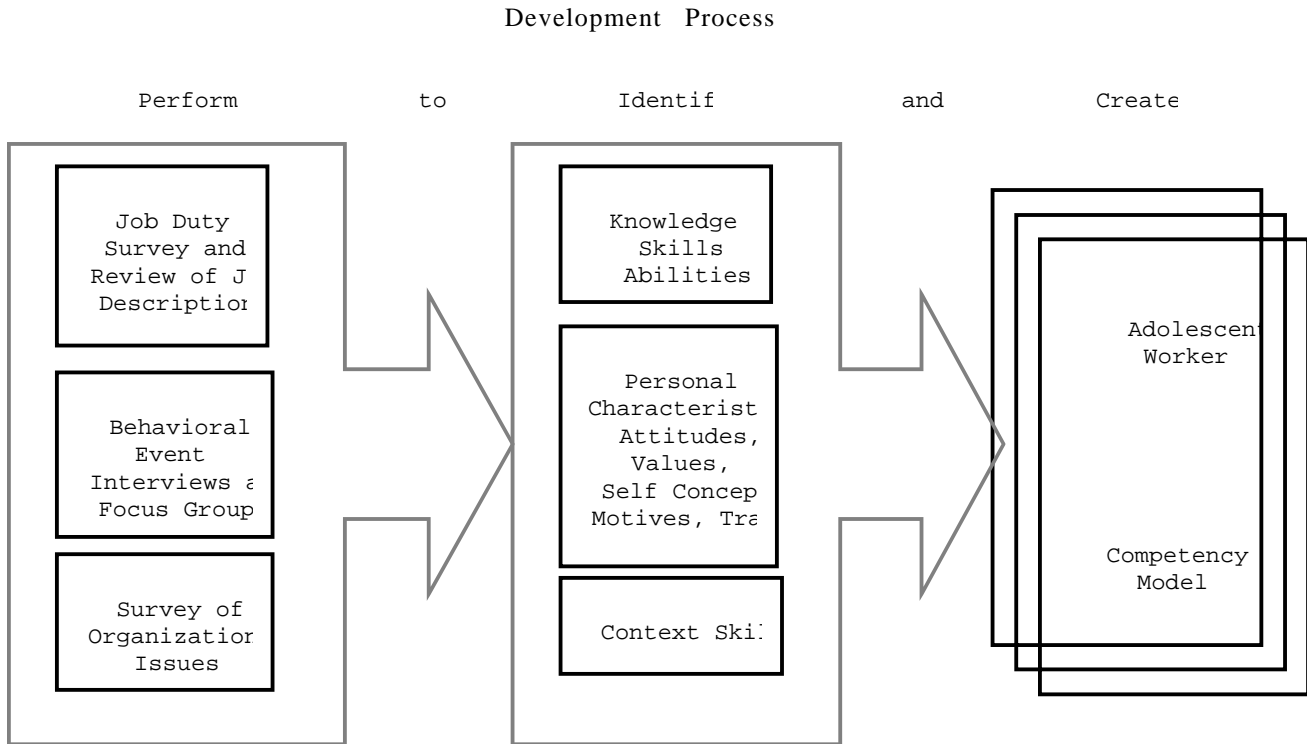
Data from each of the different approaches are combined and redundancies eliminated. The resulting model is then reviewed and validated by focus groups familiar with the job in question. Such reviews ensure that both concepts and language accurately reflect the experience of those most knowledgeable about effective performance.

A holistic approach also recognizes that effective functioning in the real world of work involves the capacity to learn from experience and to manage change. The truly competent professional is engaged in an ongoing process of self-assessment and reflective practice. Accordingly, linking all these skills (as a meta-competency), a comprehensive competency model emphasizes self-awareness and reflective practice as the basis for self-directed, ongoing learning to bridge the gap from the classroom to job performance in the real world of work. Viewed from a holistic perspective, effectiveness on the job is a process, a constant spiral of learning, growth and renewal that stems from the individual's inner core of competencies, her or his attitudes, values and motives. Because training can address this inner core only to a limited extent, the responsibility for the on-going process of effectiveness must rest with each individual. In this constant spiral of learning and growth, of reflecting upon and learning from experience, the individual is engaged in a continual process of becoming competent at being competent.

## II. DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPETENCY MODEL FOR ADOLESCENT CASEWORKERS

### A. APPROACH

The approach described above was used to develop a competency model for Adolescent Caseworkers and included a number of data gathering techniques as indicated in the following graphic.



#### ***Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Needed to Perform the Job Tasks***

The approach focuses first on the specific tasks or duties that make up a job or role. Job descriptions for Adolescent Caseworkers from the six New England states were collected and analyzed to identify task-related knowledge and skills.

#### ***Characteristics of Outstanding Performers***

This component of the training model attempts to get below the surface of observable behavior to identify the personal characteristics (e.g. values, motives, traits) that distinguish people who are outstanding in the particular role. To identify the interview sample for this training program, managers and supervisors in Connecticut, Maine and Massachusetts were asked to nominate two outstanding Adolescent Caseworkers in each state. Nominations were based on criteria identified by youth.

Each of the outstanding caseworkers participated in a two-hour, tape-recorded interview with an individual trained and certified in Behavioral Event Interviewing. Each caseworker was asked to describe key events (high points and low points) in their experience as Adolescent Caseworkers. Through the use of follow-up questions, the interviewer probed beneath the surface to identify the thoughts, feelings, motives and values of the workers during these key episodes. The youth perspective on the

characteristics of outstanding caseworkers was developed through an in-depth behavioral interview and a focus group with youth.

Detailed analysis of the transcripts produced several examples or behavioral indicators of the competencies or personal characteristics that distinguish effective caseworkers.

### ***Context Skills***

Context skills identify the competencies required to function effectively in a specific organizational setting. To complete the picture of the competencies needed for effective performance in each of the three states, two data gathering approaches were used. First, information about the specific context knowledge and skills needed was collected from the Department of Human Services' policy manuals and mission statements in each state, as well as from federal and state statutes. In addition, a survey was mailed to caseworkers, supervisors and managers in each of the states, asking them to rate the organizational issues (mission, policy and procedures, professional standards, external environment, and culture/climate) which impact on job performance in the agency. Analysis of their responses produced a list of context skills that was incorporated into the competency model.

### ***Self Assessment and Reflective Practice***

The competency listing was reviewed to ensure adequate representation of self-assessment and reflective practice skills, especially in the category of Self-Management Skills. In addition, the literature on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998) was reviewed to ensure that key competencies in this area had not been overlooked.

### ***Developing a Draft Model***

Project staff and youth advisors reviewed all of the data collected from the multiple sources and met in several lengthy sessions to identify common themes and group indicators from the interview transcripts into competency clusters. Existing competency models and other relevant reports were also reviewed (Rycus and Hughes, 1994; Sheehy, Oldham, Zanghi, Ansell, Correia & Copeland, 2000) and information incorporated into the model.

## **B. REVIEW AND VERIFICATION**

Once a draft competency model had been developed, a meeting was held with two youth and six outstanding caseworkers that had participated in the interviews to review and revise the entire listing. These reviews resulted in changing the language to make it more reflective of the target audience, and in building familiarity and ownership of the competencies.

The experienced caseworkers also noted that the competencies reflect the ideal and that in the real world of practice a key competency is the ability to know how to work within the system. In response to their input, a competency related to political savvy, the ability to know what you need to do to be in compliance with policy and what you can "get away with" was added. It is interesting to note that this competency was also identified as critical to effective functioning in a bureaucracy in one of the first competency studies conducted (Goleman, 1981).

### III. COMPETENCIES IN CONTEXT

#### A. ROLES

Review of the competency model suggests three primary roles played by Adolescent Caseworkers: Coach, Networker, and Advocate.

**COACH:** This role comprises the predominant component of the workers' time. Perhaps as much as 70% of their time is dedicated to this area. Much of the workers' functions revolve around their various relationships with the youth. They act as teachers, role models, guides, friends, companions etc. At times they act as "family" for the youth with whom they are working, and in many cases, they are the only "parental" figures in the young person's life. In the five major functions that workers assume in this category, workers are always mindful of maintaining safety for the youth.

The five functions of workers are to listen, plan, provide experience, practice, and reflect.

**Listen:** The workers are there to listen, understand and give the youth a "voice," by providing a chance to be heard. They help the youth identify what they need and want. This is the early stage of developing an in-depth relationship with the youth.

**Plan:** The workers assist the youth formally (using life skills assessment tools) and informally assessing and planning their personal goals and guiding the direction the youth wants to move in. The focus is on the youth's wants and needs, more than on maintaining compliance.

**Provide Experience:** Here, workers let the youth experience "real life" by creating and supporting the youth through experiential learning. The context may be a three-day canoe trip, accompanying the youth in the process of getting his/her driver's license, or the youth deciding to drop out of a substance abuse rehabilitation program. Special attention is given to providing the youth the space necessary to try something first hand, succeed, fail, and try again, with supportive adults there when needed.

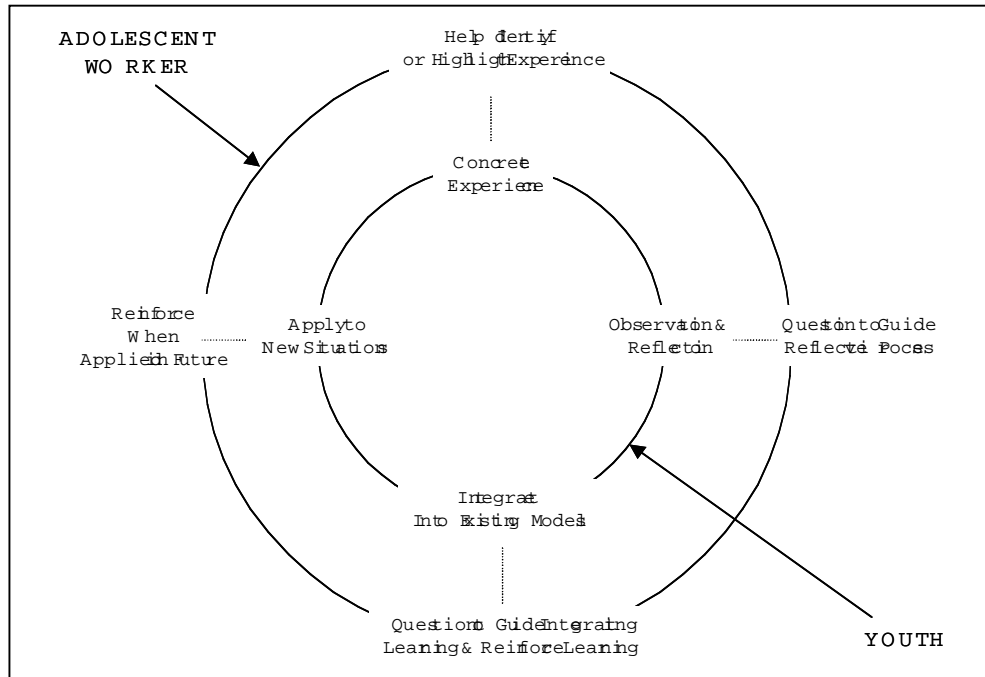
**Practice:** This is very similar to the "Provide Experience" function described above. However, in this instance the process is more planful (e.g. Semi-independent living program) and preparatory. Workers may help the youth prepare for a job interview, a meeting with care providers, or writing a college essay. Like a coach preparing a team or individual for a sporting event, the workers are preparing the youth for real world situations/events.

**Reflect:** The worker helps the youth reflect, review and decide whether the approach they have taken and decisions they have made have been in their best interest.

This process occurs in a cycle that includes: *Concrete Experience, Observation and Reflection, Integration into Existing Models, and Application to New Situations* (Kolb, 1984) (see diagram on following page). An example might be a person who rides a bike for the first time and falls off (*Concrete Experience*). Lying on the sidewalk, the person looks at the bike and thinks about what might have gone wrong (*Observation & Reflection*). A number of possibilities go through the person's head regarding the reasons for the fall ("I wobbled too much... crouched over... got scared," etc.) (*Integration into Existing Models*). The person decides to try again and remembers to sit up straight, and hold tightly to the handlebars (*Application to New Situations*).

Assisting youth as they gain experience in life is a key aspect of the Adolescent Caseworker's role; therefore s/he must possess the competencies necessary to assist youth in their learning process.

The competencies articulated in this document focus on the partnership that exists between the Adolescent Worker and the youth. In this partnership the Adolescent Worker's role is focused on modeling behaviors, providing feedback and encouragement, demonstrating value for the youth, and assisting them in setting goals. The Adolescent Worker is involved with the youth in the growth process as s/he works together with the youth to identify the youth's goals/desires and to develop action plans that the youth owns.



How do these functions fit within the learning cycle outlined above? The Adolescent Worker must help identify and reinforce learning opportunities on an ad hoc as well as on a planned basis. Integral to this process is that the “learning moment” must be identified, reflected upon, integrated, reinforced and applied in the future.

**NETWORKER:** In this second role, the Adolescent Worker acts as a resource or options broker. S/he knows where the resources (e.g. jobs, apartments, therapists, and scholarships) are and helps broker those connections for the youth. Typically, s/he has developed these contacts through years of experience working in the field or through personal connections in the community. S/he is very committed to getting the youth the resources they need in order to achieve self-sufficiency, while continually conscious of maintaining a process that empowers and educates the youth on how to access and network other resources that they will need in the future. Often this role includes guiding and assisting the youth in becoming networkers for themselves.

**ADVOCATE:** In this final category the worker acts as the youth's advocate, both within the child welfare system and in the community at large. S/he acts as the youth's “life line” by going the distance, showing up when no one else does and acting in a way that expresses unconditional acceptance and love for the youth. S/he may help coordinate meetings on behalf of the youth, as well as intervene for the youth regarding their needs/rights in areas such as education, placement, mental health or specialized service areas. It is in this role that some friction between the worker and the systems in which s/he functions may occur. Because of the long standing relationship, and at times the “parental” role, the worker has developed with the youth, s/he will stand by the youth and advocate for them long after others have given up.

## B. APPLICATIONS

The major purpose for development of this competency model was to provide the basis for designing a competency-based inservice training program. To assist in developing the content for the curriculum, Adolescent Caseworkers, supervisors and managers were surveyed and asked to rate each competency in

terms of two factors: the importance to the job and the need for training. A copy of the survey instrument is included in the Appendix. In addition, all transcripts were cross-indexed for competencies to provide examples that could be used in the curriculum.

In designing a competency-based curriculum the following six-step process was used:

1. **Recognition:** Learners acknowledge that the competencies exist and are important to being able to perform their job well.
2. **Understanding:** Learners comprehend what each competency means and how to perform it.
3. **Self-Assessment:** Learners identify for themselves their current level of competence against the levels that predict superior performance and select the competencies they have the most energy and interest in learning.
4. **Skill Practice/Feedback:** Learners practice the competency behaviors in realistic simulations, compare their performance with the standard for superior performance and get coaching feedback on how to better perform.
5. **Job Application/Goal setting:** Learners set goals and develop action plans for exactly how they are going to use new competency behaviors in their real jobs.
6. **Follow-Up Support:** Learners carry out activities to reinforce the above processes. These activities may include sharing plans with supervisors, rewarding initial experimentation with new behaviors, holding review meetings at which learners report on progress, and establishing peer groups in the workplace to encourage one another in the competency development process.

In addition to training, other potential uses of the competency model include:

**Recruiting/Selecting Applicants for Positions:** The competency model can be used as a framework to identify those competencies needed at entry to the job and those needed for full performance. The entry-level competencies can then be used as criteria for hiring and selection including designing job samples, interview questions and candidate rating sheets.

**Strengths Inventory and Professional Development:** The competency statements can be used as self-assessment tools by Adolescent Caseworkers to determine the degree to which they possess each of the competencies. This information can guide an individual's professional development plan to acquire needed competencies or enhance existing ones through courses, workshops, mentoring/coaching, and other methods of professional development.

**Performance Management/Appraisal:** The competency statements can be used as the basis for the yearly performance appraisal cycle, providing clear articulation of expectations, on-going feedback and coaching, plans for professional development and other components of the appraisal process.

## IV. Adolescent Caseworkers Competency Model

### A. Outline

- I. *Work Management Skills*
  1. Collaboration
  2. Assessment, Interviewing and Planning
  3. Networking
  4. Role Clarity
  5. Results Orientation
  6. Advocacy
- II. *Conceptual Knowledge and Skills*
  7. Psychological Understanding
  8. Observational Skills
  9. Analytic Thinking
  10. Strategic Thinking
  11. Promoting Experiential Learning
- III. *Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills*
  12. Interpersonal Sensitivity
  13. Establishing Relationships
  14. Communication Skills
  15. Interpersonal Techniques and Approaches
  16. Rapport Building
  17. Coaching
  18. Persuasiveness/Influencing
  19. Diversity
- IV. *Self-Management Skills*
  20. Commitment to Youth
  21. Self-Awareness
  22. Self Control
  23. Self-Confidence
  24. Self Development
  25. Flexibility
- V. *Technical Knowledge*
  26. Statutory and Regulatory Bases
  27. Policies and Procedures
  28. Court and Judicial System
  29. Placement Services
  30. Relationship Permanency
  31. Casework Principles
  32. Adolescent Development
  33. Education
  34. Teen Parenting
  35. Substance Abuse
  36. Health-Maintenance Services
  37. Youth Development
  38. Life Skills
  39. Supporting Independent Living
  40. Preparation for Transition from Care
  41. Aftercare
  42. Community Linkages
  43. Employment
  44. Technology

## B. Adolescent Caseworker Competencies

### I. WORK MANAGEMENT SKILLS: *Performing effectively in the work environment.*

#### 1.00 Collaboration

- 1.01 **Forms Partnerships:** Employs strategies to avoid triangulation and to work collaboratively with youth caseworkers, foster parents, and other care and service providers.
- 1.02 **Resource Development:** Identifies and understands what resources are available, educates about them when necessary, and builds and maintains effective working relationships with a network of systems.
- 1.03 **Respects Differences:** Understands and appreciates the different views, expertise and experience of others; understands the perspectives and limitations of other individuals and systems.
- 1.04 **Support and Information:** Offers support and information to other care providers to enable them to support youth.
- 1.05 **Support Network:** Uses own professional support network (including supervisor) appropriately to get feedback and process issues.
- 1.06 **Partnering with Youth:** Works with youth and others to find creative and effective ways to meet youth needs.
- 1.07 **Organizational Savvy:** Balances requirements of regulations and reality of the field; knows what can and cannot be done within bureaucratic system.

#### 2.00 Assessment, Interviewing and Planning

- 2.01 **Ongoing Process:** Engages youth in ongoing assessment and planning of life skills strengths and needs as well as incorporating their hopes and dreams.
- 2.02 **Appropriate Strategies:** Selects strategies and techniques appropriate to the developmental stage and needs of youth.
- 2.03 **Tools:** Understands the need for, and benefits of, using assessment and planning tools in work with youth and for making sure youth understand the process.
- 2.04 **Interview Skills:** Communicates the purpose of the interview and guides the process while encouraging youth participation; observes and listens actively while helping youth to communicate feelings as well as facts.
- 2.05 **Interview Techniques:** Uses varied interview methods, such as open-ended or closed questions, clarification, affirmation, confirmation, appropriate body language, support, summarization, or confrontation, as appropriate.
- 2.06 **Interview Environment:** Establishes and maintains appropriate and non-threatening interview environment through such techniques as arrangement of furniture, use of personal effects, décor, and assurance of privacy/confidentiality.

#### 3.00 Networking

- 3.01 **Resources:** Knows resources for youth and how to assist youth in accessing them appropriately.
- 3.02 **Alternatives:** Explores alternatives with youth to find best options.
- 3.03 **Youth Support Network:** Develops and maintains a wide variety of formal and informal contacts to build a youth support network in the community.

#### 4.00 Role Clarity

- 4.01 **Systems Understanding:** Understands roles and responsibilities of participants in systems that may impact youth (e.g., Child Welfare, Education, Judicial, Mental Health, etc).
- 4.02 **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clarifies for youth the role, responsibilities and boundaries of adolescent worker, caseworker, agency, other care providers and youth.
- 4.03 **Multiple Roles:** Recognizes the need to wear multiple hats and the mix of formal and informal responsibilities.

#### 5.00 Results Orientation

- 5.01 **Action Focus:** Regularly re-assesses and re-prioritizes with youth in order to focus attention on the most important tasks while supporting youth in gaining problem solving and life skills.
- 5.02 **Action Orientation:** Acts efficiently to solve problems and to get things done.
- 5.03 **Organizational Skills:** Uses "to-do" lists or other tools to manage time, keep track of what needs to be done, and manage multiple, pressing job demands.
- 5.04 **Monitoring Progress:** Pays attention to and evaluates youth progress; follows up to keep things on track through frequent communications with youth and keeps informed on collaterals' progress on work related to youth.
- 5.05 **Goal Orientation:** Is persistent and thorough in seeing problems through to conclusion, in getting point across, in overcoming obstacles, and in tracking down resources.
- 5.06 **Common Focus:** Keeps self, youth and providers directed toward objectives and redirects or refocuses as needed.
- 5.07 **Parallel Planning:** When appropriate, engages in actions parallel to those of youth to provide safety net and quality outcomes.

#### 6.00 Advocacy

- 6.01 **Creativity:** Finds creative and effective ways to advocate for individual youth (e.g., to provide resources, keep case open).
- 6.02 **Systems Knowledge:** Knows law, policy and systems involved in effectively advocating for youth rights.
- 6.03 **Education of Others:** Educates others about needs of youth in care.
- 6.04 **Youth Involvement:** Engages youth in advocacy efforts to promote systems change and in advocating on own behalf.
- 6.05 **Educates Youth:** Works with youth to understand the limitations and strengths of the system.

## II. CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: *Using information effectively.*

## 7.00 Psychological Understanding

- 7.01 **Environmental:** Recognizes and understands the psychological impact of events or situations on youth.
- 7.02 **Behavioral:** Recognizes and understands trends and patterns of youth behavior and the underlying reasons or causes.
- 7.03 **Contextual:** Makes sense of particular behaviors of youth within the context of the youth's environment, history and experiences.
- 7.04 **Awareness and Observation:** Observes and develops hypotheses about the meaning of nonverbal cues (e.g., body language, tone of voice).
- 7.05 **Transference:** Understands and recognizes potential for youth's family history to color present relationships. (e.g., interpersonal conflicts, hidden agendas, family tensions).

## 8.00 Observational Skills

- 8.01 **Recognizes Inconsistencies:** Recognizes incongruities and inconsistencies in information or observed behavior. ("What's wrong with this picture?")
- 8.02 **Integrative Thinking:** Fits pieces of information into coherent whole or summary.
- 8.03 **Fact Based:** Describes factually what is observed without using language that presumes values and motives.
- 8.04 **Whole Person Assessment:** Observes, assesses and incorporates information from body language and presentation into assessment of youth.

## 9.00 Analytic Thinking

- 9.01 **Information Gathering:** Gathers information from a broad range of sources to develop understanding of a situation (e.g., documentation, interviews, checks of collateral resources, consultation with experts).
- 9.02 **Separates Person from Behaviors:** Able to separate behavior from person and to help youth to understand the implications of their actions.
- 9.03 **Forms Hypotheses:** Weighs available current and historical information about situations or behavior to form hypotheses.
- 9.04 **Comprehensive Assessment:** Looks beyond superficial or simplistic explanations; searches for underlying causes of situations, behavior or conditions.
- 9.05 **Conceptual Frameworks:** Uses conceptual frameworks (e.g., child or human development, cultural diversity, family systems) to synthesize and analyze data or evaluate situations.
- 9.06 **Analytical Approach:** Thinks through the implications of situations or events (e.g., "if-then" analyses) to develop hypotheses or predictive statements.
- 9.07 **Ongoing Analysis:** Continually gathers and reevaluates available information on youth progress, periodically taking stock and revising understanding.
- 9.08 **Individual Approach:** Recognizes that not all youth are the same and that each needs to be assessed and treated on an individual basis.

## 10.00 Strategic Thinking

- 10.01 **Balances Long and Short Terms Goals:** Understands clearly the scope of involvement based on developmental needs and goals of youth and proceeds within that framework; keeps a long-term perspective while working on immediate problems.
- 10.02 **Youth Involvement:** Ensures continuity and focus of effort toward long-term goal by involving youth in continual refocusing during each step in the process.
- 10.03 **Advance Preparation:** Prepares in advance for situations, assesses the potential for things to go wrong, anticipates what is needed and weighs pros/cons for options (e.g., develops mental plans, visualizes upcoming situations and rehearses presentations).

## 11.00 Promoting Experiential Learning

- 11.01 **Role Modeling:** Uses experiences as “teachable moments” to role model skills needed for future encounters/life events. Identifies, recruits and indicates family role models for youth to emulate, particularly regarding parenting and partnering.
- 11.02 **Encouragement:** Encourages youth to persist in efforts despite failures or obstacles (e.g., consider the mantra “fail ‘til you succeed”).
- 11.03 **Provides Examples:** Uses teachable moments to illustrate/explain the ways of the world and other people's perspectives (external not subjective reality).
- 11.04 **Risk Taking:** Models new learning (being vulnerable, making and owning mistakes, stretching oneself) as way to increase youth's confidence to pursue goals.
- 11.05 **Practice:** Provides opportunities for youth to practice skills to promote success and encourage future efforts.
- 11.06 **Skill Development:** Models effective concrete (tangible) skills as way to promote development of soft skills and generalize to future situations.
- 11.07 **Experiences:** Exposes youth to everyday life experiences (e.g., ordering in a restaurant, riding a bus, filling a gas tank).

## III. INTERPERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: *Relating to others effectively.*

### 12.00 Interpersonal Sensitivity

- 12.01 **Appropriate Response:** Responds appropriately and provides emotional support to youth in times of stress or crisis.
- 12.02 **Contextual Understanding:** Sees youth as whole individual, understanding past and its implications for developmental process and plans for future (e.g., multiple placements, family difficulties).
- 12.03 **Self Reflection and Disclosure:** Is discerning in understanding own feelings and is purposeful in expressing them.

- 12.04 **Openness:** Recognizes the importance of individuals airing strong feelings and dealing with them openly in an appropriate setting.
- 12.05 **Validates Feelings:** Lets youth know their feelings are legitimate and real, validating them in a non-judgmental way.
- 12.06 **Respect for Youth:** Shows genuine respect for the wishes, preferences, and privacy of youth.
- 12.07 **Understands Needs:** Acknowledges and gives priority to survival needs of youth (e.g., shelter, clothing, food) while attending to social and behavioral issues and problems.
- 12.08 **Understands Need for Relationships:** Understands and shows support for the relationships youth may have with other people and their importance to youth.
- 12.09 **Acknowledges Mistakes:** Can admit and own mistakes and be proactive in rectifying through discussion and feedback.

### 13.00 Establishing Relationships

- 13.01 **Creating Bonds:** Identifies common interests (e.g., sports, music) to create bond and build trust.
- 13.02 **Meeting Youth:** Meets youth where they are emotionally and where they prefer to be physically (e.g., holds initial meeting in place where youth is comfortable).
- 13.03 **Involving Support Network:** Builds trust and credibility by involving youth's existing support networks in initial meeting.
- 13.04 **Communication Pattern:** Establishes communication pattern of give and take, mutual respect and choice.
- 13.05 **Ground Rules:** Outlines ground rules, boundaries and parameters for relationship (e.g., role, services available, voluntary).
- 13.06 **Enthusiasm for Program:** Demonstrates enthusiasm for possibility of Independent Living program and services available.
- 13.07 **Identifying Hook:** Identifies "hook" (realistic, concrete action that can be delivered immediately such as getting driver's permit) to promote youth interest and build trust.

### 14.00 Communication Skills

- 14.01 **Communication Opportunities:** Utilizes time, environments, and activities (e.g., driving, malls, restaurants) to create opportunities for open communication.
- 14.02 **Accepting Environment:** Creates accepting environment to allow youth to express hopes and fears.
- 14.03 **Small Talk and Humor:** Uses small talk and humor to relieve tension and encourage youth to talk.
- 14.04 **Open Communication:** Creates opportunities for open communication and sharing of information, adapting approaches to the audience.
- 14.05 **Attentive Listening:** Gives nonverbal and verbal evidence of attentive listening (to make youth feel heard, to gather facts, to provide a sounding board).

- 14.06 **Questioning Techniques:** Uses a variety of questioning techniques to elicit information needed in order to form conclusions and make decisions.
- 14.07 **Information and Guidance:** Makes sure youth have all the available information needed to manage situations and make sound decisions; explains complexities in an easy-to-understand manner.
- 14.08 **Confidentiality:** Respects requirements for confidentiality and exercises discretion when sharing information.
- 14.09 **Written Communication:** Prepares clear, accurate, factual, and appropriate written communications or documents.

## 15.00 Interpersonal Techniques and Approaches

- 15.01 **Behavior Management:** Understands and supports the uses of appropriate behavior management techniques, especially for youth who have a trauma history.
- 15.02 **Crisis Intervention:** Responds to crises with effective crisis intervention techniques.
- 15.03 **Conflict Management:** Manages conflicts by dealing appropriately in difficult situations with supervisors or peers.
- 15.04 **Group Facilitation:** Facilitates meetings and groups, providing leadership or support as needed to accomplish tasks and maintain group cohesiveness.

## 16.00 Rapport Building

- 16.01 **Acceptance:** Sees youth as whole individuals with strengths as well as challenges; affirms worth of youth even when distinguishing unacceptable behavior.
- 16.02 **Building Trust:** Establishes and nurtures youth trust by having frequent contact and by being reliable, dependable, accountable, and candid in interactions, making sure that behaviors match words.
- 16.03 **Purposeful Self-disclosure:** Uses purposeful self-disclosure as a professional tool in order to recognize and acknowledge commonality and to develop a genuine relationship with youth.
- 16.04 **Sharing Celebrations:** Recognizes opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge progress, and milestones (e.g., graduation, 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, getting into college).
- 16.05 **Sharing Challenging Experiences:** Builds relationships through sharing challenging experiences (e.g., winter camping, sea kayaking).
- 16.06 **Flexible Strategies:** Tailors and modifies approach over time to meet needs/style of individual youth.

## 17.00 Coaching

- 17.01 **Feedback:** Gives feedback to youth to help understand message and image being projected.
- 17.02 **Reinforcing Choices:** Gives positive feedback and reinforces strengths and healthy choices in order to help youth build self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- 17.03 **Confronting Youth:** Directly confronts youth to help deal with past, accept personal

responsibilities and prepare for future.

- 17.04 **Encouraging Learning:** Coaches and empowers youth to make own decisions and choices and handle own situations, including accepting making mistakes.
- 17.05 **Emotional Support:** Counsels youth to help cope with emotionally demanding situations or to prepare for situations they need to face, while connecting with other support resources as needed.
- 17.06 **Building Commitment:** Builds youth commitment and promotes investment in process by requiring specific actions.
- 17.07 **Promoting Accountability:** Sets parameters and expectations to promote youth accountability.

## 18.00 Persuasiveness/Influencing

- 18.01 **Youth Values:** Influences youth by helping them recognize, and by appealing to, their sense of right/wrong or to their own best interest.
- 18.02 **Logic and Examples:** Uses sound logic, convincing arguments and/or real life examples from own experiences or media.
- 18.03 **Implications:** Helps youth explore realistically possible negative or positive consequences of their actions.
- 18.04 **Successes:** Assists youth to establish sequence of short-term actions or activities that allow youth to experience success.
- 18.05 **Understanding Others:** Assists youth in understanding others' points of view in order to facilitate agreements and compromises.
- 18.06 **Utilization of Situations/Environments:** Structures situations or the environment to influence youth's attitudes or behavior (e.g., setting deadlines, structuring investigative questioning, meeting in places to minimize stress or to limit influence from other sources).
- 18.07 **Use of Others:** Uses the situational authority of others appropriately; enlists their help in influencing events and situations.
- 18.08 **Limits Use of No:** Uses the word "no" rarely when working with youth, reserving it for situations such as those involving personal safety.
- 18.09 **Peer Support:** Engages peers and other resources to influence youth decisions and behaviors.

## 19.00 Diversity

- 19.01 **Language and Terminology:** Understands definitions, language and terminology from an array of cultures (e.g., youth, GLBTQ, Native American, Vietnamese, etc).
- 19.02 **Communication Skills:** Communicates cross-culturally, uses language that is inclusive and sensitive to a broad, diverse population, and works with diverse communication styles, such as the effective use of an interpreter or TTY machine.
- 19.03 **Respect for Diversity:** Demonstrates respect for people regardless of differences and is inclusive in decision making by being aware of, and open to, diverse and/or minority viewpoints in decision making.
- 19.04 **Legal Compliance:** Acts in compliance with relevant law and policy and accesses additional

information as needed (e.g., Civil Rights Law, EEO regulations, ADA and state Human Rights Act).

- 19.05 **Conceptual Framework:** Understands concepts of power, dominance and oppression as well as roots of prejudice; is aware of potential stereotypes and the developmental stages of individuals from denial to valuing differences.
- 19.06 **Community Resources:** Knows resources and organizations available in the community to provide support and advocacy networks for diversity issues.
- 19.07 **Cross Cultural Diversity:** Understands and is able to identify differences in cultural, ethnic, and religious values, perceptions, customs and behaviors.

#### IV. SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS: *Effective use of self in job.*

##### 20.00 Commitment to Youth

- 20.01 **Liking Young People:** Genuinely likes youth, is enthusiastic and energetic, believes in youth strengths and takes pride in their accomplishments.
- 20.02 **Partnership:** Assumes responsibility with youth to make program work to help youth succeed.
- 20.03 **Nonjudgmental:** Affirms and demonstrates unconditional commitment and support for youth.
- 20.04 **Values & Beliefs:** Has firm values and beliefs about protecting children and promoting relationship permanency.
- 20.05 **Accessible:** Makes self-accessible/available to youth beyond routine expectations via pager number, voice mail, e-mail, etc.
- 20.06 **Available:** Extends self to meet youth in places and at times comfortable to youth.
- 20.07 **Stable Presence:** Demonstrates willingness to be stable presence for youth through routine and spontaneous interactions and participation in celebrations and life events.
- 20.08 **Youth Focused:** Maintains genuine priority with youth for what is in youth's best interest.
- 20.09 **Regular Meetings:** Meets with youth on a regular basis to build relationship and trust, to maintain ongoing communication and to create a presence in youth's life.

##### 21.00 Self Awareness

- 21.01 **Self Reflection:** Understands and reflects on own strengths and limitations and implications for professional role.
- 21.02 **Values, Culture & Family:** Understands and reflects upon own values and biases, cultural/personal style, familial background and how it impacts others.
- 21.03 **Awareness of Others:** Understands how others might perceive them.
- 21.04 **Integrating Changes:** Understands that people change over time, recognizes changes in self and others, and integrates this into practice.
- 21.05 **Differentiating Own Hopes:** Recognizes and differentiates own hopes and expectations for youth from youth's own dreams and desires.

- 21.06 **Personal and Emotional Understanding:** Recognizes and manages own personal and emotional issues that arise in working with youth.
- 21.07 **Understanding Role Privileges:** Recognizes that youth perceive that adolescent workers have power and privilege because of their role.
- 21.08 **Spirituality:** Understands how one's own beliefs may impact work.

## 22.00 Self Control

- 22.01 **Maintains Balance:** Recognizes the danger and warning signs of spreading self too thin and is able to balance efforts and set appropriate limits to serve youth.
- 22.02 **Independent Thinking:** Resists jumping to conclusions; investigates hearsay or others' opinions in order to form opinions and conclusions based on first hand interactions and assessment.
- 22.03 **Composed Under Stress:** Maintains composure in stressful situations; persists despite turmoil or conflict.
- 22.04 **Assessing Risks:** Without compromising safety, functions effectively in situations involving personal risk or when confronted with behavior or situations that may be personally offensive; follows reasonable and sound ground rules for safe interactions.
- 22.05 **Impulse Restraint:** Restrains impulses to respond immediately and takes appropriate safety precautions in situations that may place self in personal danger.
- 22.06 **Patience:** Demonstrates patience and acceptance; gives people reasonable time to understand or to change.
- 22.07 **Manages Management:** Controls own stress; finds ways, such as humor, to reduce or manage it.

## 23.00 Self-Confidence

- 23.01 **Confident:** Believes in own decisions, and is optimistic about own ability to get the job done.
- 23.02 **Trusts Instincts:** Is in touch with own intuition and instincts.
- 23.03 **Decisive:** Is able to think on one's feet and to be decisive in ambiguous or chaotic situations.
- 23.04 **Assertive:** Knows when to be assertive, when to confront others and when not to take a strong stand on issues.

## 24.00 Self Development

- 24.01 **Staying Current in Field:** Keeps up with knowledge in the field (e.g., new placements, modern technology). Stays current with Independent Living and other youth programs and resources at a local and national level.
- 24.02 **Personal Growth:** Actively solicits feedback, recognizes needed changes and integrates them into performance.
- 24.03 **Ongoing Learning:** Reflects on experience and learning from youth and applies them to present situations.

- 24.04 **Skills Development:** Seeks to develop new areas of expertise, to improve skills, and to broaden own horizons.
- 24.05 **Life Long Learning** Embraces opportunities for life long learning and personal growth through work with youth.
- 24.06 **Continuous Learning:** Stays current with Independent Living and other youth programs and resources at a local and national level.

## 25.00 Flexibility

- 25.01 **Adaptable:** Adapts personal and professional styles and schedules to meet the needs of specific youth and situations.
- 25.02 **Open to New Ideas:** Is open to new information and to changing own opinions.
- 25.03 **Redirect Focus:** Is able to shift gears and redirect activities.
- 25.04 **Understands Realities of Work:** Acknowledges and copes with both positive and negative outcomes of work with youth, recognizing and dealing with issues of grief and loss including lost opportunities and perceived error.

## V. TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE: *Information necessary to perform job tasks.*

### 26.00 Statutory and Regulatory Bases

- 26.01 **Statutory and Regulatory Base:** Understands the basis in federal and state law, regulations and rules for the operation of Adolescent and Independent Living services.
- 26.02 **Terminology, Definitions and Concepts:** Understands the legal terminology, definitions and concepts of the disciplines relevant to youth (e.g., legal mandates for youth coming into care).
- 26.03 **Funding:** Knowledge of state and federal funding streams and history of Independent Living program.
- 26.04 **Child Welfare Law:** Knowledge of laws around permanency, concurrent planning and implications of youth emancipation.

### 27.00 Policies and Procedures

- 27.01 **Policy Base:** Understands the basis in policy for the operation of social service programs.
- 27.02 **Independent Living Policies and Procedures:** Knows the specific policies and procedures related to Independent Living, Adolescent Services and related Child Welfare policies and procedures (e.g., special education for children in care).
- 27.03 **Terminology, Definitions and Concepts:** Understands policy terminology and concepts and is able to apply them appropriately to transitional adolescent case management.
- 27.04 **Ethical Issues:** Understands the policy requirements of ethical practice and the ramifications to staff and clients when this does not occur.

- 27.05 **Documentation:** Knows information to be accumulated, analyzed and recorded, appropriate forms, the relationship between documentation and accountability, and the potential for documentation to be used as evidence in court.

## 28.00 Court and Judicial System

- 28.01 **Youth Rights:** Knowledge of youth rights under the law.
- 28.02 **Legal System:** Understands jurisdiction of various courts that deal with youth and families. (e.g., superior, juvenile, criminal, family and probate).
- 28.03 **Procedures and Process:** Knows and can apply legal procedures, including basic rules of evidence, how to testify, standards of proof and preparation for court activity including adjudicatory and dispositional phases.
- 28.04 **Youth Related Laws:** Understands immigration laws, special education laws and other laws that could impact youth.
- 28.05 **Corrections System:** Understands the corrections system including youth incarceration, the prison system, probation, and alternative sentencing.
- 28.06 **Adjudicated Youth:** Understands the issues surrounding adjudicated youth and how to guide them through job applications, college applications and other activities.

## 29.00 Placement Services

- 29.01 **Placement Resources:** Knows various types of placement options and their differential use based on youth's needs; has knowledge of criteria for selecting among alternatives (e.g., kinship vs. foster homes, etc), admission and department approval procedures, and how to develop creative alternatives when resources do not exist.
- 29.02 **Continuum of Care:** Understands the concept of "continuum of care" in determining the best placements for youth, and knows strategies to identify, strengthen, and maintain the least restrictive, most homelike, culturally relevant placement to meet specific youth needs.
- 29.03 **Preparation for Placement:** Understands and is able to utilize knowledge and techniques for preparation of youth and youth's placement resource, the need for continuity and information for and about youth, and ways to reduce stress and facilitate adjustment.
- 29.04 **Adoption:** Understands that adoption is an alternative and in some instances the preferred option for specific youth, and understands the legal aspects regarding eligibility for services.

## 30.00 Relationship Permanency

- 30.01 **Maintaining Family Relationships:** Knowledge of the importance of helping youth define relationships with primary family, siblings, extended family, and other important caregivers, and knows how to promote and support these relationships through regular contact and visitations.
- 30.02 **Life Long Relationships:** Knows of the approaches and need for youth to successfully sustain life-long emotional relationships with adults, including relatives and other people met while in care.
- 30.04 **Balancing Independence and Family:** Assists youth in addressing need for independent living skills while also assisting with need for permanent family connections in order to help

youth achieve self-sufficiency.

- 30.05 **Intervention Strategy:** Interprets youth's stage in process and customizes intervention/services accordingly.
- 30.06 **Identifying Connections:** Works with youth to identify current and past people that can serve as permanent family connections; includes relatives, foster parents, siblings, group home staff, school personnel and other professionals in this planning process.
- 30.07 **Relationship Issues:** Understands that problems may exist that keep youth from establishing permanent, healthy relationships with adults and works to ameliorate these problems.
- 30.08 **Relationship Management:** Works with youth and care providers regarding loyalty and loss and how to safely relate to relatives in order to develop healthy permanent relationships and reconcile feelings with the past.

### 31.00 Casework Principles

- 31.01 **Standards of Helping Relationships:** Understands and is able to identify standards for development, maintenance and boundaries of helping relationships.
- 31.02 **Concurrent Planning:** Understands and is able to identify standards and procedures for obtaining pertinent information and decision making at various stages of the casework process and for integrating risk assessment with service planning for case outcomes.
- 31.03 **Life Skills Assessment and Independent Living Plan:** Understands need for Life Skills Assessment tools and procedures and how to work with youth to turn the assessment into a plan.
- 31.04 **Case Planning Coordination:** Works in collaboration with care providers, foster parents, youth, caseworker, therapists and others to promote the development and implementation of case plans.
- 31.05 **Service Coordination:** Understands, and is able to identify, standards and techniques for coordinating the timely delivery of services to meet identified needs, including identification of community resources, advocacy and appropriate follow-up reports.
- 31.06 **Case Termination/Closure:** Understands, and is able to identify, criteria and procedures for effectively preparing for terminating a relationship with youth.

### 32.00 Adolescent Development (Cognitive, Psychosocial, Physical)

- 32.01 **Developmental Stages:** Understands stages, processes and milestones of normal physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development for early adolescence (11 - 13) through post adolescence (20 - 21).
- 32.02 **Attachment and Loss:** Understands the feelings and behaviors associated with the losses experienced by youth as they move through the foster care system.
- 32.03 **Impact of abuse and neglect:** Understands how previous abuse, neglect, and multiple home placements affects the development of healthy positive self-esteem and self-concept; and uses strategies, including active listening, to help youth resolve personal and family issues and

establish a positive identity.

- 32.04 **Social Development:** Understands the importance of youth developing friends and becoming part of a peer group because of the role stable relationships play in other areas of social and psychological development.
- 32.05 **Developmental Disabilities:** Understands the nature, causes, symptoms and treatment of disabilities such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, spina bifida, Down's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome, pervasive developmental disabilities and other conditions that delay or impair development.
- 32.06 **Developmental Challenges:** Understands how mental illness or emotional problems can affect youth's rate and maintenance of learning and contribute to variations in performance.
  
- 32.07 **Mental Health:** Knows the primary symptoms of emotional disturbances or mental illness of adolescents; including schizophrenia and other psychoses, paranoia, obsessive compulsive behaviors, depression, anxiety, and personality disorders and how these can impact learning and development.
- 32.08 **Physical Development:** Understands the physical changes experienced in adolescence and the effect on sense of self and identity.
- 32.09 **Eating Disorders:** Knows the signs of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia and the resources available to deal with these issues.
- 32.10 **Identity Formation:** Understands that during adolescence youth are developing their sense of personal identity and that they may need access to resources to help them deal with the complexities of formulating their answer to the question – "Who am I?"
- 32.11 **Emotional and Psychological Independence:** Understands that youth may vacillate between their desire for independence and need to be dependent as they assert their independence and individuality and, as a result, may exhibit mood and behavioral swings.
- 32.12 **Sexuality:** Understands that youth's personal identity includes their own attitudes about what it means to be male or female, which influences values about sexual behavior and their sense of masculinity and femininity.
- 32.13 **Developing Value System:** Understands that youth develop their own value system during adolescence and will join with, as well as have conflict with, family, friends and others at this time as they define their own ideology.
- 32.14 **Spirituality:** Knows of and respects spiritual beliefs, rituals and festivals and is able to guide youth as they discover and grow within their religion and learn about others.

### 33.00 Education

- 33.01 **Educational Challenges:** Understands the challenges and barriers presented to youth in care within the educational system (e.g. school credit transfer, labeling, district restrictions).
- 33.02 **Educational Resources:** Knows the services and resources that contribute to youth's positive educational outcomes (e.g., educational liaisons, school to work, educational tutors/coaches, tuition waivers, scholarship resources).
- 33.03 **Educational Alternatives:** Knows about pre secondary and secondary educational

alternatives available to youth (e.g., alternative schools, home tutoring, vouchers, credit for service).

- 33.04 **Educational Goals:** Works with youth to develop educational goals and a plan for attaining those goals.
- 33.05 **Post-Secondary Preparation:** Works collaboratively with school officials and guidance counselors to identify appropriate plans for supports and services to assist youth in preparing for post-secondary education.
- 33.06 **Post Secondary Options:** Knows programs and services for youth who choose to continue their education (e.g., Job Corps, vocational and higher education, etc.).
- 33.07 **Learning and Behavioral Challenges:** Awareness of assessment tools, district requirements and services to assist youth in identifying and addressing learning and behavioral challenges.

### 34.00 Teen Parenting

- 34.01 **Resources:** Knows resources that are available to youth who become parents (e.g., pre-natal care, hospital services, parenting classes, delivery education, well-childcare, immunization schedules, support groups and financial entitlements).
- 34.02 **Pregnancy:** Works with youth to assess options, identify services and secure support as needed during pregnancy.
- 34.03 **Paternity:** Knows requirements for establishing paternity and child support/financial responsibilities of child's father.
- 34.04 **Parenting Skills:** Works with youth to identify classes and other programs to develop skills needed to successfully parent.
- 34.05 **Financial Entitlements:** Knows of the programs available to single parents relative to employment, financial support and childcare.
- 34.06 **Cultural Expectations:** Awareness of cultural expectations relative to pregnancy and parenting.

### 35.00 Substance Abuse

- 35.01 **Dynamics and Indicators:** Understands substance use as a continuum and recognizes the dynamics and indicators of substance problems that occur throughout the continuum.
- 35.02 **Use:** Understands reasons why youth may choose to use alcohol and other substances.
- 35.03 **Resources:** Works with youth to identify treatment and prevention services/alternatives and to understand referral procedures so that youth are able to address substance abuse issues.
- 35.04 **Addiction:** Understands dynamics of, and various philosophical approaches to, addiction, such as disease, self-medication and biopsychosocial perspectives.
- 35.05 **Diversity Issues:** Understands the dynamics and sensitivities around diversity issues, such as cultural background, sexual orientation, etc. and their influence on substance use.
- 35.06 **Impact:** Understands the impact of substance abuse/use/addiction on specific developmental stages of adolescence and on family members and care providers.

- 35.07 **Dual Diagnosis:** Understands and is able to identify symptoms and dynamics of dual diagnoses and the need for collaborative efforts for better therapeutic outcomes for this population.
- 35.08 **Recovery:** Understands and is able to identify stages of recovery from addiction and the effects of the recovery process on family members and care providers.

### 36.00 Health – Maintenance Services

- 36.01 **Managing Medical, Dental and Mental Health Needs:** Works with youth to prepare them to manage their own medical, dental and mental health needs by helping them gain an understanding of their health care needs and the importance of keeping appointments, maintaining records and complying with insurance/Medicaid requirements.
- 36.02 **Identifying Health Resources:** Works with youth to identify and connect with appropriate health resources in their own communities.

### 37.00 Youth Development

- 37.01 **Developing Competencies:** Creates opportunities for youth to develop competencies and feel supported and safe in practicing skills, learning about relationships, and connecting with their community.
- 37.02 **Working in Partnership:** Understands the importance of youth having a voice in and collaborating to make team decisions and life decisions.
- 37.03 **Cultural Awareness:** Understands the need for youth to explore their culture through participation in rites of passage, spending time with elders, learning about own native music, dance, food and history.
- 37.04 **Enhancing Self-Esteem:** Willingness to work with youth to identify activities that challenge them to gain confidence in their skills, to demonstrate knowledge and to develop their capabilities.
- 37.05 **Self as Resource:** Provides youth with opportunity to recognize self as a resource for others because of life experiences (e.g., legislation, training professionals).

### 38.00 Life Skills

- 38.01 **Continuum:** Understands the four-stage continuum (informal learning, formal learning, supervised practice and self-sufficiency) that enables youth in independent living programs to move through a series of phases to acquire tangible and intangible skills.
- 38.02 **Needs and Goals:** Understands that youth’s acquisition of life skills is dependent on their own developmental needs and their independent living goals.
- 38.03 **Core Skills:** Knows and understands core set of life skills and approaches for youth to learn/practice the skills.
- 38.04 **Joint Planning and Consistency:** Knows the importance of joint planning and of consistency in approach and expectation by all adults teaching independent living skills to youth.

- 38.05 **Practice:** Consistently works with youth to create opportunities to practice daily living skills in a real world environment to promote confidence.

### 39.00 Supporting Independent Living

- 39.01 **Models of Independent Living:** Knows models of semi-independent or supervised living and can provide case management and advocacy services to locate appropriate community-based living arrangements for youth including youth with special needs and at- risk youth.
- 39.02 **Assisting Resources and Services:** Works with other agencies and care providers to develop and secure services necessary to prepare youth for adulthood.
- 39.03 **Support for Housing Issues:** Assists youth in establishing and maintaining their own housing, paying their own bills, maintaining their own budget, working out landlord and roommate disputes, and assuming a lease or establishing their own housing arrangement at the end of the program.
- 39.04 **Working Collaboratively:** Understands methods and techniques for working collaboratively with foster parents and other caregivers to identify issues, needs, and risk factors in particular placements; to jointly develop strategies to meet needs; and to access and coordinate resources.
- 39.05 **Developmental Disabilities:** Understands and is able to apply learning strategies (e.g. positive reinforcement, repetition, etc.) that will assist youth with developmental disabilities to achieve their developmental potential.
- 39.06 **Youth Safety:** Understands procedures for on going monitoring to identify indicators of risk and procedures for appropriate intervention.

### 40.00 Preparation for Transition from Care

- 40.01 **Developing Support Systems:** Works with youth to develop/expand personal support systems, to anticipate changes that will arise in leaving the child welfare system, and to assist youth as they work through the emotional stages of their transition.
- 40.02 **Making Peace with the Past:** Understands the need for youth to deal with unresolved issues that may surface as they prepare to transition out of care.
- 40.03 **Re-uniting with Family:** Assists youth as they explore the need to re-unite with family by helping them prepare a plan to be used in the present or in the future.
- 40.04 **Returning to Home Community:** Understands the expectations youth may have about their old community, is able to work with them to prepare for a return visit and is available to help youth work through positive and negative outcomes.

### 41.00 Aftercare

- 41.01 **Finances and Housing:** Understands that youth may have need for financial assistance or may experience housing issues, and works with youth to prepare for these situations.
- 41.02 **Resources:** Works with youth to identify supports and resources if they experience difficulties while on their own.

- 41.03 **Emotional Support:** Understands need to empower youth to identify supports and resources as they transition to self-sufficiency.

## 42.00 Community Linkages

- 42.01 **Connecting Youth with Community Resources:** Works with youth to identify available resources in the community in which they are choosing to live.
- 42.02 **Connecting Youth with Adult Mentors:** Understands the need for appropriate adult support and encourages youth, foster parents, family, and the community to identify resources.
- 42.03 **Contributing to Community:** Works with youth to identify opportunities to contribute to the community (e.g. youth to youth help, advocacy) and to advise and educate others.

## 43.00 Employment

- 43.01 **Exploration:** Works with youth to identify opportunities for career exploration, development of educational and career plans, gaining career related experience, and connecting to role models.
- 43.02 **Community Resources:** Knows community resources available to assist youth in career exploration and/or to gain work experience through job shadowing experiences, mentoring opportunities and long-term personal connections.
- 43.03 **Advocacy:** Knows how to advocate for youth employment opportunities with local educational institutions, industries and employment programs to assist youth in meeting their educational and career goals.

## 44.00 Technology

- 44.01 **Computer Basics:** Applies basic computer concepts including the ability to turn on computer, log on and turn off, display start and help menus, opening programs and files, using a mouse, moving cursor within documents, working with multiple windows, deleting files and using recycle bin.
- 44.02 **E-Mail:** Utilizes e-mail to compose, reply to and forward messages, attach files and save attachments, set-up files and file messages.
- 44.03 **Scheduling:** Utilizes scheduling including creating new tasks, viewing, editing and deleting appointments, and printing appointments.
- 44.04 **Word-processing:** Utilizes the word processing function including editing and maneuvering; selecting, deleting and inserting of text; indenting paragraphs, cutting, copying and pasting text; and saving and securing documents.
- 44.05 **Distance Learning:** Leverages opportunities to engage in electronic discussion groups and other forums in order to enhance skills/abilities.



## V. Appendices



# Appendix A.

## Background Reading

- Bernotavicz, Freda, A. (1994) A New Paradigm for Competency-Based Training. *Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*. Albany, NY:Continuing Education Program, School of Social Welfare, State University of New York.
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- Goleman, Daniel (1981) *The New Competency Tests: Matching the Right People to the Right Jobs*. Psychology Today.
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- Kolb, David (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall.
- Rycus, Judith, S., Hughes, Ronald, C. (1994) *Child Welfare Competencies: Promoting Family-Centered, Culturally Relevant, and Interdisciplinary Child Welfare Practice and Training*. Institute for Human Services, Columbus, OH.
- Senge, Peter M. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday Currency.
- Sheehy, A., Oldham, E., Zanghi, M., Ansell, D., Correia, P., & Copeland, R. (2000) Promising practices: Supporting the transition of youth served by the foster care system. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.



## Appendix B. Survey Instrument

### Institute for Public Sector Innovation Adolescent Worker Competency Model Survey

The Institute for Public Sector Innovation at the University of Southern Maine is currently developing a curriculum to train adolescent caseworkers. We would like to ask for your help in defining the following competencies to adolescent workers. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The information you provide will be compiled with that of others and will be used to formulate the curriculum.

Please return the survey by June 29, 2001 in the enclosed, stamped envelope to:

Amy Detgen  
Institute for Public Sector Innovation  
USM/Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service  
295 Water St.  
Augusta, ME 04330

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the following attributes, we would like to know:

- 1) Importance to Job – how important the competency is to the job of adolescent caseworkers
- 2) Need for Training – how important it is for adolescent caseworkers to receive training in this competency

Using a scale from 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important, rate each of the following twice assigning each a number from 1 to 5 for Importance to Job and a number from 1 to 5 for Need for Training. Write the numbers in the corresponding boxes below.

<b>I. Work Management Skills</b>	Importance to Job	Need for Training
1. Collaboration and Cooperation - Works collaboratively with youth, caseworkers, foster parents and other providers, respecting different views and providing support and information to enable them to support youth. Has organizational savvy and is able to identify available resources for youth.		
2. Assessment, Interviewing and Planning - Uses varying interviewing techniques that encourage youth participation. Engages youth in an ongoing assessment and planning of life skills, selecting strategies appropriate to the youth's developmental stages.		
3. Networking - Develops and maintains a wide variety of contacts for a youth support network in the community. Knows how to assist youth in accessing resources and explores with youth the best alternatives.		
4. Role Clarity - Understands and clarifies for youth the roles, responsibilities and boundaries of the adolescent worker, caseworker, agency and other care providers. Recognizes the need to wear multiple hats.		
5. Results Orientation - Uses organizational skills to manage time and priorities. Continually evaluates youth progress and helps youth focus on most important tasks, providing a safety net through parallel actions. Is goal oriented and acts efficiently to solve problems.		
<b>II. Conceptual Knowledge and Skills</b>		
6. Psychological Understanding - Recognizes and understands youth's behavior and events that may lead to behavior trends and patterns. Makes sense of youth behavior within context of youth history and experiences, and understands that a youth's interaction with his/her biological family can influence how the youth responds within other relationships.		

II. Conceptual Knowledge and Skills (continued)	Importance to Job	Need for Training
7. Advocacy Knows law, policy and system to effectively advocate for youth rights and educate others about youth in care. Engages youth in advocacy efforts and helps youth understand system limitations and strengths.		
8. Observational Skills - Recognizes incongruities in information or observed behavior. Can coherently summarize information and provide unbiased, factual descriptions.		
9. Analytic Thinking - Continually gathers information from broad range of sources, weighing current and historical information. Looks beyond superficial explanations for underlying causes and thinks through implications of events. Helps youth understand implications of actions. Uses conceptual frameworks but assesses each youth individually.		
10. Strategic Thinking Understands scope of involvement based on youth's goals and keeps a long-term perspective. Ensures continuity by continually refocusing with youth. Prepares in advance for situations, anticipating problems and weighing pros/cons of options.		
11. Promoting Experiential Learning Uses own experiences to offer role model skills to youth and uses teachable moments to illustrate other people's perspectives. Models learning something new to increase youth's confidence to pursue goals. Provides opportunities for youth to practice skills and encourages youth to keep trying despite failures.		
III. Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills		
12. Understanding Others - Provides emotional support to youth in crises. Understands the possible effects of youth's past on his/her developmental process. Offers youth an open and appropriate setting to air strong feelings and validates youth's feelings non-judgmentally. Shows genuine respect for youth's wishes and privacy and supports youth's relationships with others. Admits mistakes and proactively rectifies them through discussion.		
13. Establishing Relationship - Creates bonds and builds trust through common interests and concrete actions. Meets youth where youth is comfortable. Outlines ground rules and boundaries for relationship and establishes give-and-take communication pattern. Involves youth's support network in initial meeting, showing enthusiasm for program and services.		
14. Communication Skills Creates an accepting environment and opportunities for open communication. Uses small talk and humor to relieve tension and encourage youth to talk, giving evidence of attentive listening. Uses a variety of questioning techniques to elicit needed information and respects requirements for confidentiality. Prepares clear, accurate, factual and appropriate written documents.		
15. Interpersonal Techniques and Approaches Understands and supports appropriate behavior management techniques. Manages conflicts and responds to crises with effective intervention techniques. Facilitates meetings and provides leadership or support as needed to accomplish tasks and maintain group cohesiveness.		
16. Rapport Building - Establishes and nurtures youth's trust through frequent contact and by being reliable, accountable, and candid. Uses purposeful self-disclosure as a tool to develop a genuine relationship with youth. Recognizes opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge progress and milestones, and affirms worth of youth even when distinguishing unacceptable behavior.		

III. Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills (continued)		
17. Coaching	Gives positive feedback to help youth build self-esteem and understand the image they are projecting. Directly confronts youth to help them accept personal responsibilities, cope with demanding situations and prepare for future. Empowers youth to make their own decisions and sets parameters to promote youth accountability.	
18. Persuasiveness/Influence	Appeals to youths sense of right/wrong or to their own best interest. Uses sound logic, convincing arguments and/or real life examples to help youth explore consequences of their actions. Rarely uses the word no and assists youth in establishing short-term actions towards success. Assists youth in understanding others' points of view and structures situations to influence youth's attitudes or behavior (e.g. setting deadlines).	
19. Diversity	Understands terminology from an array of cultures and is able to identify differences in values, perceptions, customs and behaviors. Accommodates diverse communication styles (using interpreters or TTY machines). Demonstrates respect for all people and is aware of and open to diverse and/or minority viewpoints. Understands concepts of power, dominance and oppression as well as roots of prejudice.	
<b>IV. Self Management Skills</b>		
20. Commitment to Youth	Is enthusiastic and energetic. Believes in youth's strengths and has firm values about protecting children and promoting relationship permanency. Assumes responsibility for program with youth and is accessible to youth beyond routine expectations. Meets and communicates regularly with youth and prioritizes what is in youth's best interest.	
21. Emotional Awareness	Has accurate self-assessment, understanding implications of own strengths, limitations, values, biases, cultural/personal style and familial background in a professional role. Understands how others might perceive them and integrates changes in self and others into practice. Manages own personal and emotional issues. Recognizes youth perception of adolescent workers having power and privilege because of their role.	
22. Self Control	Is conscientious and trustworthy. Balances efforts and avoids spreading self too thin. Resists jumping to conclusions, demonstrates patience and acceptance, and controls own stress. Maintains composure and functions effectively in stressful, risky or offensive situations.	
23. Self-Confidence	Is optimistic and believes in own decisions. Is in touch with own intuition and instincts. Is decisive in ambiguous or chaotic situations, knowing when to confront others and when not to take a strong stand on issues. Shows initiative, is ready to act on opportunities, and persists despite obstacles and setbacks.	
24. Innovation	Is comfortable with new information as well as novel ideas and approaches. Keeps up with knowledge in the field and with local and national Independent Living programs. Seeks to develop new areas of expertise and embraces opportunities for personal growth through work with youth. Solicits feedback and integrates needed changes into performance.	
25. Adaptability	Adapts personal and professional styles and schedules to meet the needs of specific youth. Is open to new information and can shift gears and redirect activities. Acknowledges and copes with negative outcomes of work with youth.	

V. Technical Knowledge	Importance to Job	Need for Training
26. Statutory and Regulatory Regulations – Understands federal law, state law, regulations and rules for the operation of Adolescent Living services and around permanency, concurrent planning and youth emancipating. Understands relevant legal terminology and concepts and knows state and federal funding streams.		
27. Policies and Procedures – Knows specific policies and procedures related to Independent Living and Adolescent Services and knows related Child Welfare policies and procedures. Is able to apply policy terminology and concepts in case management. Understands requirements of ethical practice and understands the relationship between documentation and accountability.		
28. Court and Judicial-System – Knows youth rights under the law and understands jurisdiction of various courts that deal with youth and families. Understands immigration laws, special education laws, the corrections system and knows how to guide adjudicated youth through job applications, college applications, etc.		
29. Placement Services – Knows various types of placement options and their use. Understands continuum of care and uses strategies to identify and maintain the least restrictive, most culturally relevant placement. Prepares youth and the youth’s placement resource and recognizes adoption is, in some instances, the preferred placement option.		
30. Relationship Permanency – Helps maintain youth’s relationships with primary family, siblings, extended family, etc., through regular contact and visitation. Assists youth in addressing needs for independent living skills and customizes intervention/services. Understands problems may prevent youth from establishing permanent relationships with adults and works with youth to identify permanent connections.		
31. Casework Principles – Knows standards for development, maintenance and boundaries of helping relationships. Knows procedures for casework decision-making and risk assessment, including Life Skills Assessment tools and how to work with youth to turn the assessment into a plan. Coordinates case planning and knows how to effectively prepare to terminate a relationship with a youth.		
32. Adolescent Development (Cognitive, Psychosocial, Physical) – Understands physical, cognitive, social, and emotional adolescent development, as well as the feelings and behaviors associated with loss, abuse and neglect. Strategizes to help youth resolve personal and family issues and establish a positive identity. Understands youth may exhibit behavioral swings in asserting independence and that youth develop their own value system through joining/conflicting with family, friends and others.		
33. Education – Understands the educational challenges and barriers to youth in care. Knows resources that contribute to a youth’s positive educational outcomes (e.g. tutors/coaches, tuition waivers, scholarship resources). Works with youth to develop a plan for attaining educational goals and works with schools to identify supports and services for youth preparing for post-secondary education.		
34. Teen Parenting – Knows resources available to youth who become parents during care and works with youth to assess options and secure support during pregnancy. Knows requirements for establishing paternity and child support/financial responsibilities of child’s father. Knows employment, financial support and childcare programs available to single parents.		

V. Technical Knowledge (continued)	Importance to Job	Need for Training
35. Substance Abuse - Understands substance use as a continuum and recognizes the dynamics and indicators of substance problems. Works with youth to identify treatment and prevention services and to understand referral procedures. Understands the impact of substance abuse/addiction/recovery on the developmental stages of adolescence and can identify the need for collaborative efforts.		
36. Health – Maintenance Services – Prepares youth for managing their own medical, dental and mental health needs by helping them gain an understanding of their health care needs and the importance of keeping appointments. Identifies and connects youth with appropriate health resources in their communities.		
37. Youth Development - Creates opportunities for youth to develop competencies, gain confidence and feel supported in practicing skills, learning about relationships and connecting with their community. Understands the importance of youth collaborating in team decisions and helps youth recognize themselves as a resource to others because of life experiences.		
38. Life Skills - Understands the Independent Living four-stage continuum and that a youth's acquisition of life skills is dependent on their developmental needs and independent living goals. Knows the importance of joint planning and consistency. Consistently creates opportunities for youth to practice daily living skills in real world environment.		
39. Independent Living - Knows models of semi-independent or supervised living and can provide case management and advocacy services to locate appropriate community-based living arrangements. Assists youth and works with other agencies and care providers to secure necessary services, including those needed for youth with developmental disabilities. Understands procedures for ongoing monitoring to identify indicators of risk and procedures for intervention.		
40. Preparation for Transition from Care - Works with youth to develop/expand personal support systems and assists them in the emotional stages of their transition from the child welfare system. Understands youth's need to deal with issues that may surface as they transition out of care and helps them explore the need to re-unite with family and former community.		
41. Aftercare - Helps prepare youth for any financial assistance needs or housing issues by working with youth to identify supports and resources. Understands need to empower youth to identify supports and resources as they transition to self-sufficiency.		
42. Community Linkages - Works with youth to identify available community resources. Encourages youth, foster parents, family, and the community to identify resources for needed adult support and helps youth identify ways to contribute to the community.		
43. Employment - Helps youth develop educational and career plans. Knows community resources that can offer youth job shadowing and mentoring experiences as well as long-term personal connections. Works with educational institutions and employment programs to assist youth in reaching goals.		
44. Technology - Applies basic computer concepts and utilizes e-mail, scheduling software and word processing functions. Leverages opportunities to engage in electronic discussion groups and forums in order to enhance skills/abilities.		

Thank you for your input!