

# **NYS DSP Competencies and the Code of Ethics Frequently Asked Questions – Updated 10/15/13**

## **Background and Reasons**

### **1. Why is there a need to change DSP roles and expectations?**

The culture in which supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities has evolved to become increasingly person-centered with a strong emphasis on personal choice. In addition, a greater emphasis has been placed on ethical practice and a high level of competence when providing supports and services. The nature of these components has led to OPWDD's identification of the need to establish a set of Core Competencies that combine the technical skills for the provision of high quality services and supports, with more value-based skills needed to assist people with disabilities to make their own decisions, and live and work within the community.

### **2. Are the NYS DSP Competencies mandated for all OPWDD affiliated providers?**

Yes, the NYS DSP Competencies and Evaluation Tools are mandated for all staff providing direct support to people with developmental disabilities.

### **3. How were the NYS DSP Competencies and Evaluation Tools developed?**

In 2011, OPWDD created the New York State Developmental Disabilities Talent Development Consortium, a diverse group representing our stakeholders, including people with developmental disabilities, families, nonprofit providers, employee labor unions, academia, and national workforce experts. One of the primary goals of the consortium was to develop and implement a comprehensive set of core competencies for direct support professionals across the state, and a talent development plan to master those competencies.

### **4. How will this initiative improve the quality of services?**

By explicitly stating the requirements for both technical and value-based skills, the expectations of the DSP will be set to appropriate levels. The expectations for the quality of service, held by an individual, can be molded to more appropriately reflect the roles that the DSPs are to fulfill. This pairing of expectations with satisfaction levels is extremely important to the development of trusting, professional relationships. It is the development of these professional relationships that heavily impacts the perception of quality of care provided. How many times have we heard of physicians who have a high level of skill but "no bedside manner"? This comment stems from the perception that the relationship the patient has with the physician is purely medical, when in fact, most patients desire a certain level of "caring" from their personal physicians. The same is true for the perceptions of quality of care delivered by the DSP. There must be a healthy balance between technical skills and genuine caring about the person being served. When these two factors are in place, the perception is that there is high quality care being delivered. The combined effects of standardized training, implementation of the Code of Ethics and improving the overall status of the DSP as a career, fosters the development of caring relationships and ultimately a sense of high quality perceived by the person served, their families and advocates.

### **5. How does this make sense in a managed care environment?**

As managed care unfolds, and resources are re-directed from traditional services and more toward versions of individual community supports, DSPs will be functioning with less immediate oversight. For this plan to be successful, DSPs must operate with a broader skill set and a deeper ethical commitment.

This does not mean that congregate service has no such imperative, but ICS is driving the thinking. Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) will be evaluating providers not only in the area of financial accountability but also in service deliverables. Preferred provider status will be achieved and maintained only if certain metrics such as health, safety, incident reporting, community connections, end-user satisfaction, meaningful relationships, internal quality improvement systems, etc. are tracked and goals achieved. In this context, a provider will want to not only embrace these competencies but also to excel at them.

## **6. If our organization already has a DSP development program, why would I want to do this one? Why do we have to be standardized?**

Many agencies have done a good job in developing their staff, but there is always room for improvement and utilizing the competencies will lead to higher staff performance and consequently individuals with greater skills and increased self-esteem. The reasons for standardization include but are not limited to:

- Assuring that a DSP trained in one agency has skill portability as s/he moves to another agency or already works in two or more agencies;
- Decreasing the need to re-train transfers except in agency-specific policy and practice;
- Establishing a portable career path within the direct support profession;
- Ensuring reasonable ethical practice in decision making and skill practice;
- Setting the foundation for a recognizable profession
- A uniform measure for Managed Care Organizations to determine the capacity of a provider's workforce.

## **7. Does the NYS Department of Labor recognize DSP on their list of trades and occupations?**

OPWDD and NYS DOL have had formal meetings on:

- Using the Core Competencies as the baseline definition of DSP as a recognized occupation. If a DSP meets an achievement of "satisfactory" on the annual evaluation, s/he will be considered a DSP.
- Reforming the current DSP apprenticeship trade from a time-based training program to a competency-based program;
- Writing the job description for DSP in the DOL O-Net.
- NYS DOL is open to all of these changes providing standardization is maintained.

## **Resources and Tools**

### **8. How can I access the competencies, evaluation tools, and available resources?**

The NYS DSP Competencies, Evaluation Tools, and other available resources can be accessed at: [http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd\\_careers\\_training/training\\_opportunities/core\\_competencies](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_careers_training/training_opportunities/core_competencies). Questions and concerns can be directed to [DSP.Competencies@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:DSP.Competencies@opwdd.ny.gov) or (518) 473-1190.

### **9. How are the evaluation tools designed?**

There are 3 different evaluation tools available. The first is the Initial Evaluation, which is completed by the supervisor, but can also be used as a self-assessment by the DSP. The Initial Evaluation includes the following rating categories: "Meets the Skill Standard", "Making Progress", "Does Not Meet the Skill Standard", and "Not Applicable". The Initial Evaluation should be delivered around the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of employment for new staff. The second evaluation tool is the Annual Evaluation. The Annual Evaluation includes the following rating categories: "Exceeds the Skill Standard", "Meets the Skill Standard", "Does

Not Meet the Skill Standard”, and “Not Applicable”. The Initial and Annual Evaluations are available online and include an auto-scoring feature, which compiles all of the ratings. The third evaluation tool is the Evaluation for Individuals Supported, Family Members, or Other Advocates. This evaluation is designed to be completed by the person receiving support or his/her advocate.

**10. What resources and/or curricula are available to support DSPs in learning the competencies?**

A list of learning resources can be viewed on the OPWDD website. The Learning Resources Document provides a searchable listing of available resources to help DSPs learn and demonstrate the competencies. These learning resources are an available option for agencies to review if the agency determines that it does not currently provide training and development opportunities for their DSPs to learn and demonstrate specific competencies. Each agency can determine how to best support its DSPs to achieve competence in the skills described.

## **Implementation**

**11. What is the deadline for implementing the NYS DSP Competencies?**

Service Providers are encouraged to begin implementing the NADSP Code of Ethics, the DSP Core Competencies and the Performance Evaluations for direct support professionals by April, 2014. Three years later, April, 2017, service providers shall have on file completed Initial or Annual Performance Evaluations, appropriately related to the timeframes of Initial and Annual, for all direct support professionals.

**12. What will OPWDD’s Division of Quality Improvement do with these new requirements?**

As with all quality initiatives, DQI will eventually check that the Core Competencies and Code of Ethics are part of DSP preparation and evaluation. DQI has not yet determined how this will play out specifically. Survey protocols will be developed before April, 2017. An Administrative Memorandum (ADM) will be issued to the field.

**Additional questions can be submitted to [TalentDevelopment@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:TalentDevelopment@opwdd.ny.gov).**