



A Vision of Core Competencies for Care Givers Serving Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People

The creation of Core Competencies was driven by understandings in providing the best healthcare for transgender and gender nonconforming individuals in the global population. These competencies embrace the notion that all individuals deserve medically competent care by knowledgeable professionals that is respectful, responsible and responsive. These competencies describe what effective treatment looks like and promote a new paradigm for educating caregivers and supporting professionals working with transgender and gender nonconforming people in the healthcare system.

An Emphasis on Knowledge, Skills and Cultural Awareness

Today's transgender and gender non-conforming populations need caregivers who treat them with the same respect and dignity which is afforded all humans. The Core Competencies for professionals working with transgender and gender nonconforming people incorporate a framework that includes knowledge, skills and cultural awareness needed to be effective caregivers (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992 as cited in Burns, Singh, Harper, Pickering, Moundas, Scofield, Maxon, Harper, Roan, & Hosea, 2009). The Core Competencies include four domains which incorporate specific knowledge, skills and cultural awareness related to the domain. Although outlined separately, the domains are not independent of one another. Instead, they are meant to be integrated in professional practice within and across specific medical disciplines.

An Emphasis on Collaboration

Current health care professionals tend to treat clients in isolation. Yet, we know that collaboration among professionals improves client care and improves professional practice. When professionals and clients share in collective decision making, they are able to create respectful, responsible and responsive treatment plans that encompass a shared vision for the client's future. The Core Competencies create a framework for effective collaboration between caregivers and care receivers.

Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to act as a resource for global organizations to develop educational programs and courses to train professionals and community members to provide respectful, responsible and responsive care and treatment to transgender and gender nonconforming people. This document seeks to offer consistency among caregivers and provides clear expectations for the care receiver.

Summary of the Core Competencies Domains

The competencies have been grouped into four general domains to help users organize their thinking about the competencies.

Caregiver/Care Receiver Relationship

Caregiving begins with the transgender or gender nonconforming client. Caregivers must understand and respond to perceived power and balance in the relationship. Additionally, caregivers must understand that care receivers bring individual and diverse experiences to the relationship. Care receivers need a welcoming and safe environment in order to develop a therapeutic rapport with the caregiver. Caregivers help to create this environment by understanding gender identity as one facet of an entire identity, using evolving language and terminology, identifying appropriate communication styles, and affirming interpersonal exchanges.

Content Knowledge

Caregivers must have a deep yet fluid understanding of their discipline in order to effectively treat the transgender and/or gender nonconforming care receiver. Caregivers must understand general health care across the lifespan for transgender and gender nonconforming people including foundations in primary care, mental health, hormone therapy, and surgery. Additionally, caregivers must be able to incorporate scientific evidence into clinical judgment and decision making. Caregivers must keep the voice of the care receiver at the center of all decision making.

Interdisciplinary Practice

Effective caregiving integrates interdisciplinary evidence, knowledge and approaches within and across practices, institutions and areas of health and care. Caregivers must also understand and be prepared to address both a distinct lack of medically competent knowledge in particular areas of medicine as well as attitudinal problems linked with transphobia which impact the delivery of care within a system. Caregivers must also be able to collaborate and implement the expertise of professionals in various disciplines as related to transcare and transitional care.

Professional Responsibility

It is imperative that professionals create safe and supportive environments for their transgender and gender nonconforming clients. Caregivers must adhere to practices that promote confidentiality and ethical standards while working with care receivers. This includes but is not limited to developing appropriate communication styles, developing cultural humility and being an advocate for transgender and gender nonconforming people across cultures. Through critical reflection caregivers should identify gaps in their own personal knowledge. In order to achieve this, caregivers must engage in continuous and meaningful professional learning. While this learning requires caregivers keeping abreast of developments in their respective disciplines, it also includes examining their own practice through self-reflection and collaboration with individuals across disciplines. Additionally, professionals should identify knowledge gaps in their disciplines and seek to create new evidence to contribute to advancements in the study and practice of working with transgender and gender nonconforming people.

Implementation

The implementation of the Core Competencies is intended to take place within the Global Education Initiative (GEI). Individual courses will incorporate local knowledge with the Core Competencies as they relate to the course content. Course content should include meaningful learning, shared learning and self-directed learning. Trainers should be knowledgeable in the field of study and model the respectfulness, responsibility and responsiveness with which they expect caregivers to work with their clients. Trainers should encompass a diverse population including transgender and gender nonconforming people.

Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC)

Competencies for Counseling with Transgender Clients

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Approved by American Counseling Association Governing Council - November 7, 2009

Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70, 477-486.