



## National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth KSA Professional Development Assessment for Organizations and Systems

This assessment was developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) to allow organizations and systems to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of youth service practitioners and to create a professional development agenda based on that assessment. This assessment can be used as an organizational development tool or as part of a system-wide professional development strategy. The ten questions below will help organizations and systems put in place the components necessary for an effective professional development system that strengthens the KSAs of youth service practitioners. The KSAs are organized into ten competency areas which were compiled from a review of over 70 initiatives offering training and/or identifying competencies for the fields of youth development, workforce development, education, and

disabilities. These ten areas were validated by youth practitioners, program managers, and stakeholders from the field through focus groups, conference calls, meetings, and an on-line survey of relevancy, proficiency, and available training. A chart of the competency areas is included at the end of this assessment and was excerpted from: *Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of Youth Service Practitioners: The Centerpiece of a Successful Workforce Development System*, a background paper published by the NCWD/Youth (<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/background/ksa.pdf> or <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/background/ksa.doc>). For more information on the KSA competencies, professional development strategies or the benefits of practitioner professional development, please visit the NCWD/Youth website at: [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info).

### 1. Have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for youth service professionals been identified?

- Tasks/roles/responsibilities of all staff members identified
- Youth, families, and communities served identified
- Expected outcomes/goals for organization and system identified

### 2. Have the KSA strengths and areas for improvement for current staff been assessed?

- Staff completes KSA self-assessments (use NCWD/Youth version or organization's own)
- Supervisors/managers/administrators complete assessments
- Assessments reviewed individually (for practitioner professional development plans)

### 3. Are there individual professional development plans based on these assessments?

- Staff strengths identified from KSA assessments
- Areas for improvement identified from KSA assessments
- Practitioner goals identified
- Organizational goals identified
- KSA professional development plan for practitioners developed

### 4. Have the KSA strengths and areas for improvement for the entire organization or system been assessed?

- Plan for organizational/staff assessment developed (when, whom, how, purpose)
- All staff or representative number of staff complete KSA assessment
- Assessments reviewed collectively (for system/organization professional development plan)

**5. Is there an organization/system-wide training agenda or professional development plan for current staff and programs based on these needs?**

- Organizational/system strengths identified from KSA assessments
- Organizational/system areas for improvement identified from KSA assessments
- Organizational/system goals identified
- KSA organizational/system professional development plan developed

**6. Is there a recruiting plan for staff or programs based on these strengths and needs?**

- Organizational/system strengths identified from KSA assessments
- Organizational/system areas for improvement identified from KSA assessments
- Organizational/system staff recruitment needs identified
- Job descriptions developed
- Interview questions developed

**7. Does the organization/system value and promote a culture of professional development?**

- All stakeholders (board members, executives, managers, practitioners, families, youth) are aware of professional development goals, plans, and benefits
- Professional development is encouraged and time/funding is willingly granted
- Professional development efforts are recognized, celebrated, and rewarded

**8. Are opportunities and time for professional development a part of the organization/system's annual calendar and planning?**

- Practitioner and organization/system professional development plans are aligned with organizational/system annual calendar (e.g., breaks, annual meetings, conferences, performance reviews, fiscal year)
- Regular professional development opportunities are scheduled (e.g., staff meetings, trainings, conferences)
- Review and revision of practitioner and organization/system professional development plans is scheduled on a recurring basis

**9. Is funding for all the associated costs of professional development a line item in the organization/system budget?**

- Full costs of professional development have been calculated (registration fees, materials, staff time/work coverage, travel, meals, lodging)
- System request for proposals (RFPs) include a line item for full costs of professional development
- Organizational budget includes a line item for professional development
- Organization/system strategic plan includes sustained funding for professional development

**10. Have the benefits to the youth, families, practitioners, program, organization, system, and community been identified and maximized?**

- Staff regularly share information gained during professional development with colleagues at program, organization, or system
- New practices and strategies from professional development opportunities are incorporated into organization/system procedure
- New resources and collaborations from professional development opportunities are utilized by organization/system
- Youth, families, and community are informed of new practices, strategies, resources, and collaborations

# SYNTHESIS OF COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH SERVICE PRACTITIONERS

**B**aseline competencies for all youth service practitioners are listed in the first column. These were synthesized from the work of The John J. Heldrich Center, the Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship (YDPA) Program, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP), and others. The second column

contains the additional competencies for youth service practitioners working with youth with disabilities. These competencies are a combination of those suggested by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), the Center for Mental Health Services, the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), and others.

KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively	Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively
<b>Competency Area #1: Knowledge of the Field</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of youth development theory, adolescent and human development</li> <li>• Understanding of youth rights and laws including labor, curfew, and attendance</li> <li>• Knowledge of self as a youth development worker, including professional ethics and boundaries, confidentiality, and professional development needs and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the values and history of the disability field</li> <li>• Understanding of disability laws including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA)</li> <li>• Knowledge of key concepts and processes including Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), transition, due process procedures, parents' rights, informed choice, self determination, universal access, and reasonable accommodations</li> <li>• Understanding of privacy and confidentiality rights as they relate to disability disclosure</li> </ul>
<b>Competency Area #2: Communications with Youth</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect and caring for all youth, including the ability to be open minded and nonjudgmental, develop trusting relationships, and maintain awareness of diversity and youth culture</li> <li>• Ability to recognize and address need for intervention (e.g., drug or alcohol abuse, domestic abuse or violence, and depression)</li> <li>• Ability to advocate for, motivate, recruit, and engage youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of issues and trends affecting youth with disabilities (e.g., low expectations, attitudinal or environmental barriers, need for social integration)</li> <li>• Understanding of disability awareness, sensitivity, and culture</li> <li>• Understanding of how to communicate with youth with various physical, sensory, psychiatric, and cognitive disabilities</li> </ul>

**KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively****Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively****Competency Area #3: Assessment and Individualized Planning**

- Ability to facilitate person-centered planning, including the ability to assess goals, interests, past experience, learning styles, academic skills, assets, independent living skills, and needs (e.g., transportation, etc)
- Ability to involve youth in their own planning process by helping youth to set realistic goals and action steps, make informed choices, exercise self-determination, and actively participate in own development (includes financial/benefits planning and educational requirements)
- Knowledge of various assessment tools and strategies and ability to administer assessments (or make referrals, as needed)
- Ability to track progress and change plans as needed

- Ability to ensure appropriate assessment of young people's disabilities (in-house or through referrals, as necessary)
- Understanding how to use information from assessments and records and recognize implications for education and employment, including any potential need for accommodations and assistive technology
- Ability to assess independent/ community living skills and needs, including accommodations and supports
- Understanding of benefits planning, includes Social Security income and health benefits and their relation to working

**Competency Area #4: Relationship to Family and Community**

- Engage/build relationships with family members or other significant persons
- Resource mapping/ability to connect youth to community institutions, resources and supportive adults
- Ability to engage youth in community service and leadership activities

- Involving families, guardians, and advocates, including connections to disability-specific resources and groups
- Community resources, including disability-specific resources and organizations

**Competency Area #5: Workforce Preparation**

- Ability to facilitate job readiness skill-building and assess employability strengths/barriers
- Ability to teach job search skills, including use of technology and the Internet
- Ability to coach youth, assist in job maintenance, and provide follow-up support
- Ability to match youth with appropriate jobs and careers, including job analysis and skills standards
- Ability to involve employers in preparation process

- Ability to conduct job analysis, matching, customizing, and carving for youth with disabilities, including accommodations, supports, and modifications
- Knowledge of support required to place youth in jobs, including what employers need to know about reasonable accommodations, undue burden, assistive technology, funding streams, and tax incentives

**Competency Area #6: Career Exploration**

- Knowledge of technology and online search skills
- Knowledge of tools and processes for career exploration
- Ability to engage employers in career exploration
- Knowledge of workplace and labor market trends

- Knowledge of workplace and labor market trends, including options for youth with disabilities such as supported employment, customized employment, or self-employment

KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively	Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively
<b>Competency Area #7: Relationships with Employers and Between Employer &amp; Employee</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to develop relationships with employers</li> <li>• Ability to communicate effectively with employers</li> <li>• Ability to mediate/resolve conflicts</li> <li>• Ability to engage employers in program design and delivery</li> <li>• Ability to train employers in how to work with and support young people</li> <li>• Customer service skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify, recruit, and provide support to employers who hire youth with disabilities</li> <li>• Ability to advocate for youth with disabilities with employers including negotiating job design, job customization, and job carving</li> <li>• Ability to train employers and their staff in how to work with and support young people, including providing disability awareness training and information about universal access and design, reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services for youth with disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Competency Area #8: Connection to Resources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify a range of community resources (people, places, things, and money) that can assist youth</li> <li>• Ability to create relationships and network with other community agencies and potential partners</li> <li>• Ability to market own program as a valuable resource to community and a viable partner</li> <li>• Ability to build collaborative relationships and manage partnerships</li> <li>• Knowledge about different funding streams for youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of community intermediary organizations to assist with disability-specific supports and resources</li> </ul>
<b>Competency Area #9: Program Design and Delivery</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of workforce development system, including technology of workforce development (service management, performance measures, and assessment)</li> <li>• Ability to work with groups, foster teamwork, and develop leadership and followership among youth</li> <li>• Ability to manage programs and budgets</li> <li>• Ability to design programs using best practices (considering age, stage, and cultural appropriateness)</li> <li>• Service management skills, including how to set measurable goals with tangible outcomes</li> <li>• Ability to evaluate and adjust programs based on outcome measurement and data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to access resources from special education, vocational rehabilitation, community rehabilitation programs, disability income support work incentives, and other disability-specific programs</li> <li>• Knowledge of universal access and design, reasonable accommodation, auxiliary aids, and services</li> </ul>

KSAs Needed to Serve All Youth Effectively	Additional KSAs Needed to Serve Youth with Disabilities Effectively
<b>Competency Area #10: Administrative Skills</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to complete referrals and service summaries using common reporting formats and requirements</li> <li>• Written and verbal communication skills</li> <li>• Time management skills</li> <li>• Strong interpersonal skills/ability to work within a team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to complete disability-specific referrals and service summaries, such as IEP, transition plan, IPE, and In-service Work Plan (IWP)</li> </ul>

**TAKE ACTION**

Once the necessary components have been identified, organizations or systems may want to:

- Have practitioners in the organization or system complete the *KSA Assessment for Practitioners* to identify training priorities and develop a professional development plan.
- Visit the *KSA Hot Topic* to gather organizational or system professional development strategies.
- Read the “*Why Professional Development*” *Info Brief 19* to learn how professional development benefits youth, practitioners, organizations, and the community.
- Share their action with NCWD/Youth!

*For More Information, Contact:*

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