

# **Specialty Endorsement Alzheimer's/Dementia Competencies and Essential Content**

## **About the Development of the Competencies**

A workgroup consisting of a broad group of stakeholders in direct care and dementia services and training convened on Monday, August 27, 2012 in Des Moines, Iowa. The workgroup discussed current policies and regulations related to dementia education and training for direct care professionals and utilized work completed in 2010 by the Dementia Education Task Force convened by the Alzheimer's Association Greater Iowa Chapter to identify necessary competencies in the field. The competencies recommended in this report reflect the work of that Task Force. Some language, but not intent, has been edited.

## **Target Audience – Direct Care Workers**

These are individuals who provide supportive services and care to people experiencing illnesses or disabilities, not including nurses, case managers, or social workers. This definition directly aligns with the definition developed and used by the Iowa Direct Care Worker Task Force and Advisory Council. For the purposes of this project, a direct care worker is an individual who is employed to aid and attend individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of irreversible dementia.

## **Competency Categories**

Competencies are defined as the skills, knowledge and approach that a direct care worker must possess and demonstrate to effectively provide care for a person with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Dementia education curricula must have learning objectives and related content that address the following competencies:

1. Understanding Dementia
2. Communication
3. Person Centered/Directed Care
4. Understanding Behavioral Symptoms
5. Unique Aspects of Daily Living
6. Meaningful Relationships and Social Engagement
7. Ethics of Caregiving
8. Understanding and Managing Stress

### **1. Understanding Dementia**

COMPETENCY #1: The direct care worker will provide support to persons served with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of irreversible dementia that reflects an understanding of

the disease, the losses and progression associated with irreversible dementia, and its impact on the quality of life.

Essential Content:

- types of irreversible dementia
- progression of disease
- difference between normal aging and Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.
- ten warning signs of dementia
- definition of dementia
- differentiate dementia and Alzheimer's

## **2. Communication**

COMPETENCY #2: The direct care worker will develop communication skills needed to effectively interact with persons served with dementia, their families and associated care teams.

COMPETENCY #3: The direct care worker will use affirming communication and non-verbal strategies that promote positive relationships and enhance the person's served self-esteem.

COMPETENCY #4: The direct care worker will follow communication approaches identified in the person's served Individualized Support Plan (ISP).

COMPETENCY #5: The direct care worker will observe behavior and other non-verbal communication of the person-served to understand what the individual is communicating.

Essential Content:

- common characteristics of communication with individuals with dementia
- techniques to individualize communication
- communicate as part of care team
- communicate with families of individuals with dementia
- interpret the care plan
- importance of non-verbal communication
- behaviors are a way of communicating
- respond appropriately to repetitive questions
- validate emotions and frustrations to maintain dignity
- discussions about a person in his/her presence, without his/her participation, should be avoided
- correcting, reasoning and/or arguing with a person should be avoided
- use simple sentence structure and statements that include only one thought
- person's need for comfort is more important than the direct care worker's need to be right

## **3. Person Centered/Directed Care**

COMPETENCY #6: The direct care worker will follow person-centered principles when providing holistic support and services.

COMPETENCY #7: The direct care worker will demonstrate approaches to promote the person's served strengths and minimize the impact of the disease to assure the best quality of life.

Essential Content:

- Ability to define person-centered/directed care
- Understanding of VIPS – Valuing, individualized care and services, perspective, and positive social environment (V- valuing people with dementia, I-treating people as individuals P-looking at the world from their perspective, S- Providing a positive social environment)
- Knowledge of care teams and individualized care plans and ability to implement care plans.
- Ability to use personal background, history, family members, and/or life story to individualize care and services

#### **4. Understanding Behavioral Symptoms**

COMPETENCY #8: The direct care worker will discuss behavioral symptoms of persons with irreversible dementia caused by brain damage and progression of the disease.

COMPETENCY #9: The direct care worker will demonstrate strategies and approaches that minimize frustration, protect the person's served dignity and enhance quality of life.

Essential Content:

- Recognition of non-verbal indicators of pain
- Knowledge of non-pharmaceutical interventions
- Knowledge of common pharmaceutical side effects
- Understanding of how behaviors are symptoms of unmet needs
- Ability to define late-day anxiety and fatigue-related behavior such as “sundowning” and “catastrophic reaction”
- Understanding the positive and negative effects environment may have on the behavior of persons with dementia
- Ability to list common causes for behavioral changes
- Recognition of causes for difficult symptoms related to a task
- Understanding inappropriate sexual behaviors and need for intimacy
- Depression and Alzheimer's Disease – understanding the relationship between Alzheimer's and depression and observations related to presence of depression.

## **5. Unique Aspects of Daily Living**

COMPETENCY #10: The direct care worker will discuss the unique impact of irreversible dementia on person's served ability to carry out personal care and the importance of structure in their daily life.

COMPETENCY #11: The direct care worker will demonstrate ways to adapt support and services to respect each person's privacy, dignity, and nutritional needs; minimize the individual's frustration; and encourage independence.

Essential Content:

- Knowledge of unique strategies for personal care of individuals with dementia
- Recognizing the importance of cueing and prompting
- Ability to adapt strategies to the current abilities of the individual with dementia
- Knowledge of how to support the nutritional and hydration needs of individuals with dementia
- Ability to demonstrate the following:
  - Sequencing
  - Mirroring
  - Hand-over-hand
  - Chaining and end-chaining
  - Bridging
  - Mouth opening and swallowing facilitation
- Understanding of risk factors and interventions to prevent falls (Safety)
- Knowledge of how cognitive and functional loss impacts daily life

## **6. Meaningful Relationships and Social Engagement**

COMPETENCY #12: The direct care worker will discuss of the importance of relationships with family, friends, neighbors, direct care workers and the community in which the person served with irreversible dementia lives.

COMPETENCY #13: The direct care worker will provide therapeutic programming which provides individualized activities which are meaningful, stimulating and encourage contact with others.

Essential Content:

- Understanding of how to recognize spirituality of individual served
- Ability to encourage simple pleasures and stimulate the senses through activities
- Ability to integrate meaning and structure into daily life
- Understanding of ways to meet the emotional needs of families with loved ones with dementia
- Knowledge of reasons why families may be described as “difficult” or “demanding”

- Understanding the importance of establishing relationships with other individuals in setting/facility or peer group
- Understanding the importance of individuals with dementia being accepted as they are.

## **7. Ethics of Caregiving**

COMPETENCY #14: The direct care worker will discuss ethical issues that relate to working with persons with irreversible dementia and how these issues impact the individual's quality of life.

COMPETENCY #15: The direct care worker will incorporate ethical care giving principles into their work practice providing holistic support and services to persons served with irreversible dementia.

Essential Content:

- Knowledge and understanding the rights of individuals served
- Understanding end of life care and services
- Knowledge regarding the ethical principles of caregiving
- Knowledge of legal issues for direct care workers, such as mandatory abuse reporting
- Understanding standards of professional conduct

## **8. Understanding and Managing Stress**

COMPETENCY #16: The direct care worker will explain how stress impacts the person served with dementia, their family, friends and the direct care worker.

COMPETENCY #17: The direct care worker will demonstrate effective ways of managing stress in their work environment which will enable them to provide the best quality of life possible for individuals with irreversible dementia.

Essential Content:

- Knowledge of approaches for reducing direct care worker burden and burnout
- Understanding how direct care worker stress impacts the individual served

### **Modes of Delivery**

Training may be delivered in a variety of ways, including classroom instruction, audio-visuals, web-based, case study discussion, and other methods. A combination of methods is recommended to enhance accessibility and effectiveness and to allow for different learning styles among direct care workers.

### **Competency testing**

The curriculum must provide information on how direct care workers will be evaluated for competency. Competency testing should include an assessment of knowledge, affective and

psychomotor skills and may include such methods as written pre-and post-tests, skills checklists, supervisor observation and/or client response.

### **Credential earned upon completion of an approved curriculum**

Direct care workers will receive a Certificate of Completion issued by the instructor of approved curriculum.

### **Instructor qualifications**

Instructors of dementia curriculum must have a minimum of two years experience providing care or services for individuals with dementia, professionally or otherwise.

Instructors shall also have completed educational coursework on learning or have experience with teaching adults or supervising direct care workers.

### **Continuing Education**

The workgroup recommends direct care professionals with a specialty in Alzheimer's and dementia receive two hours annually of continuing education that is specific to Alzheimer's and dementia.

### **Portability**

The Certificate of Completion is valid in all settings in which dementia care is provided and is transferable from one employer to another.