Core competencies of social workers

June 2006
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NOTE: The Core Competencies of Social Workers was adopted by the Board of the Order in June 2005. In June 2006, the Board adopted a document entitled: Le Référentiel de formation des travailleuses sociales et des travailleurs sociaux. These two documents have been combined to produce The Core Competencies of Social Workers, which includes the Competencies section of the June 2005 document in its entirety, plus a section on the knowledge required for the acquisition of said competencies.

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This document is available on the Order’s website: www.optsq.org
Since the Professional Code requires the Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec (OPTSQ) to ensure the protection of the public, the Order must supervise the professional practice of its members. To this end, it establishes regulations regarding admission, applies a professional inspection program, implements the services of a “syndic” and establishes disciplinary measures. It must also ensure respect of the reserved title of “social worker” and develop standards of professional practice for its members. Consequently, it must ensure that the basic university education of members guarantees the level of competence required for quality practice. Further to this responsibility, the Order must adopt a position on the quality of social work practice and the university-level training providing access to the title.

Moreover, the Training Committee constituted according to an OPTSQ regulation is the Order’s entity mandated to look into the quality of social work training in compliance with the respective and complementary competencies of the Order, university teaching establishments and the Quebec Department of Education, Recreation and Sports. Serving as an advisory committee to the Office, it consists of two representatives of the Order, two persons appointed by the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Québec Universities [CREPUQ] and one representative of the Department of Education, Recreation and Sports.

The Training Committee is required to:
- Conduct an annual review of the quality of training in light of the evolution of knowledge and practice, particularly with regards to the protection of the public and, if need be, report its observations to the Office.
- Inform the Board of its opinion on the quality of the training.

With regards to training, the Committee considers:
- The objectives of the training program leading to a diploma leading to a specialist’s permit or certificate.
- The objectives of other terms and conditions for the issuance of the specialist’s permit or certificate that may be imposed by a regulation of the Board (ex.: a professional internship or exam).
- Diploma and training equivalence standards set by the Board, leading to a specialist’s permit or certificate.

In 1998, “Les états généraux de la profession” identified four main points of reflection: the relevance of the profession, professional identity, competence and skills and the level of education needed to ensure adequate practice. This reflective process gave rise to the Core Competencies of Social Workers adopted by the Board in June 2005. The ultimate purpose of the Core Competencies is to ensure that training programs respond to the needs of professional practice, providing social workers with the skill-set needed for employment. It also supports the develop-

While social workers may not use the full set of professional competencies in the practice of their profession, they must be capable of doing so.

**Note:** In this document, the word “person” is used in its generic sense for reading ease. In their practice, social workers ideal with individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations and communities.

1. See Appendix A: Mission, values, principles and ultimate purposes of the Order, laws, regulations and obligations and professional activities.
2. Regulation relating to the Social Worker Training Committee – article 5
3. Regulation relating to the Social Worker Training Committee – article 2
ment of self-sufficiency and professional identity while highlighting the specific contribution of social work. In the process, it provides points of reference for maintaining and improving the competencies of social workers.

Work on the development of a logical extension of this first document continued, giving rise to the Standards for the Training of Social Workers, which was adopted by the Board in June 2006. This mandate involved two consultative phases. The first involved social work training units while the second sought input from teaching and practice environments as well as the Order’s various committees and other players involved. Combining the competencies and knowledge facets, this document emerges as an essential work for the Order.

In addition, the Core Competencies of Social Workers was used in the revision of the Regulation on Diploma Equivalence Standards and the development of the Regulation Relating to Training Equivalence Degree Standards.

Definition of (professional and personal) competency and knowledge

Competency
Competency can be defined as an individual’s demonstrated ability to accomplish an activity, task or professional act. The term "demonstrated" implies that it is possible to observe and evaluate the application of a person’s knowledge, behaviour, ability to communicate and skill.

The proposed model includes two types of competencies:
- Professional competencies
- Personal competencies

Professional competencies
Professional competencies represent the core activities of social workers. They incorporate the standard process that takes shape in response to the intervention milieu, the type of problem and the diversity of the clientele. There are ten professional competencies. Each professional competency will be addressed from the perspective of the quality of the action as well as complementary knowledge and personal competencies.

Personal competencies
Personal competencies, which are sometimes referred to as generic or transversal, complement and reinforce professional competencies through appropriate behaviours. There are 18 personal competencies1 that incorporate the interchangeable skills that must be demonstrated and the attitudes that must be displayed in the exercise of our profession. Personal competencies are generally acquired at the adult stage through education, experience and the environment within which the individual evolves. For the most part, they are already present when the social worker begins his career. They facilitate the acquisition or mastery of professional competencies in harmony with the values of social work and the realities of professional practice. The listing presents these ten personal competencies in alphabetical order rather than order of importance.

Knowledge
As proposed in this document, knowledge (theoretical and practical) seeks to foster the development of the professional competencies needed for the practice of the social work profession.

1. The definition of each of the 18 personal competencies is presented in Appendix B.
Conducting a psychosocial evaluation

Important components (activities)

- Engaging the individual concerned *
- Collecting and verifying relevant information concerning social functionality or social development
- Analyzing information relating to the situation, taking into account the reciprocal interaction and influence methods employed between the person and his environment, relying on theoretical knowledge and relevant practices
- Observing and interpreting activities, behaviours and situations
- Arranging/conducting an interview with specific objectives
- Describing and classifying problems
- Using appropriate measuring tools or instruments
- Defining problems
- Evaluating the urgency, risks and dangers associated with a situation
- Identifying personal and locally available resources
- Identifying the links between the problem situation and the person’s living conditions paying particular attention to occurrences of oppression and discrimination
- Identifying the needs, the relevant human rights and ensuing social protection measures
- Conducting a contextual analysis of the problem (describing it and putting it into perspective)
- Examining requests, needs and interests by speaking with the vulnerable person and ascertaining his perception of the situation
- Informing the person with respect to existing resources
- Providing a professional opinion and recommendations or suggesting possible solutions

In-depth and updated knowledge

- Social system
  - Human development and related problems
  - Reciprocal interaction and influence methods employed between the person and his environment
  - Living conditions, social aspects of health problems and their repercussions on individuals, couples, families and their networks, groups and communities (discrimination, oppression and exclusion)
  - Social systems (including family systems and social networks)
  - Socio-economic institutions, including public and parapublic systems as well as the community network
  - Nature and extent of social policies and laws, as well as government orientations (notably the Act respecting Health and Social Services, the Youth Protection Act, the Public Curator Act, the Act respecting the protection of persons whose mental state presents a danger to themselves or to others, as well as federal laws applicable in Québec)
  - Social roles
  - Social development
- Basis and extent of social prejudices
- Evaluation process and techniques
- Systematic information collecting and evaluating tools:
  - Description, extent, use and limitations
- Formulation of a professional opinion

Personal competencies

Analysis, listening, judgment, perceptiveness, thoroughness

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- Respects practice standards
- Appropriate to the individual, couple, family, group or community in question
- Thorough and realistic
- Respects deadlines

* Bold elements are considered essentials.
Planning a social intervention

Important components (activities)

- Identifying targeted changes with respect to social functionality or social development
- Agreeing on a work plan and contract adapted to the targeted person and including his input
- Establishing objectives, means, a schedule
- Selecting recognized intervention methods and models suited to the situation
- Devising effective intervention strategies at different levels:
  - Promotion
  - Prevention
  - Restoration (or rehabilitation)
- Encouraging the person to use his skills
  - Selecting the appropriate criteria and methodology in order to evaluate the intervention
  - Choosing behaviours or events to serve as indicators
  - Orienting and representing

In-depth and updated knowledge

- Social work intervention process
- Negotiation principles and processes (leading to an agreement, a contract, a plan)
- Vulnerable clienteles [characteristics, strengths, skills]
- Involuntary or hard-to-reach clienteles [in the areas of youth protection or other contexts]
- Organizations
  - Missions, resources and programs
  - Development of intervention and action plans

Personal competencies

Mobilization, work organization, thoroughness

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- Respects practice standards
- Realistic
- Produces measurable results
- Accepted by the person involved
Conducting a social intervention

Important components (activities)

- Using skills related to the selected methods and models
- Reinforcing ties between the person and his environment
- Fostering increased awareness, mutual assistance and the reclaiming of personal and social power
- Promoting the process for personal and social change
- Denouncing injustice
- Mediating conflict situations
- Defending human rights (through socio-political representation)
- Supporting the development of the person’s competencies within his social roles
- Developing a work partnership
- Mobilizing local resources (including social networks)
- Introducing new social practices
- Integrating research elements into professional practice
- Demonstrating solidarity with persons and social causes
- Coordinating services (case management) or activities (project management)
- Assisting the person with certain measures
- Completing an intervention process, service episode or project
- Conducting required follow-ups

In-depth and updated knowledge

- Intervention methods with individuals, couples, families, groups and communities (notably theoretical foundations, attitudes, skills and techniques)
- Varied approaches
- Interventions of different durations (in short, medium and long-term crisis)
- Processes and impacts of placement and changes in the living environment
- Processes for reclaiming power
- Decision-making process
- Human rights (Quebec and Canadian charters)
- Socio-political representation and the defence of human rights
- Mobilization of resources
- Meditation and conflict management
- Vulnerable clienteles
- Involuntary, dangerous or hard-to-reach clienteles (in youth protection or other situations)
- Coordination of services and projects

Personal competencies

Adaptability to change, cooperation, communication, interpersonal relationships, teamwork

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- Respects practice standards and knowledge acquired in the field
- Involves an investment sufficient to ensure that objectives are met
- Reoriented according to obstacles and events.
Evaluating the social intervention

Important components (activities)

- Reviewing the process (relevance of the interventions and methods selected, etc.)
- Measuring and interpreting the effects of the intervention by soliciting the opinion of the person involved as well as other persons concerned, if relevant
- Identifying needs previously undisclosed or unmet by the intervention
- Developing a new intervention plan, if needed
- Identifying the most effective strategies (based on conclusive data) relating to various aspects:
  - Promotion
  - Prevention
  - Restoration (or rehabilitation)
- Make recommendations relating to the organization’s policies and procedures or the organization of services if relevant

In-depth and updated knowledge

- Methods for evaluating and analyzing intervention practices
- Formulation of recommendations to clients and/or the organization

Personal competencies

Adaptability to change, analysis, judgement

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- Respects practice standards
- Relevant in terms of the extent to which targeted objectives are met and expected results are produced
- Reoriented in keeping with conditions favouring change
Establishing professional cooperation

Important components (activities)
- Identifying common activities and interests
- Clarifying the division of labour by separating individual activities from collective responsibilities
- Identifying the implications of specific choices
- Explaining specific roles and contributions
- Noting discriminatory comments and the impact of specific attitudes
- Raising the ethical aspects of a situation
- Ensuring cooperation with partners
- Developing, using and contributing to networks
- Responding in cooperation with colleagues from other disciplines
- Identifying and consulting experts
- Providing information and answering questions

In-depth and updated knowledge
- Social worker’s role and professional identity
- Processes inherent to interdisciplinary teamwork and work carried out in conjunction with other organizations
- Processes inherent to the development, coordination and implementation of a personalized service plan

Personal competencies
Cooperation, interpersonal relationships, teamwork

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria
- Respects the limits of personal competencies and actively uses the competencies of others
Communicating with colleagues, the person involved and his entourage

Important components (activities)

- Listening to the opinions of those involved
- Confirming understanding by rephrasing what was said
- Explaining a process or action plan
- Persuading, negotiating an action
- Making presentations (conferences, training, etc.)
- Choosing the appropriate means of communication
- Drafting professional files in keeping with OPTSQ regulations

In-depth and updated knowledge

- Professional writing and record keeping
- Planning and making a verbal presentation of a situation
- Communicating information adapted to different contexts

Personal competencies

Analysis, communication, ability to integrate information, judgment, interpersonal relationships, thoroughness

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- Respects the pace and opinions of the persons involved and actively seeks their cooperation
- Demonstrates respect, tact, patience and good listening skills
- Effective
- Structured while providing reliable information
- Clear and concise
Applying the obligations outlined in the Code of Ethics and the ethical principles to situations encountered in professional practice

Important components (activities)

- Integrating ethical and moral principles into practice
- Identifying existing and potential ethical and moral conflicts
- Exercising responsible ethical judgement
- Consulting other professionals
- Resolving ethical and moral dilemmas encountered in practice, based on an ethical decision-making process
- Assessing practice in keeping with the OPTSQ’s standards and social work values

In-depth and updated knowledge

- Profession’s principles and values
- Quebec professional system
- Code of Ethics and other regulations
- Practice standards
- Ethics
- Ethical decision-making processes

Personal competencies

Analysis, ability to integrate information, judgment, perceptiveness, thoroughness

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- According to a logical methodology
- With integrity
- With consistency
Ensuring professional development

Important components (activities)

- Tracking the evolution of social, political and economic problems and issues
- Obtaining information from different sources to remain abreast of the thinking, analyses, research and new practices in the field of social work
- Conducting an in-depth analysis of certain problems
- Collaborating on committee work
- Sharing relevant professional literature to influence the evolution of society and the profession
- Remaining abreast of the policies, laws and regulations that govern the profession (including jurisprudence)
- Participating in professional development activities that favour the development of professional identity
- Acquiring and developing consulting and supervision skills
- Using supervision to reflect on and evaluate the quality of his practice
- Periodically synthesizing data from his clinical intervention or community activity files to analyze practice
- Updating skills in the field of information technology

Sufficient and updated knowledge

- Professional development
- Realities of the labour market
- Continuing education
- Supervision and consultation processes
- Assessment of skills and professional practice
- Tools for analyzing practice
- Development of a social research perspective
- Identifying the most effective strategies (based on conclusive data) relating to various aspects:
  - Uses and limitations

Personal competencies

Adaptability to change, intellectual curiosity, judgment

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria

- Rigorous analysis of his strengths and areas for improvement
- Sound choice of development activities
Coaching a work team

Important components (activities)
- Contributing a vision of the work
- Training, assisting, evaluating
- Influencing the team
- Generating continuous feedback
- Leading a team
- Supporting members of the team
- Creating team spirit

Sufficient and updated knowledge
- Work planning and organization
- Role of moderator, coach and supporter
- Conflict resolution
- Management of projects or social programs

Personal competencies
Communication, influence, judgment, work organization, interpersonal relationships, thoroughness

Characteristics of the action, performance criteria
- Work planning and organization
- Clear communication on expectations and targeted results
- Clear, complete and precise instructions
- Motivating objectives
Contributing to the development and advancement of the profession and society

**Important components (activities)**

- Transmitting professional knowledge
- Contributing to the training of students
- Supervising interns
  - Making presentations to peers
  - Writing scientific articles
  - Giving conferences and courses
- Collaborating on research
  - Carrying out a research-action, practice analysis or program assessment project
  - Serving as a consultant
  - Serving as an expert

**Sufficient and updated knowledge**

- Role and function of the profession in society
- Processes relating to the supervision of interns, volunteers, employees, etc.
- Learning and training processes
- Professional supervision
- Social research processes and methods
- Planning a presentation
- Producing a written document for publication

**Personal competencies**

Communication, self-confidence, ability to integrate information

**Characteristics of the action, performance criteria**

- Sound knowledge
- Credibility
- Educational value
- Popularization (when necessary)
- Clear and concise
Mission of the OPTSQ

According to the Professional Code, the primary role of a professional order is to ensure the protection of the public. In this respect, the Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec has the authority to monitor and control its members' practices (social workers, marriage and family therapists) in order to ensure that they provide high-quality professional services to anyone who calls on them.

In support of professional practice, the OPTSQ urges its members to maintain and develop their knowledge and their competencies through ongoing training or any other beneficial means.

In fulfilling its role with respect to the recognition and pursuit of objectives relating to social justice, the OPTSQ encourages the active promotion of measures aimed at ensuring equity between citizens, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable persons, groups and communities.

Values, principles and ultimate purposes

In their daily practice, social workers draw inspiration from the following values and principles, which frame and define their profession.

- Respect for the dignity of every human being
- Belief in the human capacity to evolve and develop
- Recognition of the need to perceive and understand the human being as a component of interdependent systems and as a potential catalyst of change
- Respect for the rights of persons, groups and communities
- Respect for the principles of individual autonomy and self-determination
- Recognition of the right of any individual who is in danger to receive assistance and protection in accordance with his needs
- Promotion of the principles of social justice.

These are the ultimate purposes of the profession, uniting social workers who strive to promote social justice and foster social development while developing solidarities by speaking out against discrimination and oppression.

Laws, regulations, standards and obligations relating to the practice of the profession

Social work is subject to a legislative and regulatory framework. As a health and social services professional, the social worker is governed by the Professional Code (R.S.Q., c. C-26) with respect to specific obligations pertaining to professional secrecy, acts that are derogatory to the dignity of the profession and false representations.

The Youth Protection Act (R.S.Q., c. P-34) also places an obligation on social workers, pursuant to their professional status, to protect children whose security or development is or may be in danger.

The professional status of a social worker may also be recognized by a law or regulation. In light of this, the Youth Protection Act stipulates that, in the case of an adoption that is granted by judicial decision outside Québec, the psychosocial evaluation may be made by a member of the Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec. Similarly, the Regulation respecting family mediation stipulates that a social worker may be certified as a family mediator.

Exercising the practice of a social worker may also be governed by other laws that have a more general scope, which govern not only professionals but other stakeholders as well, including the Act respecting the protection of persons whose mental state presents a danger to themselves or others (c. S-4.2). Moreover, social workers are obliged to respect all laws of general application that apply to them as citizens.
As a member of the OPTSQ, a social worker is subject to a Code of Ethics and to the Regulation respecting the keeping of records and consulting offices by social workers, as well as standards for the professional practice of social work and standards for record-keeping.

**Professional activities of social workers**

Since November 30, 2001, the definition of the professional activities of social workers has been: *Providing social services to persons, families and communities with a view to favouring their social development and the improvement or restoration of their social functioning, in particular by psychosocial evaluations and social intervention, by means of an approach focused on the interaction with the environment.*

In order to ensure a clear understanding of the specific nature of the professional activities carried out by social workers, the OPTSQ proposes an overview of the main elements of this definition.

**Providing social services**

This encompasses all professional activities carried out by social workers within the framework of organizing, distributing and evaluating services intended for the public in response to the psychosocial and community requirements of individuals, families and communities.

These activities are mainly offered through the public system comprising health and social services, education and justice, in both the public and private sectors. The specific objectives of the development and introduction of social services programs are to support the improvement or restoration of living conditions for persons and communities, to prevent the emergence or aggravation of social, physical and mental health problems, to foster the development of persons and communities and to seek a satisfactory response to their fundamental needs.

**Community services**

Community services provided by social workers seek to meet the collective needs of a community: providing support for the development of services and resources in and by local communities, preventing the emergence of social problems, fighting the exclusion or marginalization of vulnerable communities, fostering the association of persons and networks, organizing new powers and promoting social change and greater social justice.

Professional activities performed in providing these community services include studying the environment, local development, social planning, social action and socio-political representation, social administration, as well as the planning, development and evaluation of social policies and programs.

**Community needs**

Meeting the collective needs of a community is fundamental to maintaining collective harmony, justice in relationships between persons and groups and community development. Community needs have four basic characteristics:

- **They are material, economic, socio-cultural, or political.**
- **They evolve over time, in keeping with the natural evolution of the community (demographic, ecological, sociological change).**
- **They are transformed with the occurrence of certain events, such as international context, the management of public affairs, political orientations and the evolution of knowledge and new technologies.**
- **They can be met by the development of resources and shared services, the democratic representation of the community, the balance of power and the introduction of social policies and social programs that are equitable and attuned to the communities.**
Psychosocial services

Social workers provide psychosocial services to persons, couples, families and groups. The needs are diverse, but they share a quest for balance between persons and their environment. The breaching or absence of this balance is at the root of psychosocial problems.

Social workers seek to re-establish this balance and to restore interactions and relationships between persons and their environment. The professional activities that comprise psychosocial services include psychosocial evaluation, social intervention, psychosocial consultation and the defence and promotion of social rights. Also included are specialized activities such as individual, marriage, family or group therapy, psychosocial expertise, post-traumatic intervention and all other professional activities that provide access to services defined by specific laws.

Psychosocial needs

Psychosocial needs are essential to a person’s wellbeing, security and development:

- They essentially arise from the phenomenon of life in society and are biological, sensory, cognitive, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual in nature.
- They change and evolve with the stages of the life cycle.
- They emerge and transform in keeping with certain events, such as illness, disability, trauma, job loss, grief...
- They develop with the evolution of new knowledge and technologies.
- They can be met through the improvement of the physical health of persons, the improvement of interpersonal communications, the consolidation of relationships between social systems, the improvement of living conditions and the exercise of their rights.

Psychosocial evaluation

Psychosocial evaluation is a planned, structured, continuous activity during which the social worker makes observations and gathers, analyses and reformulates significant data, both objective and subjective, regarding the situation and psychosocial needs of the individual requiring services.

A psychosocial evaluation covers a range of components related to the way in which individuals interact with their environment, as manifested by the individual concerned and as observed and noted by the social worker, based on various sources. These components are analysed according to reference frameworks specific to the profession, formulated as a professional opinion and organized into an intervention plan or strategies.

Psychosocial evaluations may be comprehensive to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the context in which the services are provided, the seriousness of the situation and the legislative framework concerned.

Psychosocial evaluation benchmarks

- Observations concerning the nature of the situation (factors related to the individual and the environment), specifically:
  - The first manifestations of the situation and its duration, development and degree of seriousness;
  - The psychosocial needs of the individual with respect to the situation;
  - The living conditions of the individual (especially stress factors);
  - The individual’s physical, cognitive, emotional and social abilities to resolve the difficulties encountered, as well as limitations on such abilities;
  - Motivation quality and obstacles;
  - The network and environment involved in the situation;
The quality of reciprocal relationships between the individual and components of his network and environment;
The availability of resources in the environment and limitations related to the existence and nature of or access to such resources.

- Analysis of observations noted in accordance with a specific frame of reference, leading to the formulation of a professional opinion;
- The development of a social intervention plan or determination of intervention strategies:
  - The development of a social intervention plan is carried out with the active participation of the person and entails:
    - identifying the intervention target, the need to be met, the problem to be corrected, or the change to be implemented
    - identifying the objectives
    - choosing the intervention methods
    - establishing a schedule
    - selecting indicators for attaining objectives.
  OR

  - The development of intervention strategies is used specifically in contexts where no social intervention requiring psychosocial follow-up is necessary. These strategies specifically include:
    - providing various forms of information
    - providing referrals to appropriate resources
    - implementing various mutual assistance, protection and representation measures as needed.

The psychosocial evaluation must be the topic of a fairly exhaustive report structured in keeping with the context and nature of the services required. The professional psychosocial evaluation activity is centred on the situation of a person, couple, or family.

If the situation involves a small group of persons, it becomes a group psychosocial evaluation; and if the situation involves a local community, organization, or group, a study of the milieu is involved.

Social intervention
Social intervention is a process that includes a variety of planned activities that the social worker uses in order to provide persons, couples, families, groups, or communities with support in attaining their objectives for change and in response to their psychosocial and community requirements.

These planned activities include:
- psychosocial evaluation (both a necessary step and a prerequisite to any social intervention of which it is an integral component)
- implementation of a social intervention plan by means of structured interviews; introduction of and follow-up on various measures; referrals to appropriate resources; and defence and promotion of human rights
- relationships between cases or case management through the planning, research and coordination of required services provided by various professionals and organizations
• application of resources, specifically non-institutional residential resources
• mobilization and creation of resources.

Planned activities are accomplished in keeping with appropriate individual, conjugal, family, group, or community intervention methods, models and approaches and by means of a set of techniques.

Social intervention encompasses several facets and is expressed in several ways, including case management, psychosocial follow-up, psychosocial consultation, therapy and introduction of the intervention plan. These expressions are not all synonymous, but each one is considered to be a form of social intervention.

**Interaction with the environment**

The intervention approach centred on interaction with the environment refers to a concept that is at the heart of the social work profession. It is the paradigm according to which social workers seek to grasp reality and to understand relationships between persons. From this perspective, the person is perceived as a *social being, a person-in-circumstances*, who is in constant interaction with his environment, which is defined as one or more close persons, a network of different systems, or his societal environment.

This perception of the *person-in-circumstances* characterizes the ultimate purpose of the social intervention: the quest for a balance between the needs of a person or a community and the capacity of the environment to respond to these needs. It also provides a benchmark for the professional activities of psychosocial evaluation (evaluation of the group or study of the milieu) and the social intervention. The factors that relate to the person and those that relate to the environment, as well as the mutual interaction between these factors, must be taken into consideration throughout the evaluation and intervention process.

**Social functionality**

Social functionality is the ability of the person (or a group or community) to play his role in society. It refers to the accomplishment of various social roles, the ability of an individual to organize his everyday life, the range of behaviours observed (gestures, words, attitudes), the mental processes, models learned, built perceptions and values received and selected by an individual in his quest for reciprocity with his environment.

The social worker seeks to re-establish the functionality of a person (or a group or community) when the person-environment reciprocity is out of balance or has become dysfunctional. The social worker responds in such a way as to improve social functionality when a person (or a group or community) wants to make a situation more satisfactory in keeping with his individual aspirations or those of the group or community.

Believing in the intrinsic value of the person, the right to self-determination and the aspiration to achieve autonomy, the social worker utilizes professional activities to put into place conditions that foster the abilities of persons, groups, or communities to realize their respective potential and aspirations and to respond to their psychosocial and community needs through the implementation of satisfactory social interactions.
Definition of personal competencies

Adaptability to change
Ability to be effective in any situation involving change.
• Flexibly adapts to requests for change
• Adopts a calm and positive attitude when faced with new or unforeseen situations
• Understands the internal and external political mechanisms of the organization and acts accordingly
• Does not hesitate to re-think work methods if the context changes
• Demonstrates an ability to adapt

Analysis
Ability to identify specific elements in order to explain a situation.
• Identifies the essential elements of a situation and detects existing and potential problems
• Identifies the inherent economic, social, political and cultural issues of a situation
• Identifies the impacts of a situation
• Draws conclusions based on the hypotheses presented

Cooperation
Ability to demonstrate respect, consideration and acceptance of the opinions of other persons while expressing his own expertise and effectively utilizing relevant resources and experts
• Recognizes the limitations of his competencies
• Recognizes the limitations and capabilities of others
• Is assertive while respecting others
• Believes in the effectiveness and added value of teamwork
• Actively shares in the decision-making process with the persons involved
• Seeks consensus
• Is a team player who contributes to the quest for solutions

Communication
Ability to transmit and receive messages in a manner that can be understood in high-quality verbal and written language.
• Uses appropriate style and proper and relevant vocabulary
• Presents his ideas in a clear, complete and concise manner, integrates his thoughts and structures his presentation
• Structures his documents to ensure that they are comprehensible to the targeted readers
• Makes presentations
• Adapts the complexity of his message to the recipient, uses lay terms, analogies and concrete examples
• Uses active listening, reformulation, reframing, confrontation and other communication and intervention techniques
• Determines the type of information that should appear in the professional’s file
•Drafts psychosocial evaluations, intervention plans, chronological notes and miscellaneous reports for specific purposes, within the framework of established standards
• Masters the written codes
• Verifies the quality of his writings before sending them out or circulating them

Self-confidence
Believes in his own ability to handle situations that are increasingly demanding and trusts in his decisions.
• Is able to take risks
• Works autonomously in keeping with his level of competence
• Demonstrates his ability to learn and to locate the information necessary for his work
• Considers himself to be an expert in his field
• Sees himself as a catalyst, initiator
• Demonstrates confidence in his judgment

Intellectual curiosity
Demonstrates awareness and an interest in learning more.
• Knows how to learn from experience
• Constantly seeks to learn and evolve
• Solicits comments and advice
• Is seeking innovations in his field of expertise
• Is intent on keeping his knowledge up to date
• Has a development reflex

Attentiveness
Ability to be attentive to the message conveyed by the other person and understand its meaning based on the latter’s opinion.
• Focuses on what the other person is saying
• Confirms his understanding by rephrasing what the other person has said
• Keeps an open mind while trying to set aside personal feelings

Ability to integrate information
Ability to identify the essential elements of a situation, establish links between them and assemble them into a coherent whole.
• Groups elements into a coherent whole providing an overview of the situation
• Summarizes in few words

Stress management
Ability to identify stress factors that may be harmful to a person’s health and efficiency.
• Able to work under pressure
• Expresses emotions appropriately in stressful situations
• Demonstrates a positive and constructive spirit
• Identifies potential high-stress factors in his work situation
• Recognizes his psychological and physical limitations
• Ensures balance between his professional and personal life
• Takes the time to decompress after a stressful situation

Influence
Ability to elicit cooperation, influence the work and develop the power of a group or team.
• Develops the team’s resources and allows their use in an autonomous manner
• Defines and obtains expected input from others
• Listens, provides feedback and encourages others
• Clearly expresses and defends ideas and positions
• Rallies the various members of the group or team around the targeted result

Judgment
Ability to demonstrate logic and discernment when making decisions and more particularly, in the application of existing procedures or regulations.
• Makes wise use of the Code of Ethics and practical guides
• Takes economic, social, political and cultural factors into consideration
• When faced with several possibilities, chooses the one that presents the greatest potential for success and development
• Ensures a clear understanding of the problem before attempting to resolve it
• Estimates and weighs the pros and cons of an impending decision
• Adjusts his decisions and interventions by evaluating their impact, in order to minimize the negative effects and maximize the chances of sustained success

Mobilization
Ability to engage people and bring them together in action designed to produce the desired results.
• Establishes stimulating objectives
• Recognizes and validates each person’s contributions
• Shares the credit for success
• Gives visibility to all those who are mobilized

Negotiation
Ability to ascertain the expectations of another party and reach an agreement that is satisfactory to both parties.
• Is able to reach an agreement with a minimum amount of conflict
• Is able to obtain concessions without affecting the quality of the relationship
• Seeks to persuade rather than overcome by adopting an approach that benefits all parties and seeks common ground
• Quickly wins the trust of the other party
• Maintains an attitude of cooperation in difficult and stressful situations

Organization of work
Ability to identify the priority elements of a mandate or series of tasks and to plan his time to carry it out within the stipulated timeframe.
• Has a clear picture of all of the tasks to be accomplished and evaluates the time required
• Plans, prioritizes and organizes his time
• Differentiates between the essential and less important elements
• Knows how to identify an emergency
• Makes effective use of his time
• Establishes and respects deadlines rules for excessive demands
• Evaluates his workload on a regular basis
• Questions the validity of tasks that have no added value
• Makes adequate use of available human resources
Perceptiveness
Ability to quickly perceive what others fail to detect and to distinguish between the essential and non-essential elements of a problem.
- Takes the time to observe the most intricate details of a situation
- Quickly identifies the method(s) to be employ in a situation

Interpersonal relationships
Ability to establish and maintain harmonious relationships with others, to perceive the needs of others and to respond accordingly.
- Establishes the proper climate for a relationship (initiates contact, approaches the other person)
- Establishes trust
- Is honest
- Has an open mind
- Is fair
- Demonstrates listening skills
- Adopts a non-judgmental attitude
- Demonstrates empathy
- Observes and decodes the non-verbal expressions of others
- Controls his own non-verbal expressions

Thoroughness
Ability to perform his tasks while striving for accuracy, precision and respect for standards.
- Takes the situational context into consideration and ensures that the facts and indicators collected are not taken out of context
- Keeps a chronological and detailed log of his professional activities
- Applies a rational work process, supported by appropriate methodological tools
- Ensures the accuracy and precision of the information that supports his actions
- Respects pre-established procedures, instructions, rules and practices

Teamwork
Ability to work with a team and to foster inter and intra-team cooperation in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary contexts.
- Seeks opinions, proposals and suggestions drafted by team members
- Recognizes the limitations of his competencies
- Calls on others
- Acts in accordance with the team’s decisions
- Contributes to a climate of cooperation by supporting colleagues, partners, or others, with a view to attaining shared objectives
- Demonstrates team spirit
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