SKILL COMPETENCIES FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS IN VIRGINIA SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM ACROSS THE LIFESPAN
TRACKER

DEVELOPED BY THE VIRGINIA AUTISM COUNCIL

To guide best practice in supporting individuals with autism across the state, the Virginia Autism Council developed the skill competencies for professional and paraprofessional staff in all fields of service delivery. These competencies are based upon consistent findings from the research community and are based on the best and most promising practices that have been identified through research as critical to address the needs of individuals with autism.

There are eight competency areas. Under each, there are two types of competencies: those that are knowledge based and those specialized skills professionals and paraprofessionals need in practice. Some competencies require that the professional or paraprofessional have a particular knowledge unique to serving individuals with autism. Knowledge competencies are in bold type and have a /K/ immediately after the number of the competency. However, the majority of the competencies require specialized skills that the professional and paraprofessional must be able to demonstrate in practice. These competencies have an /S/ immediately after the competency number.

The Skill Competencies Tracker
The Skill Competencies Tracker is intended to be used to monitor the professional development of professionals and paraprofessionals working with individuals with autism. The purpose of the Tracker is to illustrate who you are and your evolving skills and abilities and movement towards proficiency in competency areas. This Tracker should be a reflection of your current and emerging self as a professional or paraprofessional. Each competency in the Tracker should contain entries that illustrate evidence of your accomplishments.

The Skill Competencies Tracker can be used in three different ways: 1) it is designed to be used by an individual as a self-monitoring device; 2) it can be used by an outside observer or supervisor to document areas of professional development; and 3) it may be used by organizers of professional development activities to document training and development activities provided to professionals and paraprofessionals.
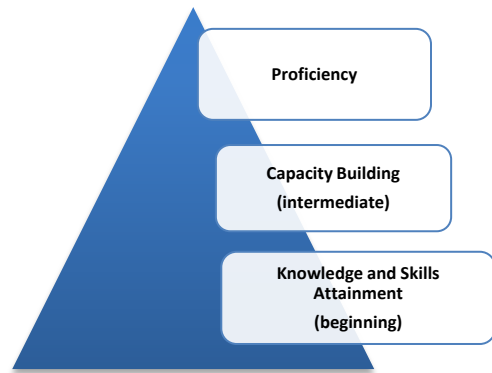
Professional Development
Professional development refers to attainment of skills and knowledge. Professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees to formal coursework, conferences, workshops, discussion forums, and informal learning opportunities situated in practice. It has been described as intensive and ideally incorporating an evaluative component.

While the Skill Competencies Tracker is designed to help the user to monitor professional development activities and opportunities, **it does NOT ensure mastery of the knowledge or skills outlined within the document**. **This document is not intended to serve as a formal evaluation tool. It is designed to help the user record and track areas of strength as well as areas in need of improvement so that further training, practice**

and teaching opportunities may be targeted appropriately. The ultimate goal is proficiency of the Virginia Skill Competencies. Proficiency is defined as demonstration of the combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task. To demonstrate proficiency more than participation in a training activity is needed. The figure below demonstrates a conceptual model for moving to proficiency.

1. Knowledge and Skills Attainment (beginning) - are developed through learning experiences and training activities. It is in this phase the person is able to identify and explain the content and procedures involved in the Skill Competency and is beginning to apply it in practice.

2. Capacity Building (intermediate) - is the integration of learning experiences in which knowledge and skills interact and are applied and the person is able to demonstrate the skill in practice. It is at this level where direct teaching and coaching result in demonstrated abilities and the person is beginning to perform the skill independently and with fidelity and questions are asked to improve performance and gain clarity

3. Proficiency - is the consistent and accurate application of knowledge, skills and abilities. It is in this phase the person is able to demonstrate the competency with fidelity across students and contexts and can integrate content within a collaborative team framework. It is recommended for a person to be considered proficient that his or her performance is assessed by someone who is skilled and knowledgeable in the content (e.g. supervisor, lead professional, specialist).

Documentation of Skills, Abilities, and Knowledge

It is with this framework in mind that the Skill Competencies Tracker provides the opportunity to document professional development activities completed and the level of proficiency of each of the Virginia Skill Competencies. The user may document movement through the stages of beginning, intermediate, and proficiency by indicating the activities completed.

The following provides a list of activities that may be used to document movement to proficiency on the Skill Competencies.
1. **College Course**
2. **ACE Training Activity**

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3. **Conference/Workshop**
4. **School Division Professional Development Activity / Staff Development**
5. **Coaching, Mentoring or Technical Assistance by Skilled Professional**
6. **Practice of Skill**
7. **Demonstration of Skill**

Below is an example of how an area could be completed.

Name Jane K. Teacher	Level of Proficiency		
Section 1. General Autism Competencies	Professional Development Events & Dates		
	Beginning	Intermediate	Proficient
			Documented by Skilled Professional
1.1K Understands the characteristics and diagnosis of autism as defined by the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and definition/description of the Virginia Department of Education.	7/2011 Online Course: Foundations of ASD 8/2011 Workshop	8/2011 Coaching received 9/2011-12/2011 practice in the classroom	1/18/12 DH

Review of the Skill Competencies Tracker

As noted, the ultimate goal is movement to proficiency of each Skill Competency. It is recommended that the Skill Competencies Tracker is a fluid document that undergoes continuous updates as skills and abilities are learned and demonstrated. It is also recommended that the person using the Tracker (e.g. professional, paraprofessional, supervisor, outside observer) formally review the document twice a year to determine if adequate progress is being made and to identify areas in need of further professional development and support.

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