Continuing Competence: Current Status Challenges and Trends

BEYOND CE:
Regulating Competency in a Dynamic Profession

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Continuing Competence: Current Status, Challenges and Trends

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Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the relationship between Continuing Education (CE) and Continuing Competence (CC) and the extent to which CE prepares competent practitioners.

2. Describe the role of regulation in strengthening CC while ensuring a minimal level of competence.

3. Identify the challenges and responsibility of measuring competency.
“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”

- Benjamin Franklin
What is Continuing Education?

Self-directed process where social workers assume responsibility for their own professional development.

Opportunities by which professionals augment knowledge and skills (Strom-Gottfried, 2008).

Formalized activities such as academic courses, lectures, reading of journal articles, conference attendance, certificate programs, and other forms of independent study (Whitaker & Arrington, 2008).
What’s the deal with CE?

• Historically: post university degree, SW's need knowledge updates to maintain skills

• Regardless of career stage, all SWs are ethically required to keep informed of current practices (NASW; CASW)

• CE is a condition for renewal of license/registration

• Voluntary participation unrealistic-led to policing participation by Boards

  Model: Maintenance of knowledge = competent professional = public safety
Not all CE is created equal

"Although growing in scope and importance, social work continuing education seldom undergoes rigorous evaluation. Enumerating workshop attendance and relying on inadequate evaluative procedures for documenting teaching effectiveness"

(Schinke, Smith, Gilchrist & Wong, 1981)
• Some SWs will tell you they take CEs based on location, cost, timing and convenience rather than learning needs

• It becomes a luck of the draw
Is Continuing Education a formal, measurable event?

Typically, our current climate uses the formal event paradigm:

- the practitioner begins mastery during the learning event
- but the learning death spiral begins as the event ends
- unless it is sustained through learning transfer
Or is Continuing Education a catalyst for a learning cycle???

• The event initiates, ignites a spark and the learning begins…
New CE Paradigms - Mutiny on the HMS Bounty

- Learning is a process not an event (e.g. Learn, Transfer, Sustain)
- One size does not fit all - complex work environments
- Growing recognition of need for cultural consideration (indigenous ways of learning: orality; experiential; community relevancy)
- Quality improvement focus
- Question effectiveness
What is Continuing Competence?

Demonstration of maintaining and enhancing **competence** throughout one’s career.

Reflective practice, development of a learning plan, and completing professional development activities.

A process of thoughtful reflection on practice and regular self-assessment.
Definitions

• "Competency embraces the full spectrum of mastery. Only achieved when practitioners have integrated what they have mastered into actionable skill sets”

• "Education is the event-the spark or initiative to begin engaging in the process"

Definitions

The following definition most accurately reflects the premise of the BC College’ of Social Worker’s Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program:

“Continuing Professional Development is the maintenance and enhancement of the knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers according to a plan formulated with regard to the needs of the professional, the employer, the profession and society.” (p.1)
One more Definition

- Continuing Professional Competence (CPC) – is the ongoing ability of a licensee to learn, integrate and apply the knowledge, skill and judgment to practice according to generally accepted industry standards and professional ethical standards in a designated role and setting. (NASW, Colorado Chapter website, retrieved April 6, 2017)

- CE is a tool to promote competence but does not ensure competence. (Missing Link report)
Lifelong Learning and Role of CC

• Promotes high standards and quality assurance (OCSW, 2017)
• Embraces evolving evidence/theory-informed practice throughout careers
• Integrates new skills and competencies into practice (Ruth, Gianino, Geron 2014)
• Helps employers know that SW’s are staying current
Does CE really prepare competent practitioners?

Yes…

• Much CE out there promotes CC through quality content and delivery
• CC programs promote quality assurance and encourage members to enhance their practice in an ongoing way
• CE supports transfer of knowledge to practice
• Demonstrating skills in trainings supports CC (Congress, 2012)
Does CE really prepare competent practitioners?

…and No

• The model of the “CE hour” does not contribute to CC

• Little evidence CE improving competence of SW’s who have violated professional practice standards

• Lack of transferability of skills and knowledge to agency settings
Does CE really prepare competent practitioners?

Some ideas…

• Develop levels of CE training (beginning, intermediate, advanced)
• Support for transfer of learning to practice environment
• Workplace assessments
• Remedial CE in content areas such as boundary maintenance, dual relationships, recordkeeping, technology management, confidentiality, and ethics
Committing to Continuing Competency

Providing best practices at the micro, mezzo and macro levels

Social workers, CASW, NASW, CSWE, ASWB, Regulators, other constituents
Participant Exercise

- Ask participants to get into groups of 3 to 4
- Discuss what Continuing Competence means to each person
- Identify how each person (depending on the role they have in social work practice) will contribute to Continuing Competency
- Identify 1 to 2 words for each person in the group that define or embody Continuing Competence
- Write each word on an individual sticky for submission
Approved Continuing Education-
Your current ACE in the hole

• ASWB service
• Started in 1998
• Provides an assurance of approving quality CE providers and courses to support regulatory boards and licensed social workers.
What is minimal competence?

Minimally Acceptable Competence – Code of Ethics

“Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience” (standard 1.04[a]).
Public accountability

“Social workers should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions. Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work. Social workers should routinely review the professional literature and participate in continuing education relevant to social work practice and social work ethics” (standard 4.01[b]).
Who is Responsible?

- Social Work Practitioners - Intrinsic awareness
  - Determine your challenges
  - Recognize informal learning as a valuable education opportunity
  - Find a mentor or a coach
  - Put what you learn into practice (knowledge transfer)
  - Be patient-set realistic goals

- Employers

- Schools of Social Work

- CE providers

- Professional Orgs – NASW, CSWE, ASWB

- Clients and Communities
Shared Responsibility

- Individual social workers committing to continuing competence and providing best practices
- Schools of Social Work – promoting continuing competence to support best practices for client care
- CE providers committing to supporting continuing competency and not just the bottom line
- All share in maintaining public protection
Benefits for Employers

- Improved employee performance
- Quality, motivation, safety, technical skills, productivity, leadership & communication
- Greater employee satisfaction
- Retention more stability of staffing
- Improved recruitment highly coveted benefit for employees
Benefits for Employees-
Playing your cards right

- More proficient in current position
- Specialization
- Prepare for an improved chance at promotion-the more you learn the more you earn
- Workplace satisfaction
- Learn to learn
- Keep pace with changes in the field
What does Research Say?

- What is missing?

- How do we get comfortable when there are no definitive answers?
Q and A
References


