

## **Competencies for Independent Living Services Specialized Practice Competencies**

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For Independent Living programs to be effective, emancipation activities for youth should be jointly planned and implemented by the youth's caseworker and the youth's foster caregiver, mentor family, or family members if youth live at home. The designation "CW/FCG" in the competencies reflects this collaborative approach between the worker and the foster parent or parent.

When these competencies are used for inservice training, the team approach is further promoted when foster caregivers and caseworkers attend training together. Caseworkers and foster parents should have completed their respective "Core" training workshops prior to attending specialized training in Independent Living skills. Competencies numbered 221-, 222-, and 223- should be included in an initial training program for all caseworkers and foster parents working in the Independent Living program. Further training should be planned and attended by staff based upon an individualized assessment of training need.

### **221 DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN EMANCIPATION**

- 221-1 CW/FCG has a basic knowledge of the stages, behavioral characteristics, and developmental milestones of normal adolescent physical, cognitive, social, moral, and emotional development.
- 221-2 CW/FCG understands how 'normal' adolescent traits, including ambivalence about independence, impulsiveness, and typical reactions to stress situations affect the development of independent living skills.
- 221-3 CW/FCG understands the potential negative effects of abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and multiple home placements on a youth's development; and how these may result in emotional, developmental, learning, or behavior problems.
- 221-4 CW/FCG understands how the effects of abuse, neglect, and multiple home placements, can contribute to reduced ability to participate in emancipation training and can interfere with acquisition of independent living skills. These may include low self-esteem, mistrust of adults, over-dependence or exaggerated independence, fear of failure, poor problem-solving ability, and hostile or withdrawn behaviors,
- 221-5 CW/FCG understands the importance of setting realistic and achievable expectations for the acquisition of independent living skills for youth who demonstrate problems resulting from previous abuse, neglect, or placement.

- 221-6 CW/FCG understands ways in which unresolved grief from previous traumatic separations may be reactivated during emancipation and create anxiety and depression for the youth.

## **222 TEACHING INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 222-1 CW/FCG knows the roles and responsibilities of the caseworker, the foster caregiver, the youth's family, and community professionals in helping youth successfully achieve independent living.
- 222-2 CW/FCG knows the importance of joint planning and of consistency in approach and expectation by all adults working toward developing independent living skills with a youth.

### **Developing Individualized Learning Plans for Youth**

- 222-3 CW/FCG can utilize data from psychological or developmental assessment, clinical interview, direct observation, and personal interaction to determine a youth's strengths, areas of potential vulnerability, interests, and emancipation learning needs.
- 222-4 CW/FCG can work with youth to set realistic and achievable goals and objectives, to identify learning activities and teaching strategies, to set time frames for completion of activities, and to formulate an individualized Personal Emancipation Plan (PEP) for a youth.
- 222-5 CW/FCG can involve youth in self-assessment and planning, in participating in the development of the PEP, and in evaluating his/her progress in completing activities and meeting objectives.

### **Teaching, Modeling, and Mentoring Strategies**

- 222-6 CW/FCG can break down complex skills into their less complex, more easily mastered component tasks.

- 222-7 CW/FCG can use behavioral strategies to develop and teach independent living skills. These may include modeling of new behaviors, shaping behavior, positive reinforcement, rehearsal, and use of natural and logical consequences.
- 222-8 CW/FCG can use a positive, nurturing and consistent relationship with youth to provide stability, encouragement, and support throughout the emancipation process.
- 222-9 CW/FCG can simultaneously support and challenge youth to assume increased responsibility and behave more autonomously at home and in the community.
- 222-10 CW/FCG understands the benefits of a group approach to emancipation training for youth; can identify skills which are most appropriately taught in a group setting including interpersonal and communication skills; and understands the benefit of consistent peer support to reinforce acquisition of independent living skills taught in home, school, and work settings.

### **Teaching Adaptive Living Skills**

- 222-11 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to health, hygiene, and medical care. These may include: preventive health care through proper diet, exercise, and rest; personal hygiene and grooming; first aid; when and how to contact a physician or dentist; proper use of medications; and safe sex and pregnancy prevention practices.
- 222-12 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to the purchase, maintenance, and care of clothing and other personal possessions. These may include: how and where to buy clothes; laundering and dry cleaning ; wardrobe planning; appropriate and inappropriate dress; and care and maintenance of clothing and personal possessions.
- 222-13 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to procuring and maintaining housing. These may include: reading newspaper ads and other ways to get information about available housing; evaluating the quality of housing; assessing costs for rent, deposits, utilities, and maintenance; assessing nearby services and transportation; understanding leases and rental agreements; and how to find household furnishings economically.

- 222-14 CW/FCG can help youth acquire housekeeping and home management skills. These may include: housecleaning skills; proper use of equipment and supplies; home maintenance and repair; extermination of insects or rodents; how to obtain home repair services when needed.
- 222-15 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to food purchase and preparation. These may include: understanding nutrition; shopping for food; meal planning, preparation and proper storage of food; using recipes, and cooking skills.
- 222-16 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to money management and budgeting. These may include: utilizing checking and savings accounts and money orders; paying bills; using a calculator to compute financial transactions; budgeting income and planning expenditures; maintaining receipts and records; use of credit; planning for major expenditures; and income tax responsibility.
- 222-17 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to accessing and using transportation. These may include obtaining driver's education and a driver's license; using public transportation; purchasing, registering, insuring, and maintaining an automobile.
- 222-18 CW/FCG can help youth acquire skills related to accessing community agencies and services to support daily activities, and how to utilize services in an emergency. These may include: using services from health departments, clinics, mental health centers, utility companies, legal aid, and community centers; and, establishing procedures to access services from these agencies.
- 222-19 CW/FCG can work with youth to assess their interests and to identify recreational and leisure time resources in the community. These may include: identifying local recreation and adult/youth education programs; athletic associations; public libraries; community centers; and church related social activities.
- 222-20 CW/FCG can help youth access and learn basic legal information. This may include identifying unlawful behaviors; identifying consequences of breaking laws; rights, if arrested; and how to obtain legal assistance.

### **Teaching Planning/Problem Solving and Decision Making**

- 222-21 CW/FCG understands the planning/problem solving process, including: identifying the problem; assessing its causes, including one's own behavior; identifying possible solutions; choosing the best solution; implementation; and evaluation.
- 222-22 CW/FCG can teach planning/problem-solving skills to youth by modeling these strategies in response to daily problems; and can help the youth to break potentially overwhelming problems into smaller, more manageable ones.
- 222-23 CW/FCG can help youth understand the privileges and responsibilities of independent decision making. This includes helping youth identify the potential social, legal, moral, and emotional consequences of their behavior.
- 222-24 CW/FCG knows and can help youth recognize factors that can interfere with rational decision making. These may include peer pressure, the youth's feelings, insufficient information, desire for immediate gratification, etc.

### **Teaching Social Understanding and Social Skills**

- 222-25 CW/FCG can help youth recognize and evaluate characteristics in others that contribute to positive relationships including honesty, open communication, reliability, trustworthiness, etc. ; and can help youth assess these qualities in interpersonal relationships.
- 222-26 CW/FCG can help youth recognize relationships that are not in their best interests, and can help youth develop strategies to avoid or to remove themselves from detrimental relationships.
- 222-27 CW/FCG knows how to model positive interpersonal skills in their relationship with the youth by communicating honestly, by being trustworthy, by being assertive when appropriate, by being appropriately conciliatory and cooperative, and by demonstrating polite and appropriate behavior in social settings.

- 222-28 CW/FCG can help youth to develop a positive identity and self-concept through discussion of his/her strengths and attributes, through discussion and acceptance of his/her past, and through social acceptance.
- 222-29 CW/FCG knows and can teach and counsel youth regarding responsible and mature sexual conduct, responsible use of birth control, risks of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and how to recognize and avoid sexual exploitation.

### **Managing Emotional Issues That Affect Emancipation**

- 222-30 CW/FCG can recognize a youth's emotional barriers to emancipation and can help youth identify, discuss, and cope with their fears and feelings. These may include fear of failure, low self-esteem and lack of confidence, or fear of separation.
- 222-31 CW/FCG understands the feelings typically experienced by members of the foster family when a youth leaves the home; can acknowledge these feelings openly in the family; and can manage these feelings to prevent them from interfering with emancipation training .

## **223 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PLANNING**

### **Planning and Implementing an Individualized Education Program**

- 223-1 CW/FCG can use information from a comprehensive educational assessment to work collaboratively with school personnel to develop an individual education plan. This may include identifying areas of strengths, skill, limitations, or learning disabilities, to set short and long-term educational objectives and activities to meet those objectives.
- 223-2 CW/FCG can explore and identify educational opportunities available through the public school system; can assist youth in accessing a program that best matches their interests and skills; and can advocate to assure that school programs meet youths' needs.

- 223-3 CW/FCG knows how to access alternative education and work preparation programs, including vocational training, GED, higher education, and programs outside the public school system.
- 223-4 CW/FCG can work jointly with school personnel to identify the needs and concerns of youth who are not motivated to attend school; to determine contributing factors fear of failure, boredom or lack of interest, learning problems, previous negative school experiences ; and to develop a plan to promote and support the youth's return to school.

### **Planning for Vocational Readiness**

- 223-5 CW/FCG can provide primary case management to assure that appropriate vocational assessments are completed, and that appropriate pre-vocational training is selected and accessed.

### **Helping Youth Find Employment**

- 223-6 CW/FCG can use vocational assessment data to determine a youth's vocational strengths and interests, can identify potential jobs that correspond to the youth's skills and interests, and can promote job placement by communicating relevant information about the youth to prospective employers.
- 223-7 CW/FCG can help youth prepare for job interviews by teaching proper demeanor in the interview setting, and rehearsing proper responses to potential interview questions.
- 223-8 CW/FCG knows the relevant federal, state, and local regulations and policies related to the employment of foster children, including potential changes in social security, Medicaid, or other entitlement benefits as a result of employment.

## **Job Maintenance Skills**

- 223-9 CW/FCG can teach youth good work habits and proper behavior in the work setting. These may include proper dress and demeanor; the importance of reliability and dependability; consequences of lying, stealing, tardiness, and absenteeism; appropriate responses to authority and how to follow directions; the benefits of a friendly and positive attitude; safety procedures; and how ask for help.
- 223-10 CW/FCG can teach youth to understand and, when appropriate, to compute gross wages, net wages, payroll deductions, and income taxes.
- 223-11 CW/FCG can advocate for youth in job placement and can provide the proper level of support and intervention to resolve problems and help maintain the youth in the job placement.

## **SPECIALIZED AND RELATED SKILLS COMPETENCIES**

### **224 DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY JOB PLACEMENTS FOR YOUTH**

- 224-1 CW/FCG understands key concepts of business and enterprise, including profit motive, collective bargaining, and models of employer-employee relationships; and knows how these factors may promote or prevent local businesses from becoming employment resources for youth in the independent living program.
- 224-2 CW/FCG can perform an analysis of the local job market to identify potential employers and job opportunities for youth.
- 224-3 CW/FCG can evaluate job descriptions to determine the knowledge and skills required to perform job tasks; and can use this information to help prepare youth who are potential applicants for these positions.
- 224-4 CW/FCG can contact, educate, and enlist the involvement of community employers to become job placement resources and/or to serve as consultants to the vocational program.

- 224-5 CW/FCG can provide ongoing support and education to employers to maintain existing placements and to generate additional placement resources.
- 224-6 CW/FCG knows of existing employment incentive resources for prospective employers and considers these incentives in developing employment opportunities for youth.
- 224-7 CW/FCG can help employers perform organizational needs assessments to identify potential jobs that could be filled by youth in the independent living program.
- 224-8 CW/FCG can develop and maintain record-keeping systems to assist in planning, management, and monitoring of the job placement program.

**225 TEACHING EMANCIPATION SKILLS TO YOUTH WHO ARE MENTALLY RETARDED OR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED**

- 225-1 CW/FCG knows the cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics of youth who are of low-normal measured intelligence, mildly mentally retarded, moderately mentally retarded, or who have other developmental disabilities.
- 225-2 CW/FCG understands the concept of adaptive behavior as it applies to youth who are mentally retarded or have limited abilities; and knows how to interpret data provided by adaptive behavior assessments.
- 225-3 CW/FCG understands the expectable developmental potentials of youth who are mentally retarded or intellectually limited in their rate of learning and skill acquisition.
- 225-4 CW/FCG can use behavioral learning strategies appropriate for teaching adaptive behaviors and skills to youth with various levels of mental retardation. These include positive reinforcement, shaping desired behaviors, repetition of skills, modeling, training to generalize learning across settings.
- 225-5 CW/FCG knows models of semi-independent or supervised living and can provide case management and advocacy services to locate appropriate community-based living arrangements for youth who are mentally retarded or have developmental disabilities.

225-6 CW/FCG can work with the school system and other community agencies to locate educational and vocational training programs to prepare youth who are mentally retarded or developmentally disabled for employment.

**226 TEACHING INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TO YOUTH WHO ARE MENTALLY ILL, EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED, OR BEHAVIOR DISORDERED**

226-1 CW/FCG knows the primary symptoms of emotional disturbance or mental illness of adolescents; including schizophrenia and other psychoses, paranoia, depression, anxiety, and personality disorders.

226-2 CW/FCG recognizes the indicators and dynamics of adolescent suicide, and knows appropriate intervention and referral procedures.

226-3 CW/FCG knows the indicators and symptoms of behavior disorders, including attention deficit disorders, hyperactivity, and antisocial disorders; and understands how these conditions can affect behavior and learning.

226-4 CW/FCG knows the appropriate uses of medication in the treatment of depression and mental illness; knows the potential side effects of these medications; can access appropriate psychiatric and medical management; and, can help youth learn to responsibly self-medicate.

226-5 CW/FCG understands how mental illness or emotional problems can affect a youth's rate and maintenance of learning and contribute to variations in performance especially during episodes of aggravated symptoms.

226-6 CW/FCG can use behavioral learning strategies to teach adaptive behaviors and skills to youth who are mentally ill. These include positive reinforcement, shaping/approximating desired behaviors, repetition of skills, and training to generalize learning across settings

226-7 CW/FCG knows models of semi-independent or supervised living and can provide case management and advocacy services to locate such living arrangements for youth who are mentally ill or emotionally disturbed.

226-8 CW/FCG can work with the school system and other community agencies to identify educational and vocational training opportunities to prepare youth who are mentally ill or emotionally disturbed for employment.

**227 GROUP STRATEGIES TO TEACH AND SUSTAIN INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS**

227-1 CW/FCG has well developed group work/group facilitation skills. These include the ability to: engage group members; address and lessen resistance; constructively handle conflict; manage struggles for power and control; address the needs of individual members; and direct the group process to develop an open, trusting, and supportive atmosphere for all members.

227-2 CW/FCG can plan group activities that are appropriate for the developmental levels, skills, interests, motivation, and emotional needs of individual group members.

227-3 CW/FCG can plan group activities that are appropriate to the group's stage of development.

227-4 CW/FCG can create opportunities within the group for transfer of information, discussion, modeling, practice, and feedback that support independent living activities outside the group setting.

227-5 CW/FCG can use group process to help members to identify, discuss, and resolve emotional, social, and self-esteem issues which block progress toward independent living.

227-6 CW/FCG can create opportunities in which members can model and practice interpersonal skills, including accurate verbal and nonverbal communication, listening skills, negotiation, compromise, conflict resolution, and provision of support.

227-7 CW/FCG can utilize peer influence to promote the development of positive group goals, values, attitudes, and expectations for members' behavior.

- 227-8 CW/FCG can use group process to provide structure and guidance to youth, while challenging youth to engage in more independent problem-solving and decision making.

## **228 ADVANCED BEHAVIORAL TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- 228-1 CW/FCG understands the principles of learning theory and behavior modification, including positive reinforcement, differential reinforcement, extinction, shaping of behavior, generalization, and natural/logical consequences; and can apply these principles in the development of learning activities to teach independent living.

## **229 COUNSELING ADOLESCENTS AROUND ISSUES RELATED TO EMANCIPATION**

- 229-1 CW/FCG understands the dynamics of the counseling relationship with an adolescent, and can establish a stable, and trusting relationship with adolescent clients.
- 229-2 CW/FCG can use casework interviewing approaches and strategies which are appropriate for adolescents, including use of games and activities, active listening, and use of art or music; and can modify casework approaches for youth who are resistive, unable to trust, or who have limited verbal ability.
- 229-3 CW/FCG understands the process of identity formation in adolescents; understands how previous abuse, neglect, and multiple home placements can interfere with the development of a healthy, positive self-esteem and self-concept; and can use counseling strategies, including use of lifebooks and life stories, to help youth resolve personal and family issues and establish a positive identity.

- 229-4 CW/FCG can use the counseling relationship to provide youth with a consistent source of guidance, strength, and support during the process of separating from family and establishing him/herself independently.
- 229-5 CW/FCG can use the counseling relationship to provide structure and guidance to youth, while challenging the youth to engage in more independent problem-solving and decision making.