



Five ways to use the complex care core competencies in practice

October 2020

In 2020, a diverse interprofessional working group convened by the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers' National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs (National Center) developed a set of **core competencies for the field of complex care**. The core competencies describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by every complex care team member, regardless of role, discipline, or setting, to deliver high quality care.

The National Center will be developing additional content independently and with partners to put the core competencies into practice, including curriculum, standards, and other resources, in the months and years ahead. The field of complex care has an opportunity to drive field development grounded in the perspectives of teams providing and of individuals receiving complex care. We look to organizations and programs providing complex care and individuals receiving complex care to collaborate and fuel the development of a full curriculum over time.

In the meantime, we believe the competencies themselves are a valuable tool that educators and practitioners can use to advance their own work and support their patients/clients and those individuals' caregivers and families, as well as students, colleagues, and employees. We are excited to see how you use the competencies to advance your own practice at the individual, team, and program level and are interested in using those insights to further advance the field of complex care. Please share with us how you're using the competencies and what tools you would like to see at www.nationalcomplex.care/core-competencies.

Here are five ways that you can use the core competencies in your practice today to improve care delivery and the health and well-being of individuals with complex health and social needs.

1. Add depth to your hiring process

Hiring managers can sort through the competencies and, based on their context and capacity, identify which competencies team members need to have to be hired and which can be trained after hiring.

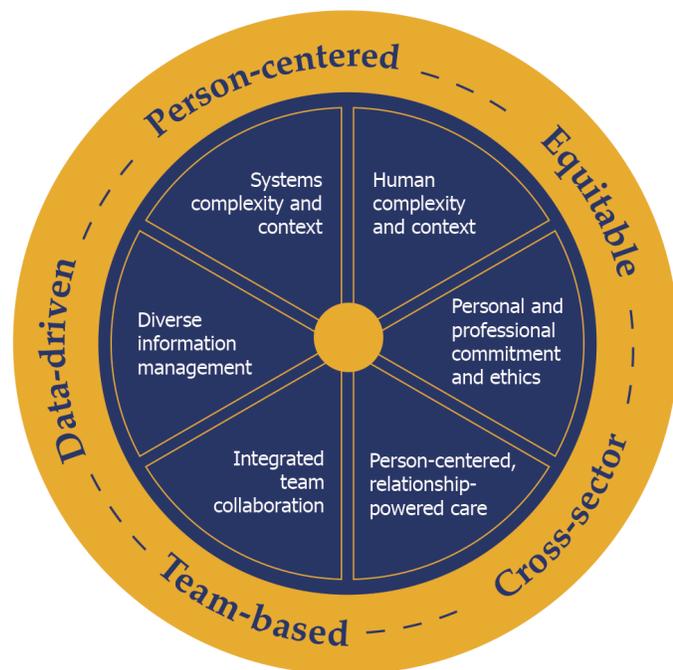


Figure 1. The principles of complex care and the domains of the complex care core competencies.

Managers can use creative ways to determine if applicants already have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be a part of the complex care team. Activities and questions used as part of the hiring process can help managers assess for important mindsets, values, and traits that can predict compatibility and success in a care team.

For example, during interviews for care team positions, the Camden Coalition's hiring managers assess for competency 1.f in Human complexity and context: *obtain and apply foundational knowledge in the philosophy and practice of harm reduction*. They do this by showing a **video** of a safe injection site and then asking questions to elicit reactions. This process shows the managers the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that applicants hold around harm reduction.

2. Use the competencies as an assessment framework

The core competencies can be used as a framework to design and implement assessments at the team and individual level. Using the competency framework, individuals can perform self-assessments and managers can perform team assessments. This process can help identify gaps, informing team training and workshop needs in specific competency areas.

3. Identify training needs

Once gaps in competency areas are identified, organizations and programs can commit to elevating the competency of staff as a whole through education, workshops, discussion, and practice. Individual complex care team members can also seek out specific training to increase their competence in gap areas. For example, organizations and programs can bring in training on:

- **Trauma-informed care**
- **Motivational interviewing practice**
- **Building authentic healing relationships**
- **Knowledge of structural racism and history of racism in healthcare**

4. Communicate about the practice of complex care

The core competencies can be used to communicate within an organization how complex care is different from traditional care. The core competencies outline how a complex care team offers a different level of care and type of care than other teams. The competencies can also be used to articulate why complex care and investment in complex care is necessary for certain populations at an organizational level.

The competencies can also be used to communicate with external partners. They provide a framework for explaining complex care and its core elements. The competencies can be used to help identify overlaps, inconsistencies, and alignment between sectors including healthcare, social services, and public health. They can also be used to communicate the need for funding and reimbursement for complex care and the professionals and peers who provide that care. Programs can share the core competencies with local community health worker, medical assistant, or nursing training programs to spread awareness of complex care and its offerings.

5. Tailor the core competencies to your team's needs

The core competencies provide a framework for all complex care team members across discipline, role, and setting. You can make the competencies more specific by adding functional capacities under each competency. Functional capacities are the discrete elements of knowledge, skill, and attitude necessary for a specific role or setting.

For example, the competencies were expanded on for navigators and case managers working across various New Jersey state programs supporting people with substance use disorders. They used the core

competencies as a framework for shared competencies across the team and differentiated functional capacities and expertise for each role. Their adaptation follows:

Original: Employ established techniques to meet people where they are, create safety, and explore behavior change.

Adapted: Employ established techniques to meet people regardless of where they are in their recovery process, create safety, and explore behavior change.

Functional capacities:

- Understand stages of change and how to identify.
- Understand when and how to utilize motivational interviewing, active listening, open-ended questions, self-disclosure, and other communication and relationship-building techniques.
- Utilize knowledge of harm reduction to be able to support and/or educate clients.

About the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers

We are a multidisciplinary nonprofit working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ, and across the country. The Camden Coalition works to advance the field of **complex care** by implementing person-centered programs and piloting new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and wellbeing. Supported by a robust data infrastructure, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, our community-based programs deliver better care to the most vulnerable individuals **in Camden** and **regionally**.

The **National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs** (National Center), an initiative of the Camden Coalition, connects complex care practitioners with each other and supports the field with tools and resources that move complex care forward. The National Center's founding sponsors are the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and AARP.

For more information about the Camden Coalition, visit www.camdenhealth.org.