CORE COMPETENCIES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are competencies?

Competencies are defined as the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to the quality of a person's work performance. Knowledge is information and understanding learned through experience or training. Skill is the result of applying knowledge or ability to a set of circumstances and attitude is the manner in which a behavior is performed. *(SAMHSA)*

What is meant by core competencies? What is its purpose?

Core competencies are the foundation for aligning professional development efforts and youth development activities across Montgomery County by addressing the following:

- Identifying knowledge and behavioral expectations
- Outlining a set of characteristics and attributes that define a continuum of professional development, that develops over time, along multiple pathways, and supports effective job performance
- Creating a common language for professional development
- Providing a blueprint for developing, tracking, supporting, and promoting staff qualifications
- Establishing a framework that allows professionals to achieve recognition in the field
- Providing access to competency-based training/education, and ensures compensation commensurate with educational achievement

Who are these competencies for?

Core competencies are written and used by a cross-section of practitioners across industries including: providers, teachers, youth workers, program administrators and directors, trainers.

How are these core competencies written and organized?

The core competencies tool is a living document in that each competency can be an observable action. They build on one another providing clear expectations for demonstrated skill acquisition and professional growth. The competencies are organized into three levels of career progression and are divided into four content areas for ease of reference and to make them more accessible.

How will these competencies be used?

Core competencies can be used to promote best practices, to guide training programs, and inform job descriptions. Organizations can use the competencies to build career ladders. Supervisors will be able to use competencies to appraise job performance and, they will also provide practitioners with a clear sense of the expectations of their roles. Practitioners will have a foundation and guidelines to evaluate their own work performance, set professional goals, and become more competent in their job.

Core competencies are not intended to impose requirements upon individuals, but rather to provide guidance for the development of initial and on-going training designed to support youth development practitioners continued competency development.

What are the benefits of identifying core competencies?
Establishing and utilizing core competencies has the potential to guide the delivery of and promote best practices for youth development practitioners across all levels of the field.

How do these relate to the National Afterschool Core Competencies?
The Core Competencies for Youth Workers from the Advancing Youth Development (AYD) manual, Maryland Out-of-School Time Programs' Quality Standards Framework, National Afterschool Association and the National Institute on Out of School Time were the resources that provided the foundation and framework for the Montgomery County Core Competencies for Youth Development Practitioners.

Can the core competencies be customized to specific roles in specific work settings?
Yes. The core competencies may be customized in practice to reflect the variety of roles and program settings.

How were these core competencies identified?
The Core Competencies document is the result of extensive work over a two year period by dedicated individuals from the education and out-of-school time fields committed to building and strengthening a professional development system. A committee reviewed the literature, synthesized related competencies from national organizations and came to a consensus about the final core competencies appropriate for Montgomery County youth development practitioners.

Portions taken from SAMHSA's Frequently Asked Questions about The Core Competencies