

# Entry-to-Practice Competency Profile

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## *Registered Counselling Therapists*

The *Entry-to-Practice Competency Profile* for Registered Counselling Therapists (RCTs) and Registered Counselling Therapist Candidates (RTC-Cs) in Nova Scotia, describes the skills and theoretical knowledge required of beginning practitioners to provide safe, competent, compassionate and ethical therapeutic care.

The competencies are grouped into five sections:

1. Foundations
2. Collegial and Professional Relationships
3. Professional Responsibilities
4. Therapeutic Process
5. Professional Literature and Applied Research

## *Background*

In 2020, the Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists (NSCCT) undertook to adopt a formal entry-level competency profile for licensed registrants. With revisions to reflect local context, this competency profile is wholly adapted from the *National Entry-to-practice Profile for Counselling Therapists* (2007) developed by the *Task Group for Counsellor Regulation in British Columbia*, and the subsequent adaptation *Entry-to-Practice Competency Profile for Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario* (2012).

The entry-level competencies are used for:

- Academic program approval/recognition
- Guidance for supervision
- Assessment of national and internationally educated applicants
- Reference for professional conduct matters
- Public and employer awareness of the practice expectations of RCTs

## *Principles Behind the Competency Profile*

The competency profile is constructed to serve users both within and outside the profession.

The individual competencies within the profile should be thought of as an interdependent array of abilities that an individual brings to the workplace, and uses according to the situation at hand.

In the ordinary practice of the profession, the entry-level Registered Counselling Therapist-Candidate (RCT-C) calls upon competencies in an informed manner based upon the practice context, and does not normally require immediate supervision or direction. The entry-level RCT-C monitors responses and reacts appropriately, and works within a reasonable timeframe, toward the achievement of outcomes consistent with the standards of practice in the profession.

This competency profile establishes minimum requirements and creates a foundation upon which practicing therapists should endeavor to build their confidence and expertise through continuous learning.

### *1. Foundations*

At entry-to-practice the Counselling Therapist is able to:

#### 1.1 Integrate a theory of human psychological functioning.

- a. Integrate knowledge of human development across the lifespan.
- b. Integrate knowledge of contextual and systemic factors that facilitate or impair human functioning.
- c. Integrate knowledge of the psychological significance of spiritual, moral, social, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, sexual, gender, and biological development.

#### 1.2 Work within a framework based upon established therapeutic theory.

- a. Integrate the theory or theories upon which the therapist's practice is based.
- b. Integrate knowledge of how human problems develop, from the viewpoint of the therapist's theoretical orientation.
- c. Identify circumstances where therapy is contraindicated.
- d. Recognize the benefits and limitations of differing therapeutic approaches.
- e. Establish a therapeutic relationship informed by the theoretical framework or philosophical stance.
- f. Integrate a theory of change consistent with the therapist's theoretical orientation.
- g. Integrate knowledge of the impact of trauma on psychological functioning.

### 1.3 Integrate awareness of self in relation to the professional role.

- a. Integrate knowledge of the impact of the therapist's self on the therapeutic process.
- b. Recognize how the therapist's values and attitudes, both in and out of awareness, may impact diverse clients.
- c. Recognize the cognitive, emotional and behavioural patterns of the therapist that may influence therapeutic relationship.
- d. Recognize instances where the therapist's life experiences may enhance or compromise therapeutic effectiveness.

### 1.4 Integrate knowledge of human and cultural diversity.

- a. Integrate knowledge of human diversity.
- b. Recognize how oppression, power and social injustice may affect the client and also the therapeutic process.
- c. Engage with each client to adapt their therapeutic approach to the uniqueness of the client's cultural identity.
- d. Recognize barriers that may affect access to therapeutic services.
- e. Identify culturally-relevant resources.

## ***2. Collegial & Professional Relationships***

At entry-to-practice the Counselling Therapist is able to:

### 2.1 Use effective professional communication.

- a. Use clear and concise written communication.
- b. Use clear and concise oral communication.
- c. Use clear and concise electronic communication.
- d. Communicate in a manner appropriate to the recipient.
- e. Use effective listening skills.
- f. Differentiate fact from opinion.
- g. Recognize and respond appropriately to non-verbal communication.

## 2.2 Maintain effective relationships.

- a. Show respect to others.
- b. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- c. Recognize and address conflict in a constructive manner.
- d. Demonstrate personal and professional integrity.

## 2.3 Contribute to a collaborative and productive atmosphere.

- a. Create and sustain working relationships with other professionals encountered in practice.
- b. Create and sustain working relationships with colleagues of diverse socio- cultural identities.
- c. Initiate professional collaborative practice.

# ***3. Professional Responsibilities***

## 3.1 Comply with legal and professional obligations.

- a. Comply with applicable federal and provincial legislation.
- b. Comply with College policy and professional standards.
- c. Address organizational policies and practices that are inconsistent with legislation and professional standards.
- d. Comply with relevant municipal and local bylaws related to private practice.

## 3.2 Apply an ethical decision-making process.

- a. Recognize ethical issues encountered in practice.
- b. Resolve ethical dilemmas in a manner consistent with legislation and professional standards as prescribed by the Code of Ethics.
- c. Accept responsibility for course of action taken.

## 3.3 Maintain self-care and level of health necessary for responsible therapy.

- a. Maintain personal physical, psychological, cognitive and emotional fitness to practice.

- b. Build and use a personal and professional support network.
- c. Maintain personal hygiene and appropriate professional presentation.

#### 3.4 Evaluate and enhance professional practice.

- a. Undertake critical self-reflection.
- b. Solicit client feedback throughout the therapeutic process.
- c. Plan and implement methods to assess effectiveness of interventions.
- d. Obtain feedback from peers and supervisors to assist in practice review.
- e. Identify strengths as a therapist, and areas for development.
- f. Set goals for improvement.
- g. Modify practice to enhance effectiveness.
- h. Participate in relevant professional development activities.
- i. Maintain awareness of resources and sources of support relevant to practice.

#### 3.5 Obtain clinical supervision or consultation.

- a. Initiate clinical supervision or consultation when appropriate or required.
- b. Articulate parameters of supervision or consultation.
- c. Protect client privacy and confidentiality, making disclosure only where permitted or required.
- d. Initiate a legal consultation when necessary.

#### 3.6 Provide education and training consistent with the therapist's practice.

- a. Recognize when to provide education and training to clients and others.
- b. Recognize therapist's limits of professional expertise as a trainer / educator.
- c. Plan and implement effective instructional activities.

#### 3.7 Maintain client records.

- a. Comply with the requirements of professional standards.

#### 3.8 Assist client with needs for advocacy and support.

- a. Identify when advocacy or third-party support may be of value to the client, and advise client accordingly.
- b. Support client to overcome barriers.

### 3.9 Provide reports to third parties.

- a. Prepare clear, concise, accurate and timely reports for third parties, appropriate to the needs of the recipient.
- b. Recognize ethical and legal implications when preparing third-party reports.

### 3.10 Establish business practices relevant to professional role.

- a. Comply with the requirements of relevant professional standards.
- b. Explain limitations of service availability.

## ***4. Therapeutic Process***

### 4.1 Orient client to therapist's practice.

- a. Describe therapist's education, qualifications and role.
- b. Differentiate the role of the therapist in relation to other health professionals.
- c. Explain the responsibilities of the client and the therapist in a therapeutic relationship.
- d. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of participating in therapy.
- e. Explain client rights to privacy and confidentiality, and the limitations imposed upon it by law.
- f. Explain relevant rules and policies.
- g. Respond to client questions.
- h. Explain and obtain informed consent in accordance with legal requirements.

### 4.2 Establish and maintain core conditions for therapy.

- a. Employ empathy, respect, and authenticity.
- b. Establish rapport.
- c. Demonstrate awareness of the impact of the client's context on the therapeutic process.

- d. Demonstrate sensitivity to the setting in which therapy takes place.
- e. Assume non-judgmental stance.
- f. Explain theoretical concepts in terms the client can understand
- g. Foster client autonomy.
- h. Maintain appropriate therapeutic boundaries.
- i. Define clear boundaries of response to client's requests or demands.
- j. Take all reasonable measures to safeguard physical and emotional safety of client during clinical work.
- k. Employ effective skills in observation of self, the client and the therapeutic process.
- l. Demonstrate dependability.

#### 4.3 Ensure safe and effective use of self in the therapeutic relationship.

- a. Demonstrate awareness of the impact of the therapist's subjective context on the therapeutic process.
- b. Recognize the impact of power dynamics within the therapeutic relationship.
- c. Protect client from imposition of the therapist's personal issues.
- d. Employ effective and congruent verbal and non-verbal communication.
- e. Use self-disclosure appropriately.
- f. Use touch appropriately.

#### 4.4 Conduct an appropriate risk assessment.

- a. Assess for specific risks as indicated.
- b. Develop safety plans with clients at risk.
- c. Refer to specific professional services where appropriate.
- d. Report to authorities as required by law.
- e. Follow up to monitor risk over time.

#### 4.5 Structure and facilitate the therapeutic process.

- a. Communicate in a manner appropriate to client's developmental level and socio- cultural identity.
- b. Identify and respond appropriately to client's strengths, vulnerabilities, resilience and resources.
- c. Respond non-reactively to anger, hostility and criticism from the client.
- d. Respond professionally to expressions of inappropriate attachment from the client.
- e. Anticipate and respond appropriately to the expression of intense emotions and help the client toward understanding and management.
- f. Recognize a variety of assessment approaches.
- g. Formulate an assessment.
- h. Develop individualized goals and objectives with the client.
- i. Formulate a direction for treatment or therapy.
- j. Practice therapy that is within therapist's level of skill, knowledge and judgement.
- k. Focus and guide sessions.
- l. Engage client according to their demonstrated level of commitment to therapy.
- m. Facilitate client exploration of issues and patterns of behaviour.
- n. Support client to explore a range of emotions.
- o. Employ a variety of helping strategies.
- p. Ensure timeliness of interventions.
- q. Recognize the significance of both action and inaction.
- r. Identify contextual influences.
- s. Review therapeutic process and progress with client periodically, and make appropriate adjustments.
- t. Recognize when to discontinue or conclude therapy.

#### 4.6 Refer the client

- a. Develop and maintain a referral network.
- b. Identify situations in which referral or specialized treatment may benefit the client, or be required.

#### 4.7 Conduct an effective closure process.

- a. Prepare client in a timely manner for the ending of a course of therapy.
- b. Outline follow-up options, support systems and resources.

### ***5. Professional Literature & Applied Research***

#### 5.1 Remain current with professional literature.

- a. Read current professional literature relevant to practice area.
- b. Access information from a variety of current sources.
- c. Analyze information critically.
- d. Determine the applicability of information to particular clinical situations.
- e. Apply knowledge gathered to enhance practice.

#### 5.2 Use research findings to inform clinical practice.

- a. Integrate knowledge of research methods and practices.
- b. Determine the applicability of research findings to particular clinical situations.
- c. Analyze research findings critically.
- d. Apply knowledge gathered to enhance practice.