The Southern Counties Regional Partnership (SCRP) has executed a contract with Loma Linda University (LLU) to create a set of core competencies, associated measurable performance criteria, and evaluation instruments and tools for professionals and collaborative behavioral health service providers.

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Project Overview

Through a two year initiative, a set of core competencies will be developed which include a definition and a list of the knowledge, skills and abilities that are expected of individuals providing behavioral health services to individuals and their families.

Year 1 will focus on professional clinical staff, and Year 2 will focus on collaborative behavioral health service providers**

The project will also develop measurable performance criteria and evaluative standards for each of the competency areas, along with evaluation instruments and tools.

**Professional clinical staff refers to those individuals who have a clinical license, and are designated as independent practitioners (i.e. MFT, PhD, MD, LCSW, LCC, NP etc.). Collaborative behavioral health service providers offer a variety of behavioral health services to persons and their families, and include individuals who may be licensed (i.e. LVN, LPT) though the majority of the individuals are not licenses, and they are not designated as independent practitioners.
Critical Definitions

- **Competency** – “the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served” (Epstein & Hundert, 2002)

- **Knowledge** – “awareness, information, or understanding about facts, rules, principles, guidelines, concepts, theories and processes needed to successfully perform a task” (Marelli, 2001, Mirabile, 1997)
Critical Definitions

- **Skill** - “a capacity to perform physical or mental tasks with a specified outcome” (Marelli, 2001, Mirabile, 1997)

- **Ability** - “a demonstrated cognitive or physical capability to successfully perform a task with a wide range of possible outcomes” (Marelli, 2001, Mirabile, 1997)
Review of the Following Documents

• Competencies and knowledge expectations from Certification/Licensing organizations for the collaborative behavioral health service provider positions reviewed (i.e. California Association of Psychiatric Technicians; California Department of Consumer Affairs; Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians, etc.);

• Competency products from other groups and organizations representing collaborative behavioral health service providers at both statewide and national levels completing competency development activities (i.e. Alaska Core Competencies, SAMHSA TAP 21 Addiction Counseling Competencies; Certification of Consumer, Youth, Family and Parent providers, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, Georgia CPS Project, etc.);

• Competency development projects of other California Regional Partnerships;

• Employee Evaluation tools/Assessment Tools submitted by counties

• Job Descriptions of collaborative behavioral health service provider positions from counties;

• State documents outlining expectations and audit criteria for mental health records;

• Relevant literature regarding competency development and evaluation of mental health competencies.
Potential Uses for Core Competency Documents

- New employee orientation;
- Student Intern orientation;
- Employee evaluation purposes;
- They can be used by both the County DMH and the employee to identify supervision, training and continuing education needs and opportunities;
- They can be used by the county to develop training and continuing education courses/activities;
- They can be utilized as a guide to training of supervisors to complete employee evaluation;
- They can be used by employees for self evaluation process;
- They can be used by employees to develop a training needs document;
- They can be used to supplement testing and interview process for new hires to county mental health agency; and
- They can be utilized by educational institutions training the future workforce for public mental health in California by providing information as to critical knowledge, skills and abilities that should be included in educational curriculum offerings.
Cornerstones of the Core Competencies

Two key elements guide each of the Core Competencies:

- **Cultural Competency**
- **Recovery, Resilience and Wellness**

(We recognize that Recovery is utilized primarily in work with adults and that Resilience is a more appropriate concept for children and TAY; it is important to consider the setting and age of individuals receiving services)

Each of these two cornerstone elements is referenced in individual competencies as well as having a specific core competency dedicated to the topic area.

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SCRP Core Competencies for Collaborative Behavioral Health Service Providers

- The following Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA’s) apply to a range of job descriptions, including but not limited to:
  
  Peer Support Services; Family Support/Advocate; Parent Support/Advocate; Licensed Psychiatric Technician, Licensed Vocational Nurse, Community Service Advocate, Case/Care Manager, Mental Health Associate; Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist, Alcohol Drug and Treatment Specialist; Mental Health Worker, Behavioral Health Specialist and other staff with extensive day-to-day contact with persons receiving behavioral health services.

- Some KSA’s are common denominators listed in all Job Descriptions and some are not. Supervisors and collaborative behavioral health service provider employees will need to identify those KSA’s which are appropriate to their particular position and job responsibilities.
The 12 Core Competencies for Collaborative Behavioral Health Service Providers

- Ethics
- Legal and Statutory Mandates
- Practice Knowledge Base
- Therapeutic Practice – Documentation
- Therapeutic Evaluation and Intervention
- Collegial and Collaborative Practice

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The 12 Core Competencies for Collaborative Behavioral Health Service Providers

- Reflective Practice and Use of Self
- Recovery, Resilience and Wellness
- Cultural Competency
- Integrated Behavioral Health and Primary Care
- Professional Development
- Work Management

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Core Competencies

❖ Ethics

Understands and applies the ethical standards and relevant code of ethics and conduct from licensure and certification/job title groups, and the agency of employment, within the environmental context and position role, including but not limited to the following knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s):

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Knowledge, skills and abilities for Ethics

• Follows agency and county of employment Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct and/or agency/county standards for appropriate behavior;
• Recognizes appropriate boundary issues with individuals receiving behavioral health services as well as colleagues;
• Recognizes evolving cultural issues;
• Does not engage in inappropriate dual relationships;
• Informs client of limits of confidentiality and reporting responsibilities;
• Promotes clients right to self-determination;
• Recognizes when persons receiving behavioral health services presentation of concerns are outside their own scope of competence and practice, and consults with appropriate supervisor;
• Knows how to manage one’s personal value system that may impact delivery of service; (i.e. counter-transference, bias, judgmental attitude)
• Uses technology and internet access in an ethical manner;
• Demonstrates ability to identify concerns regarding potential areas or ethical breaches and understands the obligation to report same to supervisor and make appropriate referrals;
• Informs persons receiving behavioral health services and family members of relevant rights;

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Core Competencies

- **Legal and Statutory Mandates**

Demonstrates knowledge of and appropriate application of relevant behavioral health state and federal laws/mandates, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Legal and Statutory Mandates

- Abides by confidentiality mandates and requirements;
- Understands and supports patients rights and notifies persons receiving behavioral health services, family members, and other responsible persons (i.e. conservator or guardian) of same;
- Understands and follows policies related to Informed Consent;
- Understands protection of electronic health information and confidentiality requirements, and release of information policies;
- Understands and follows legal statutes and mandates of partner agencies when providing consultation and/or services there (i.e. court system, schools, health clinics, substance abuse programs, etc.)
- Understands dangerous weapon control law;
- Understands legal mandates related to involuntary commitment (LPS 5150 and W & I Codes and regulations) and shares relevant concerns with supervisor/individual authorized to sign a 5150 and guardian/conservator;
- Understands Duty to Protect (Tarasoff) and Mandatory Reporting requirements, including Child Protective Services (CPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) and guardian/conservator;
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Legal and Statutory Mandates (Cont.)

- Understands utilization of medical and psychiatric advanced directives;
- Understands organizational behaviors and structure (i.e. Specific Clinic, Program Area, Department, County system, etc.)
- Understands HIPAA requirements, including specific mandates regarding substance abuse treatment;
- Understands laws and mandates regarding HIV/AIDS;
- Demonstrates general knowledge of laws related to pharmaceutical and psychotropic medication issues;
- Follows Medi-Cal proscribed regulations for documentation of services provided if relevant;
- Demonstrates awareness of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Understands LPS/Guardianship, Ombudsman Services, Children's Protective Services (CPS) and Older Adult Protective Services (APS) and application of same in behavioral health settings.
- Understands laws and reporting requirements related to CPS and APS.
Core Competencies

Practice Knowledge Base

Understands a variety of therapeutic interventions and models that are commonly used with the target population of the California behavioral health system (i.e. Children’s System of Care) including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Practice Knowledge Base

- Recovery, resilience and wellness oriented practice as appropriate for the treatment setting and the age of the individuals receiving service;
- Basic understanding of evidence based and promising behavioral health practices;
- Principles of Mental Health Services Act;
- Ethnic and culturally sensitive approaches;
- Co-occurring and Addiction disorders;
- Crisis intervention;
- Peer Support services provided by identified consumers and family members which could include specialized therapeutic interventions;
- Techniques and knowledge of psychiatric rehabilitation;

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Practice Knowledge Base (Cont.)

- Understanding and awareness of co-existing medical conditions and their impact on behavioral health conditions, and ability to collaborate with medical personnel in referrals, treatment planning and follow-up activities;
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of practice regarding suicide prevention/suicidality;
- Understand the range of resources and referral process for persons receiving behavioral health services (i.e. housing, employment, healthcare, vocational skill development, food banks, financial assistance, networks of care, etc.);
- Specialized activities based on training and expertise and current job description responsibilities (i.e. LVN and LPT medication and administration knowledge, understanding and monitoring of co-existing medical conditions, etc.)

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Core Competencies

- **Therapeutic Practice – Documentation**

  Prepares documentation that meets the standards and reporting requirements of agency and state monitoring and funding organizations, including but not limited to the following documents defining standards for documentation, audit criteria, etc:

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Documents related to Standards for Documentation of Services

- Department of Health Care Services Mental Health Plan Contract;
- State Department of Medi-Cal Oversight – Annual Review Protocol;
- Timely case record documentation of all interactions, results (successful and unsuccessful), phone calls, services rendered and any other pertinent information in the lives of persons receiving behavioral health services.

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Core Competencies

- **Therapeutic Evaluation and Intervention**

Selects and provides appropriate services based on assessment, taking into account the setting and age of the individuals receiving services, and is able to evaluate and modify services as needed, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s)

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Therapeutic Evaluation and Intervention

- Works with persons receiving behavioral health services and family to identify (1) history of presenting problem, and (2) services needed, and actively works with them to develop a plan for services;
- Incorporates developmental stages and culturally appropriate factors in the assessment process;
- Demonstrates critical thinking and judgment skills in providing evaluation, observation and therapeutic intervention activities;
- Works with persons receiving behavioral health services to develop a recovery and/or rehabilitation treatment plan including specific treatment goals and measurable outcome goals (i.e. WRAP);
- Identifies behaviors that might suggest suicidality and/or other high risk behaviors and/or changes in symptom presentation needing further intervention and informs a supervisor of same, and consults with medical staff for medical issues that may be identified;
- Employs crisis and safety measures and utilizes risk management principles;
- Identifies and utilizes relevant services and modalities that are appropriate to age, psycho-social and cultural context; (i.e. community based support services, group, etc.)
- Demonstrates understanding of and ability to work with persons with co-occurring disorders;

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Recognizes signs and symptoms of de-compensation;
Recognizes trauma based disorders including PTSD;
Is sensitive to the relationship of medical/physical health status issues to behavioral health challenges;
Monitors progress and in collaboration with the client, revises treatment service plan as needed and as appropriate, and completes and finalizes long-term care plan for review by licensed professional;
Provides specialized activities identified in job assignment or specialized training skills (i.e. public speaking, navigating services, transitioning client to wellness and recovery programs, Warm lines, working in ER and in crisis socialization Units);
Utilizes principles of care management to assist, link and empower persons receiving behavioral health services and family members to access relevant community based and interagency services (i.e. housing physical health care, financial benefits, employment, socialization activities, etc)
Evaluates effectiveness of services.
Core Competencies

- **Collegial and Collaborative Practice**

  Participates effectively in multi-disciplinary, multi-agency and support system work for persons receiving behavioral health services across the spectrum of service delivery, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Collegial and Collaborative Practice

- Understands importance of collaborative interventions with multiple partners, the community, and treatment support systems, and related roles, responsibilities and purpose of the collaborative process;
- Demonstrates interpersonal skills in collaborating, problem solving and coordinating delivery of behavioral health services with treatment team and partner agencies;
- Gives and receives critical information that contributes to a well-functioning team;
- Actively support concepts for cooperative team interactions and efforts and avoids counter productive relationships which destroy team effectiveness;
- Utilizes recovery, resilience and wellness oriented strategies and MHSA Principles of “community based” perspectives within collaborative arenas to empower persons receiving behavioral health services and family members;
- Provides information to help dispel inaccurate beliefs and misunderstanding of recovery, resiliency, wellness, stigma and discrimination toward individuals with behavioral health issues, to other partners and participants in collaborative activities;
- Understands and follows legal statutes and mandates of partner agencies, including safety and risk management issues, when providing consultation and/or services there (i.e. court system, schools, health clinics, substance abuse programs, etc.).

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Core Competencies

- **Reflective Practice and Use of Self**

  Demonstrates awareness of own strengths and therapeutic use of self, and exhibits interpersonal and communication skills that reflect a climate of compassion and person centered care, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Reflective Practice and Use of Self

- Demonstrates attentiveness to persons receiving behavioral health services and the family's’ presence, including understanding the multiple roles with individuals receiving behavioral health services;
- Critically evaluates one’s own performance;
- Recognizes when a situation is beyond their experience and ability, and seeks supervision and consultation;
- Demonstrates personal qualities that enhance practice including compassion, empathy, advocacy and respect for the inherent worth and dignity of individuals;
- Acts as a role model for examining one’s own feelings and behaviors and potential effect on persons receiving behavioral health services and service delivery activities;
- Models effective coping techniques and coping strategies;

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Reflective Practice and Use of Self (cont.)

- Demonstrates awareness of appropriate boundary issues, including ambiguities encountered in multiple roles of recovery, resilience and wellness oriented practice;
- Utilizes knowledge in resolving and/or managing conflicts and ambiguities that arise at multiple levels in the work environment;
- Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of need for self care, and shows an ability to apply self care concepts;
- Demonstrates ability to discern when and how much of a personal recovery story to share with persons receiving behavioral health services.
Core Competencies

- **Recovery, Resilience and Wellness***

  Integrates principles of behavioral health recovery, resilience and wellness oriented care and methods of service delivery as appropriate for the setting and age of persons receiving services, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):

*See SAMHSA document describing 12 Recovery Concepts in appendix to this document*
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Recovery, Resilience and Wellness

- Believes that recovery is possible, and that individuals with behavioral health issues can have a place in the community, with a focus on living a life of meaning and purpose;
- Promotes participation of persons receiving behavioral health services and family members in all aspects of the behavioral health service delivery system and responds actively and appropriately to feedback from persons receiving behavioral health services and family/support systems;
- Places priority on developing helping relationships with persons receiving behavioral health services and family members;
- Supports behavioral health services that are wellness, resilience and recovery focused, and empowering of consumer choice and independence for service recipients and family members;
- Supports concepts of integrated service delivery systems;

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Recovery, Resilience and Wellness (cont.)

- Demonstrates advocacy for persons who are receiving behavioral health services, and supports their development of self-advocacy skills
- Utilizes strength based, solution focused, and community based approaches to working with persons receiving behavioral health services from a recovery and resilience focus perspective;
- Models recovery and resilience concepts in practice;
- Promotes and supports peer integration into the workforce;
- Demonstrates awareness of stigma and discrimination regarding individuals with behavioral health illness, and promotes and supports the recovery process;
- Models effective coping techniques and coping strategies;

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Core Competencies

 Cultural Competency

Recognizes and values diversity, and partners with the persons receiving behavioral health services and their family to discern the relevant cultural and diverse aspects of the individuals life needing to be addressed in the development of the treatment plan and its implementation, including but not limited to the following knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s):
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Cultural Competency

- Demonstrates sensitivity to and respect for age, social role, culture, race, gender, gender identity and expression, language, spirituality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social class, economic status, immigration status, veteran status and disability;
- Promotes importance and sensitivity to cultural competency throughout the agency service system;
- Demonstrates importance of gathering information and showing sensitivity to the person receiving behavioral health services and family, and their self identified view of their culture and social world, utilizing strength based and solution focused interventions;
- Identifies effects of stigma and oppression on individuals, families, groups and communities, and strives to promote strategies that address these issues;
- Demonstrates awareness of the disproportionality of service delivery to underserved populations, and focuses on assuring expansion of services to all populations including providing linguistically appropriate services in multiple languages;
- Demonstrates ongoing learning about other cultures.
Core Competencies

- **Integrated Behavioral Health Practice**
  
  Understands the interface between behavioral health and primary medical health care practices, and the importance of the ability to participate in the full spectrum of service delivery with other service providers, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Integrated Behavioral Health Practice

- Understands concepts of bi-directional care, including an understanding that medical conditions in many cases could be contributing to behavioral health issues;
- Participates in coordination and collaboration with partners from primary health care agencies to provide integrated care;
- Participates in planning and development to integrate behavioral health, substance abuse and primary health care treatment with attention to the need for equal access to services for all populations;
- Develops knowledge about the interface between primary and behavioral health care practices;
- Understands the increased risk of individuals with behavioral health challenges to develop co-incidental medical illnesses and problems.

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Integrated Behavioral Health Practice (cont.)

- Understands and encourages persons receiving behavioral health services to utilize wellness principles to help combat the development of co- incidental medical illnesses (i.e. smoking cessation, dietary monitoring, healthy lifestyle issues, etc.);
- Promotes and “normalizes” knowledge of behavioral health and substance abuse issues to community partner agencies to combat stigma and discrimination;
- Works effectively with other organizations and systems to promote integrated health, substance abuse and behavioral health services.
- Provides education to the community regarding critical issues in behavioral health to help them develop understanding about needs of the persons receiving behavioral health services and utilization of available resources to combat discrimination and promote stigma reduction.

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Core Competencies

- **Professional Development**

  Recognizes and assesses one’s own level of knowledge development and demonstrates commitment to lifelong learning and improvement of knowledge and helping skills, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Professional Development

- Completes required agency mandated trainings and courses;
- Maintains required licensures or certification standards as required in their job description;
- Shares feedback and learning from training activities with other staff;
- Utilizes supervision and case discussion effectively to inform practice skills needing further development;
- Participates in presenting training activities to agency and community partners as requested by supervisor;
- Participates in providing information/consultation/mentoring for student interns, volunteers, other collaborative behavioral health service providers, and newly hired staff members as requested by supervisor;
- Is able to recognize limitations, and takes initiative to identify and seek training and assistance to meet training needs for own skill development;
- Initiates and demonstrates desire to gain more skills and implement new knowledge and skills gained from training activities.
- Demonstrates initiative in self advocacy

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Core Competencies

- **Work Management**

  Manages responsibilities and tasks of work assignment within agency timelines and expectations, including but not limited to the following Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA’s):

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Work Management

- Demonstrates punctuality and expected attendance patterns;
- Demonstrates positive, courteous and professional delivery of service to individuals receiving behavioral health services and their family/support system members;
- Meets productivity expectations and standards;
- Provides clear and direct verbal and written communication;
- Demonstrates appropriate interprofessional skills including the ability to give and accept feedback from persons receiving behavioral health services and their family members, colleagues, agency management and the public;
- Demonstrates dependability and follow-through on services provided;
- Recognizes and demonstrate time management skills;
- Demonstrates appropriate attire for the work setting;

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Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Work Management (cont.)

- Demonstrates ability to adjust to secondary assignments, such as out-stationed and community based duties and activities, program development activities, specialized activities, etc.;
- Utilizes computer and technical skills, including electronic health records, appropriately and within legal and ethical guidelines;
- Completes documents and required reporting in a comprehensive and timely manner.
- Effectively manages workload assignments, communities needs for assistance and related activities.