

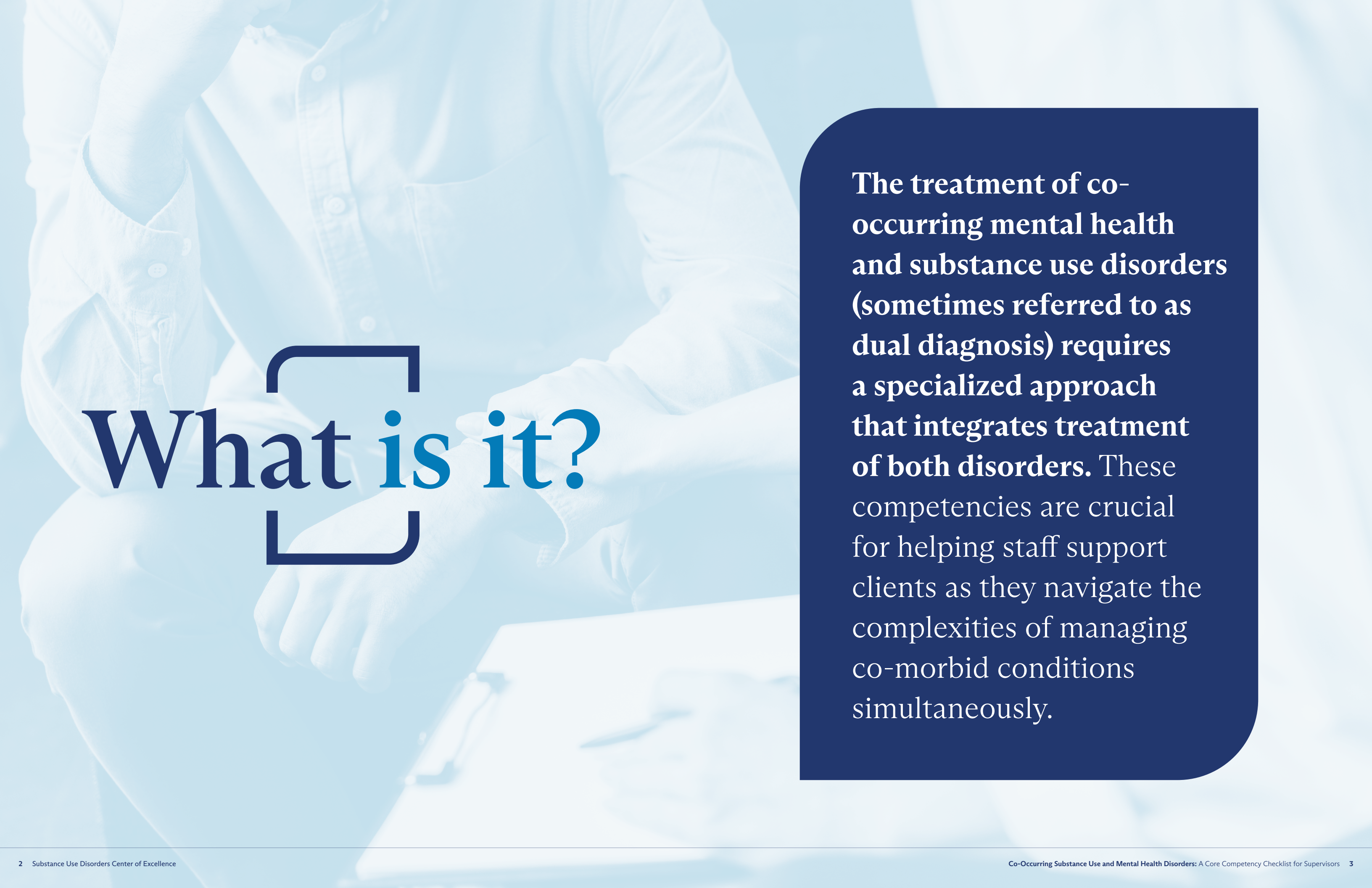


Substance Use Disorders
Center of Excellence

CO-OCCURRING SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS:

A Core Competency Checklist for Supervisors





What is it?

The treatment of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders (sometimes referred to as dual diagnosis) requires a specialized approach that integrates treatment of both disorders. These competencies are crucial for helping staff support clients as they navigate the complexities of managing co-morbid conditions simultaneously.

Person-Centered Treatment

What is it?

Person-centered treatment is the ability of behavioral healthcare professionals to deliver integrated services for co-occurring disorders (COD) in a way that prioritizes the individual's autonomy with their personal goals, preferences, values, and lived experiences. It emphasizes treating people with dignity, respect, and compassion while actively involving them in the planning and implementation of their care. It is an approach that places the individual at the center of their care, recognizing them as experts in their own lives. In behavioral health, this approach focuses on creating a collaborative, empathetic, and empowering relationship between the healthcare provider and the person receiving services, where the provider listens actively, respects the person's autonomy, and supports them in making decisions about their treatment.

Why this competency matters

Person-centered care leads to better health outcomes, stronger therapeutic relationships, and higher satisfaction among individuals receiving care. As a competency, it ensures providers not only deliver clinically effective services but also honor the humanity and rights of those they serve. Integrating this competency into clinical training and supervision ensures that emerging healthcare professionals develop the skills to deliver care that is respectful, individualized, and sensitive to diverse needs.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills with person centered treatment?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of person-centered treatment?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering person-centered treatment that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Understanding Stages of Change and Stage-Matched Treatment

What is it?

Stages of change offers behavioral healthcare professionals the opportunity to recognize where an individual is with respect to their readiness to change and tailor interventions accordingly. It draws heavily from the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM) and other behavioral theories to guide effective, personalized care. It assures that all interventions, including evidence-informed practices such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), etc., are integrated into treatment and aligned with readiness to increase effectiveness.

Why this competency matters

People are more likely to engage and succeed in treatment when interventions match their current stage of change. This competency promotes personalized care, enhances therapeutic alliance, and supports sustainable change by aligning with a person's readiness. By tailoring interventions to a person's stage of change, healthcare professionals can increase engagement, decrease defensiveness, and foster more meaningful progress. Supervisors who focus on these competencies help their supervisees develop critical thinking and adaptability, allowing them to work more effectively with clients across various stages of change. It not only enhances the healthcare professional's clinical skills but also improves client outcomes, strengthens the therapeutic relationship, and reduces burnout among healthcare professionals.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for applying stages of change in treatment?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of stage-matched treatment?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering stage-based and stage-matched treatment that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Motivational Interventions

What is it?

Motivational intervention refers to behavioral healthcare professionals' ability to use evidence-informed techniques that enhance a person's internal motivation to change health-risk behaviors. This approach centers on compassion, collaboration, evoking personal reasons for change, respecting autonomy, and resolving ambivalence — all core principles of Motivational Interviewing (MI).

Why this competency matters

Many treatment approaches have been built on the presumption of motivation, whereas most individuals in treatment have not yet fortified their commitment to change. Motivational interventions increase engagement, treatment retention, and outcomes across a range of behavioral health needs — including substance use, mental health, chronic illness, and lifestyle change. Professionals skilled in this area help people shift from a place of uncertainty about change to a willingness to engage in behavior that creates sustainable change.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills with motivational interventions?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of motivational interventions?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering motivational interventions that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Understanding Mental Health (MH) Disorders

What is it?

This competency reflects behavioral healthcare professionals' foundational knowledge of mental health disorders, including the origin, symptoms, course, and impact on functioning. It also involves the accurate and comprehensive assessment of diagnostic criteria to inform the most appropriate person-centered treatment interventions and strategies.



Why this competency matters

Understanding mental health disorders allows providers to respond with compassion, accuracy, and confidence, reducing harm and supporting trauma-informed, recovery-oriented care. It helps teams collaborate effectively and adapt services to meet complex needs in an evidence-informed manner.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for assessment and treatment of mental health disorders?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of the treatment of mental health disorders?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering the basic principles of MH disorders that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Understanding Substance Use Disorders (SUDs)

What is it?

This competency focuses on the behavioral healthcare professional's ability to understand the risk factors and the progression and chronicity of the illness. It requires a stage-matched, evidence-informed treatment approach within a full continuum of care. It includes the ability to identify and differentiate between mild, moderate, and severe symptom presentations.



Why this competency matters

Appreciating the dynamics of the illness and the multiple pathways of personal recovery helps providers' responsiveness to a unique array of presenting needs. Addressing values, attitudes, and beliefs can facilitate movement away from a one-size-fits-all approach to treatment and toward the individualized experience of recovery as defined by the individual.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for assessment and treatment of substance use disorders?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of the treatment of SUDs?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering the basic principles of SUDs assessment and treatment that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Attending to the Interactive Course of Both Disorders

What is it?

This competency involves recognizing and addressing the interactive relationship between MH disorders and SUDs. It emphasizes understanding how each condition can exacerbate, influence, and complicate the other. Professionals skilled in this area are equipped to deliver integrated treatment that meets the complex needs of individuals facing both mental health and substance use challenges.

Why this competency matters

Professionals who are skilled in managing co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders can offer more effective treatment, reduce barriers to care, and improve treatment retention and outcomes. Acknowledging the interactive course of these disorders promotes holistic, person-centered care, addressing both symptoms and underlying causes in a way that maximizes the potential for sustained recovery and improved well-being.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for assessment and treatment of the interactive course of both disorders?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of integrating treatment?

Are there challenges or barriers to attending to the integrated course of both disorders that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Symptom Management for Mental Health (MH)

What is it?

This focuses on a behavioral healthcare professionals' ability to effectively assess, monitor, and manage symptoms of MH disorders through evidence-based interventions. It involves understanding symptom expression, underlying mechanisms, and treatment strategies that help individuals function optimally despite the presence of mental health challenges. Professionals skilled in symptom management help individuals gain better control over their mental health conditions, improve quality of life, and reduce the severity and frequency of symptoms.

Why this competency matters

Competency in mental health symptom management ensures that professionals can help individuals stabilize their mental health conditions and improve functioning, which leads to greater independence and quality of life. By using evidence-based approaches, providers empower people to regain control over their mental health, reduce symptoms, and manage challenges with greater resilience. Effective symptom management is a cornerstone of recovery for individuals with MH disorders, leading to better outcomes in terms of life satisfaction, relationships, and community involvement.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for MH symptom management?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of symptom management?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering MH symptom management that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Action Stage Treatment for SUD

What is it?

This competency involves understanding the Action Stage of behavior change within the context of SUD treatment. The Action Stage is characterized by clients actively making changes to their substance use behaviors and implementing strategies to reduce or eliminate use. Behavioral health professionals skilled in this competency are equipped to support individuals through this crucial stage of change by applying evidence-based strategies, offering motivation and accountability, facilitating development of recovery skills, and addressing the challenges that arise as people work to maintain sobriety and recover from substance use.

Why this competency matters

This competency is crucial because the Action Stage represents a time of active, concrete change, where people are applying new skills, making real-time decisions, and beginning to live out their recovery. Professionals skilled in this competency are able to provide support within the transition from ambivalence to action, offering guidance, motivation, and introductions to useful tools that help them sustain positive change over the long term. Effective support during this stage greatly improves treatment outcomes, reduces the risk of relapse, and helps build a foundation for sustained recovery.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for Action Stage treatment?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of Action Stage treatment?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering Action Stage treatment for SUD that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Trauma-Informed Considerations for Treatment

What is it?

This is an essential competency in behavioral healthcare that acknowledges the widespread impact of trauma on individuals and integrates a trauma-sensitive approach into all aspects of treatment. It involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of trauma in a way that promotes healing, safety, and empowerment for individuals receiving care. This competency is foundational in supporting anyone with a history of trauma, particularly those in substance use treatment, mental health care, or individuals seeking behavioral health support for other reasons.

Why this competency matters

Incorporating trauma-informed care into behavioral healthcare practices is essential for providing effective, compassionate, and ethical care. Since trauma is often an underlying factor in mental health and substance use disorders, understanding how trauma influences behavior is critical for successful treatment outcomes. Trauma-informed considerations for treatment empowers behavioral healthcare professionals to foster a safe, respectful, and healing environment, which can reduce barriers to treatment, enhance engagement, and support long-term recovery.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills associated with trauma-informed treatment?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of trauma-informed treatment?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering trauma-informed considerations for treatment that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Group Therapy Process and Facilitation

What is it?

Group facilitation is a crucial competency in behavioral healthcare, particularly for professionals working with clients in settings which emphasize group therapy. Understanding how to effectively facilitate group processes ensures the creation of a safe, supportive, and therapeutic environment in which individuals can share experiences, receive support, and work toward personal goals. This competency involves knowing how to guide group interactions, maintain boundaries, and encourage healthy communication dynamics among group members, all while being mindful of the diverse needs of individuals within the group.

Why this competency matters

Group therapy is a powerful tool for behavioral healthcare professionals, providing the opportunity to experience peer support, learn interpersonal skills, and engage in shared problem solving. Understanding group process and facilitation is critical because it allows behavioral healthcare professionals to:

- Maximize the therapeutic potential of group settings.
- Create a safe and supportive environment that fosters healing and personal growth.
- Navigate complex group dynamics to ensure that every member's voice is heard.
- Prevent group conflicts from derailing the group process, and instead use them as opportunities for growth and learning.

In behavioral health, group therapy is often used to explore a variety of areas, including substance use disorders, mental health issues, and co-occurring disorders. Group therapy can be especially effective in providing people with a sense of community, helping them feel less isolated, and promoting social learning.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current group therapy knowledge and skills ?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of group treatment?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering group facilitation/ process that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

Professional Development Process & Method

What is it?

This competency involves using structured processes and evidence-informed methods to assess needs, set goals, facilitate learning, monitor progress, and adapt plans to ensure that both individuals and teams are advancing in their clinical skills, ethical practice, and leadership abilities.

Why this competency matters

Behavioral healthcare supervisors must effectively guide, model, and support the continuous professional growth of their team members. A structured professional development process enhances supervisee satisfaction, reduces burnout, improves service quality, supports staff retention, and ensures that the organization maintains a high standard of ethical and comprehensive care. Observational (live) supervision, refinement of feedback delivery, applied guidance and coaching, and modeling coping skills can be critical elements of effective supervision.

Key questions to consider

On a scale of 1-10, how would I rate my current knowledge and skills for developing professionals?

What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this aspect of care?

What next steps are necessary for me to enhance my knowledge or skills of professional development?

Are there challenges or barriers to delivering professional development process and methods that affect my ability to supervise this aspect of care?

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