

DSP-S Aging

Competency #1: Awareness of Age Related Changes and Aging in Place

The competent DSP Specialist in Aging will understand how aging affects a person's physical and mental health and will be aware of, and document, such changes in the person receiving supports. The competent DSP will support a person to 'age in place' for as long as desired/possible.

Mandatory Skill Statements:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of normal and atypical aging process from a biological, social, and psychological perspective.
- Identify and document the use of a variety of environmental adaptations to support the person to 'age in place' and reduce the risk of falls and accidents.

Optional Skill Statements:

- Assist and educate the person receiving support to remain as physically and mentally active as possible.
- Understand age-related changes in diet, including issues with chewing and digestion, and sensory changes in smell and taste, and use person-centered approach to support healthy eating.
- Recognize and report the need for screening if changes in bladder control, changes in cognition, changes in self-care, changes in mobility and balance and/or changes in mood are observed.
- Identify and document early signs of physical or mental decline including functional changes that may be early indicators of dementia.
- Shows a basic understanding of cognitive decline (including early onset features), mild cognitive impairment, and dementia.
- Demonstrate an understanding of best practices for providing day-to-day specialized dementia support.
- Advocate for the person to "age in place" and remain in his/her own home as long as he/she desires.
- Identify and document the use of a variety of assistive technology to maintain optimal independence and functioning while aging in place.

Competency #2: Lifelong Learning and Social Networking

The competent DSP Specialist in Aging will understand how supporting personal growth through learning and social networking positively impacts health and well-being. The competent DSP will identify educational, recreational, and social opportunities that sustain lifelong interests and introduce new possibilities, including retirement planning.

Mandatory Skill Statements:

- Identify formal and informal community resources for lifelong learning and engagement as well as the supports needed for successful participation, consistent with the person's interests and choices.
- Recognize commonly held assumptions about aging that represent stereotypes and limit possibilities for lifelong learning and social opportunities.

Optional Skill Statements:

- Develop knowledge of relevant generic resources for learning and socialization, as well as community resources designed for elders.
- Use person-centered planning methods to create transition strategies for individuals interested in retirement, including inclusive senior service networks and support systems.
- Identify the supports and services needed for successful participation in new routines.
- Provide a broad spectrum of options for each person that includes new learning opportunities based on individual capacity.
- Assess community resources to determine how each person can be supported in new social environments.

Competency #3: Grief, Loss and End of Life Planning

The competent DSP Specialist in Aging will understand how to support a person as he/she confronts the realities of loss & grief. The competent DSP will facilitate end of life planning for the aging person.

Mandatory Skills Statements:

- Support the person through a variety of emotionally challenging situations involving commonly occurring loss & grief of family and friends.
- Facilitate a thoughtful person centered lifelong planning process including accessing financial, legal, and estate planning.

Optional Skills Statements:

- Assist the person to engage in a thoughtful process that considers end of life care and, while planning, includes other people who are most important to the person.
- Advocate for the person's wishes for their end of life care, including preferences about healthcare, establishing a living will, healthcare power of attorney, and other legal considerations.
- Shows an understanding of principles that allow a person to participate in normal actions and behaviors of mourning, especially those rituals that are culturally and religiously relevant including attending wakes and funerals.
- Recognize the various types of loss that commonly occur as people age, such as losses related to leaving friends at work, losing the skills or ability to participate in activities, and loss of friends and family to death and document their impact.
- Openly discusses death in a way that the person can understand and process it.

References:

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Sedlezky, L. (2010). The role of DSPs in the lives of aging adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Impact*, 23(1), 20-21.

Tyler, C. (2011). Specialized Skills in Supporting Older Clients with I/DD. Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council.

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Aging with Developmental Disabilities (RRTC/ADD) <http://www.rrtcadd.org/Resource/Publications/Info.html>

Wilson, N., Stancliffe, R. J., Bigby, C., Gambin, N., Craig, D. & Balandin, S. (2012). Transition to Retirement: Creating opportunities for social inclusion. *Frontline Initiative*, 10(3), 7. Available online at <http://rtc.umn.edu/docs/FI-LaterLifeSupports.pdf>