

To: All Providers
From: PerformCare
Date: March 08, 2022
Subject: Suicide Prevention #4: Core Competencies for Therapists Treating People with Suicidal Thinking

The following will provide an overview of Core Clinical Competencies and can be related to the clinical best practice standards on assessment, treatment, and management of clients with suicidal thinking. This communication serves as our bi-monthly communication on this important topic.

For March, PerformCare would like to provide an overview of a resource for clinical supervisors, which could even be used by therapists themselves to evaluate or self-evaluate competencies and skills in working with clients who have chronic suicidal thinking. Specific training in treating chronic suicidality, such as the models introduced in our January correspondence, as well as Best Practice in assessing risk are often lacking in counseling, social work and psychology programs. This presents clinicians with the challenge of having to self-educate or seek outside trainings, such as those provided in prior communication, as well as additional supervision.

A useful framework for evaluating competency for treating suicidal thinking is outlined by Rudd, M, Cukrowicz, K, and Bryan, C. (2008). Their framework explains the core competencies needed for therapists who work with clients with chronic suicidality. The article/framework also addresses approaches to clinical supervision and how to facilitate the development of the defined skills. As stated above, it could be argued that this framework could serve as a tool for therapists to evaluate their own skill development, alongside of receiving specialized training in risk assessment and evidenced based treatment.

The following seven competencies for therapists noted for development include attitudes and approaches to working with clients at risk for suicide, understanding suicide (e.g. appropriate terms, statistics, risk and protective factors, etc.), accurate assessment, formulating risk, developing a treatment and service plan, managing care, and understanding legal and regulatory issues related to suicidality. The core competencies are noted to be able to be incorporated into any treatment modality. The framework outlines the primary domains to be developed for each of the seven core competencies, as well as the nature of the supervisory task. In other words, the skills that need to be developed for each domain. Providers can reference the article below and refer to a useful table from the article attached which can be used in practice, and that will be available on our website at

<https://pa.performcare.org/providers/resources-information/suicide-prevention.aspx>

References

Rudd, M. D., Cukrowicz, K.C, & Bryan, C.J. (2008). Core competencies in suicide risk assessment and management: Implications for supervision. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology* 2 (4), 219, 2008.