



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

CHCFCS802B Provide relationship counselling

Release: 1

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Modification History

Not Applicable

Unit Descriptor

Unit Descriptor

This unit of competency describes the skills and knowledge required to counsel couples experiencing complex relationship issues

Application of the Unit

Application

This unit applies to Relationship Counsellors performing complex counselling with individuals and couples using a variety of counselling approaches.

Licensing/Regulatory Information

Not Applicable

Pre-Requisites

Not Applicable

Employability Skills Information

Employability Skills

This unit contains Employability Skills

Elements and Performance Criteria Pre-Content

Elements define the essential outcomes of a unit of competency.

The Performance Criteria specify the level of performance required to demonstrate achievement of the Element. Terms in italics are elaborated in the Range Statement.

Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT

1. Assess for issues of violence and safety risks in the couple relationships

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- 1.1 *Assess for domestic and family violence issues* as part of relationship counselling
- 1.2 Take appropriate action to address any issues of violence according to organisation policy and legislative requirements
- 1.3 Refer individuals to *support services* to manage *issues of safety or risk* if required
- 1.4 Document issues of concern or potential risk according to policy and relevant legislation
- 1.5 Assess whether there is a safe enough environment where violence exists to offer couple counselling
- 1.6 Create safe environment for couples to maximise opportunities within the counselling session

ELEMENT

2. Establish professional relationship with each individual

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

2.1 *Engage* each individual using appropriate *techniques and strategies*

2.2 Remain impartial in the professional counselling relationship with couples

2.3 Explore and outline ethical boundaries and expectations of the professional counselling relationship

2.4 Identify and manage problematic issues of the professional relationship with couples

2.5 Take appropriate steps to prevent the development of problematic relationship issues between the counsellor and individuals within the couple, i.e. develop therapeutic alliance

2.6 Monitor and respond appropriately to the physical and emotional reactions of each individual to the counselling process

3. Identify and explore *presenting problems*

3.1 Encourage individuals to describe the *presenting problems* and explore their understanding of why the problem exists

3.2 Encourage couples to become aware of and discuss the problem in relation to associated behaviours or situations

3.3 Elicit the couple's understandings of attempts to previously manage the problem in the past

3.4 Evaluate couple's perception of their relationship prior to the problem existing

3.5 Reframe problems and recursive interaction

ELEMENT**PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

4. Direct the therapeutic process of couples counselling
- 4.1 Use *questioning techniques* effectively to explore couples options, motivations, and commitments for change
 - 4.2 Respond to communication difficulties including overt and covert aggression and hostility between individuals in the couples counselling session
 - 4.3 Identify strengths of the relationship and encourage individuals to negotiate and develop strategic goals to be achieved in their relationship
 - 4.4 Develop future session plans based on information and evidence obtained from current counselling session
5. *Terminate counselling sessions*
- 5.1 Recognise when the counselling is no longer serving the interests or needs of the client
 - 5.2 Discuss with the client/s when counselling no longer appears to serve the clients interest or needs and either re-negotiate professional relationship or terminate the service
 - 5.3 Engage client/s in determining any further external interventions as identified and arrange appropriate referrals
 - 5.4 Discuss with the client any *interruptions to counselling*, planned or otherwise, and implement alternative interim counselling
6. Seek feedback from the client/s about the counselling service provided
- 6.1 Review counselling progress and provision regularly with clients
 - 6.2 Obtain feedback from the clients at the conclusion of the counselling service
 - 6.3 Use a range of *feedback strategies* to encourage client contribution to improved counselling practice
 - 6.4 Review client feedback and use this to inform practice reflection and improvement as part of supervision

Required Skills and Knowledge

REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This describes the essential skills and knowledge and their level required for this unit.

Essential knowledge:

The candidate must be able to demonstrate essential knowledge required to effectively do the task outlined in elements and performance criteria of this unit, manage the task and manage contingencies in the context of the identified work role

These include knowledge of:

- The historical development of counselling theories and practice approaches
- Own prejudices and stereotyping attitudes and behaviour and the potential influence these may have on counselling practice.
- Limitations imposed on the counsellor client relationship as a result of professional and ethical responsibility in the context of an unequal balance of power in the counselling setting.
- Limitations to the effectiveness or usefulness of counsellor in some circumstances and course of actions appropriate for client referral when necessary
- Contracting and reaching agreements with client about the nature, process and expected timeframes and responsibilities for counsellor and client within the provisions of counselling
- Importance and opportunities for continuing professional development and maintaining a professional level of self awareness of current scientific and professional information and education in the area of counselling practices.
- Indicators and dynamics of domestic and family violence and complexities of interpersonal interactions, e.g. power, abuse and conflict
- Procedures and instruments to screen for abuse before, during and after couple or family counselling and any additional safety planning requirements and procedures for clients and staff. Also, option for not offering relationship counselling where there is violence
- Referral options and pathways to support clients seeking interventions and supports beyond or in conjunctions with counselling
- The importance and intent of counsellor participation in supervision
- Relevant state and federal legislation applicable to counselling practice
- Limitations of confidentiality that may arise in the counselling setting
- Contemporary research and approaches to counselling in diverse cultural contexts
- Relevance of concepts of couple, family and child dynamics in normal and abnormal developmental forms
- Critical understanding and appreciation of the main approaches used in couple counselling
- Critical understanding of the theories of major couple counselling approaches,

REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Stages of human development and how this knowledge applies to relationship counselling practice
- Human diversity including culture, gender, age, ability, class, spirituality and ethnicity

continued ...

Essential knowledge (contd):

- Recognise the role of social contexts in the counselling relationship
- Issues impacting on same sex couples
- Family and relationship research and implications for practice

Essential skills:

It is critical that the candidate demonstrate the ability to:

- Establish and explain professional relationships in the counselling context
- Identify and adhere to legislative requirements of counselling in a broad range of contexts including Family Law and counselling couples, families and children
- Explain counselling goals and action plans and outline relationship counselling process and agreements
- Assess and screen for domestic and family violence and child abuse using a range of indicators and processes
- Monitor own competence through counselling supervision and be willing to consider the views expressed by clients and by counsellor colleagues
- Manage the counselling role within an ethical context and discuss with clients processes referral where necessary
- Comprehend a variety of individual and systemic therapeutic relationship approaches and their application, including evidence-based therapies and culturally sensitive approaches
- Recognise the strengths limitations and contraindications of specific therapeutic approaches, including risk of harm associated with approaches that incorporate assumptions of family dysfunction
- Apply an appropriate relationship counselling approach and identify specific techniques to ensure client needs are met, including those needs of same sex couples
- Apply advanced relationship counselling interventions and explain the contribution of counselling interventions to the therapeutic process
- Compare and contrast relationship counselling theories and approaches
- Identify common concerns in the provision of counselling processes
- Work in a multidisciplinary environment where appropriate
- Manage confidentiality of information obtained from clients during the counselling process
- Maintain a solid theoretical base for effective and contemporary counselling practice
- Manage the dynamics of counselling couples experiencing high levels of ongoing

REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

conflict

- Respect and promote client self determination and ability to make own decisions within the clients value, beliefs and context
- Demonstrate sensitivity when counselling individual and couples from diverse backgrounds
- Produce case records, files and reports to a standard acceptable to industry and obtain client consent for release of information
- Complete case work and participate effectively in case management processes where appropriate
- Apply practitioner self critique and non-defensive recognition of own errors
- Join and manage the relational/emotional system in couples

Evidence Guide

EVIDENCE GUIDE

The evidence guide provides advice on assessment and must be read in conjunction with the Performance Criteria, Required Skills and Knowledge, the Range Statement and the Assessment Guidelines for this Training Package.

Critical aspects for assessment and evidence required to demonstrate this unit of competency:

- The individual being assessed must provide evidence of *specified* essential knowledge as well as skills
- Observation of workplace performance is essential for assessment of this unit
- Consistency of performance should be demonstrated over the required range of client situations or scenarios relevant to the workplace including
 - couples counselling
 - individual counselling as planned strategy for relationships intervention
 - complex cases of consistent high level of relationship conflict

EVIDENCE GUIDE

- Access and equity considerations:*
- All workers in community services should be aware of access, equity and human rights issues in relation to their own area of work
 - All workers should develop their ability to work in a culturally diverse environment
 - In recognition of particular issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, workers should be aware of cultural, historical and current issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - Assessors and trainers must take into account relevant access and equity issues, in particular relating to factors impacting on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients and communities
- Context of and specific resources for assessment:*
- In cases where the learner does not have the opportunity to cover all relevant aspects in the work environment, the remainder should be assessed through realistic simulations, projects, previous relevant experience or oral questioning on 'What if?' scenarios
 - Assessment of this unit of competence will usually include observation of live relationship counselling, oral and/or written questioning on essential knowledge and skills and consideration of required attitudes
 - Where performance is not directly observed and/or is required to be demonstrated over a period of time and/or in a number of workplace settings, any evidence should be authenticated by colleagues, supervisors, clients or other appropriate persons

EVIDENCE GUIDE

Method of assessment

- Observation in the workplace is essential
- Written assignments/projects or questioning should be used to assess knowledge
- Case study and scenario as a basis for discussion of issues and strategies to contribute to best practice
- Counselling skills involving direct client contact are to be assessed *initially* on two occasions in a simulated counselling setting. If successful, further assessment is required during 10 hours actual counselling practice under direct supervision
- The assessment environment should not disadvantage the candidate
- Assessment practices should take into account any relevant language or cultural issues related to Aboriginality, gender or language barriers other than English
- Where the candidate has a disability, reasonable adjustment may be applied during assessment
- Language and literacy demands of the assessment task should not be higher than those of the work role

Range Statement

RANGE STATEMENT

The Range Statement relates to the unit of competency as a whole. It allows for different work environments and situations that may affect performance. Add any essential operating conditions that may be present with training and assessment depending on the work situation, needs of the candidate, accessibility of the item, and local industry and regional contexts.

Assess for domestic and family violence issues may refer to:

- Processes for proactively enquiring about the presence of family domestic violence with the intention of preventing further violence or harm

RANGE STATEMENT

Issues of safety or risk may refer to but are not limited to:

- Being physically hurt and emotionally intimidated, bullied, harassed or controlled
- Threatened with physical harm and emotional intimidation, bullying or harassment
- Harm or threat of harm to children
- Harm or threat of harm to pets and loved ones
- Harm or threat of harm to property
- Inability to fully participate in significant events such as court ordered mediations
- Having residential address known by a person who uses violence against you
- Financial abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Social isolation

Support services may include:

- Crisis intervention services
- Legal or medical services
- Family and domestic violence services
- Child support services
- Culturally specific services
- Accommodation services
- Access to services/information
- Financial services
- Child support agency
- Mediation services
- Living skills and problem solving programs
- Educational programs
- Specialist services
- Mental health services
- Statutory child protection authorities

Engage may include techniques and strategies such as:

- Conversation - non problem-focused
- Discuss self as counsellor in professional manner
- Display respect and non-judgemental attitude
- Distribute time equally between individuals in couple
- Use open questioning in a non threatening manner
- Empathy and rapport

RANGE STATEMENT

Counselling contexts may include:

- Couple therapy including same sex couples therapy
- Separate sessions with individuals in the relationship

Presenting problems may include:

- Pre and post separation issues
- Parenting and agreements
- Sexual relationship issues
- Fertility and/or pregnancy issues
- Intimacy issues
- Grief and loss experienced one or both parties
- Family of origin influences
- Specific issues for same sex couples
- Cross cultural relationships

Questioning techniques may include but are not limited to:

- Questioning to scan relationship web
- Reflexive questioning
- Relational questioning
- Circular questioning

Terminate counselling sessions may include:

- Planned termination of counselling
- Client's decision to terminate the sessions
- Counsellor assesses and identifies issues of concern in a client case where to continue counselling would be unethical and/or place the client and/or others at risk

Interruptions to counselling may include:

- Counsellor illness
- Counsellor planned leave
- Counsellor changes employment
- Interruptions due to organisation change
- Counsellor ceases practice
- Other external factors e.g. client illness, expert recommendations that counselling cease

RANGE STATEMENT

Feedback strategies may include but are not limited to:

- Interviews with colleagues
- Evaluation forms
- Complaints
- Recommendations
- Suggestions
- Focus group work

Unit Sector(s)

Not Applicable