

Appendix D

**NADD Competency Based Direct Support Professional
Certification Program
Letter of Reference Directions**

Instructions to the Applicant: You will need to ask two (2) people to provide you with letters of reference. One person providing the reference should be a person who has received services from you or his or her representative. The second person providing a reference should be a supervisor from your current, or most recent, employment. Ask your Reference Person to go to the NADD Competency-Based Direct Support Professional page on the NADD website and click "Submit a Reference."

Instructions to Reference Person: Please go to the NADD Competency-Based Direct Support Professional page on the NADD website and click "Submit a Reference." You will be asked to provide the following information.

1. How long have you known the applicant and in what context?
2. Please provide a statement about the applicant's ability to work with individuals who have intellectual disability and mental illness. This should include your appraisal of his/her knowledge, skills, values, and level of competency
3. Please describe any other personal qualities and/or professional contributions that distinguish this applicant in providing direct support to individuals who have a dual diagnosis of intellectual disability and mental illness.
4. Please indicate any concerns you may have regarding DSP certification of this individual

Appendix E

Frequently Asked Questions

Certification

Who can become a certified DSP? Who is a

A Direct Support Professional(DSP) is a person whose primary role is to provide day-to-day support to people with disabilities in their homes, at work, at school or in their communities. They may be known by other titles such as support staff, direct care staff, psych tech, personal care attendants, job coach, or para-educators. The DSP certification was developed for DSPs who are ready to demonstrate competence in the area of supporting people with both intellectual disabilities and psychiatric symptoms. If you meet the minimum requirements, you can apply for certification.

Typically, DSPs do not have a clinical license but they may have a degree in a related field. Professionals who have clinical license may wish to apply for Clinical Certification instead.

How much does certification cost?

The certification requires NADD membership and a \$75 application fee. The renewal fee for certification is \$50 every two years.

An individual NADD DSP membership costs \$99. If your organization has a membership, you do not need an individual membership.

Application

What experience in supporting people with both intellectual disabilities and psychiatric symptoms (dual diagnosis) is required?

The equivalent of one year full time experience in either a mental health or a developmental disability setting as a direct support professional is needed. The work may be either in paid positions or a voluntary role. Knowledge of both developmental disability and mental health is needed to pass the test.

Do I need to report my volunteer experience?

No, this is not necessary unless you need the volunteer time to meet the one year minimum work experience requirements. If you have worked for one year or more there is no need to report volunteer experience.

The form asks for educational background. Does formal education matter?

No. You must meet the requirements to be employed by an agency in your community. Most employers require at least a high school diploma or GED. NADD is interested in learning about the background of certified DSPs but does not have any requirements beyond those of the employer. NADD recognizes that expertise is not always linked to formal coursework.

What if I am not currently employed?

If you meet the experience requirements, you do not need to be employed. You will need to get documentation from your previous employer and letters of recommendation from your past employment experiences.

What is the NADSP Code of Ethics? How does it relate to the test?

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) developed a set of ethical guidelines specifically for DSPs that has been shared with NADD. A code of ethics helps guide practitioners in making good choices when faced with competing demands and expectations. It keeps them focused in a positive way on the person being supported.

“The NADSP convened a national panel of DSPs, advocates, families, professionals, and researchers who constructed this code of ethics. Focus groups and surveys regarding the draft language were conducted throughout the country and were integrated to create the final code. This Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a straightforward and relevant ethical guide, shedding some light on the shared path to a self-directed life. It is intended to guide DSPs in resolving ethical dilemmas they face every day and to encourage DSPs to achieve the highest ideals of the profession.”
NADSP Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics should guide the DSP decision-making process. When choosing among alternative courses of action on test questions, the DSP should draw from the Code of Ethics.

Do I need an email address?

Yes. All correspondence regarding the certification process will be sent via e-mail. Provide an e-mail address that you check regularly to assure you get all required information.

How soon after I complete my application can I take the test?

NADD staff will review your application for completeness and to verify that you meet all the prerequisites for certification. Generally this review will be completed in less than a week. When this review has been completed you will be notified by email regarding the testing process.

How long do I have to submit all the material for certification?

12 months from the date you pay the application fee

Testing

How can I study for this?

The DSP credential is based on five critical areas of support. Within each area there are broad areas of competence (called benchmarks). Specific things a DSP should be able to do (called performance indicators) in each broad area are included. A DSP should be very familiar with each of these areas and how to apply them in practices. Services to people with both ID and MI require advanced skill. The benchmarks and performance indicators for each competency area are listed in the manual and can be found on the NADD website. Preparing for an exam on these topics can be accomplished through many different avenues. DSPs may review high quality written materials, take courses, or attend conference presentations. In-service training or other types of self-study will work. Your employer may offer training or support you by providing a mentor, identifying resources, or helping with educational fees. Consider checking with your supervisor regarding these opportunities.

When is the test available?

You can access the test 24/7 from any computer once you have been given access to the test.

If you are having problems accessing the test or have other questions regarding certification, you may contact NADD staff during regular business hours at dspcerts@thenadd.org.

Can the test be taken on any computer?

Yes. The test should be accessible on any computer that has access to the Internet.

I am not good with computers. What computer skills do I need?

You need to be able to navigate the learning dashboard, click on the answer to a multiple-choice question, and advance to the next section.

Are accommodations available for people with disabilities?

Yes. You may contact dspcerts@thenadd.org to discuss accommodations.

What is on the test?

Five short scenarios are each followed by eight multiple-choice questions. Each scenario and set of questions is connected to one of the five competency areas. Questions may relate to specific knowledge or may require selection of a course of action based on the information provided.

What if I want to go back and change an answer during the test?

You can not go back to make changes to any of your responses once they have been submitted.

How long does the test take? Is there a time limit?

There is no time limit. Allow yourself enough time to read 5 scenarios and answer 40 multiple-choice questions. It is anticipated that the test will take approximately 30 - 45 minutes to complete. However, use your past experience with tests to gauge how long it might take you. If you log out completing your test, it will automatically be submitted and your score will be based on the questions completed.

What is a passing score?

You must earn a minimum score of 75% in each competency area.

How long will it take to hear from NADD?

You should receive a response in two business days. If you do not receive a reply, contact NADD for a response.

What happens after I am certified?

A NADD-DSP certification helps you, employers, people supported and their families understand that you care about your work. It lets them know that you are familiar with important aspects of support and have achieved professional certification in this area. This certification is portable. It belongs to you, not your

employer. It is based in critical competencies that all employers and people supported will find valuable. When you complete the test:

- You will be a NADD-DSP. This designation can go on your resume.
- You will receive a certificate. You may include a copy in a professional portfolio or include a copy as an attachment to a job application.
- You will be identified as a NADD-DSP on the NADD website. Potential employers will be able to confirm your certification.
- You will qualify for some discounted training opportunities through NADD.

Employers or others who want to know more about competency areas can review the NADD Competency-Based Direct Support Professional Certification manual.

How do I renew my certification?

You will need to document that you have completed 8 hours of continuing education related to mental wellness and mental health for persons with intellectual or other developmental disabilities every two years.

You need to renew your certification every two years. At that time you will need to submit documentation and pay the renewal fee. NADD will send a reminder but it is your responsibility to renew your certification.

How do I refer to the certification?

NADD-DSP.

What if I don't pass the test?

What if I don't pass?

If you do not pass, you can retake the test after three months. Use this time to study. You do not need to pay additional fees or resubmit your application. You can take the test a total of three times without registering again.

If you retake a test the scenarios and questions will not be the same as the earlier test. There are several scenarios in each competency area. Each competency area has a pool of questions from which your questions will be randomly selected.

If I do not get a passing score because of one competency area do I need to take the entire test over or just that area?

You must retake the entire test.

Appendix F

Sample Test Questions

Arleen is 33 years old and she has been diagnosed with a moderate level of intellectual disability, a seizure disorder, and recurrent episodes of depression. She currently takes generic forms of Tegretol and Prozac. She normally enjoys movies, walking for exercise, socializing with friends, and dining out. She identifies as a practicing Roman Catholic.

- 1) For Arleen, which of the following is least consistent with the concept of wellness?
 - A. Going to a favorite movie
 - B. Enduring the ill-effects of a cold
 - C. Attending Catholic Mass
 - D. Talking to her best friend Consuela

- 2) Arleen recently fell during a seizure and scraped her knee. Which of the following would be the clearest sign that the knee scrape is infected?
 - A. A narrow rim of redness around the scrape
 - B. A dark colored scab over the scrape
 - C. Arleen scratching at the scab
 - D. Pus oozing from the scab

- 3) In checking to see if Arleen is ready to go out to eat, DSP Carla finds Arleen on the floor of her bedroom partially dressed with eyes closed and motionless. What should be DSP Carla's first response of the following?
 - A. Start chest compressions on Arleen
 - B. Turn Arleen on her side since she is having a seizure
 - C. Verbally and physically check Arleen for responsiveness
 - D. Call emergency response (i.e. 911)

- 4) The generic form of Tegretol being taken by Arleen is most likely associated with
- A. Her diagnosed seizure disorder
 - B. Her diagnosed depression
 - C. Her diagnosed intellectual disability
 - D. General health maintenance
- 5) Which of the following would be the best indication that Arleen may be experiencing an episode of depression?
- A. She refused her medications this morning
 - B. She is often sleeping during the day and avoiding activities
 - C. She is having seizures more often than in the past
 - D. She is reporting stomach pain after every meal for the past two days

Therese is 33 year old woman who lives in an apartment with 24 hour support. She has a behavior support plan that lists one of the goals as diminishing self injurious behaviors. The plan states that these behaviors usually involve cutting herself with sharp objects or other self-harm and efforts should be made to assure Therese's safety when she displays self injury. Preventatively, staff are to regularly reflect her feelings for her and help her gain insight into what bothers her.

- 1) When you arrive for your shift, you notice that there are broken CD's in Therese's room and she has scratches with some slight bleeding at her wrists. What is your first course of action?
- A. Notify your supervisor of the incident and ask for the next steps to take
 - B. Fill out an incident report including a detailed description of the wounds
 - C. Ask Therese to see the wounds to make sure they are not serious and to apply necessary treatment
 - D. pick up the broken CD's and remove any other sharp objects
- 2) During your shift, Therese receives a phone call during which you hear her yelling. You hear her hang up the phone then go into the bathroom, slamming the door loudly. What should you do?
- A. Wait five minutes then check on Therese in the bathroom.
 - B. Knock on the bathroom door and ask Therese if she is okay.

- C. Call your supervisor and seek advice.
 - D. Consult with other staff and Therese's record to see if Therese has ever harmed herself in the bathroom in the past.
- 3) Therese gets frustrated in the kitchen one night and manages to break a glass and cut her wrist such that she requires medical attention. What are your next steps?
- A. Provide appropriate immediate first aid, seek out appropriate medical treatment taking necessary information, make arrangements (following her behavior/treatment plan) to evaluate her current intent to continue to harm herself
 - B. Begin talking to Therese about what led her to harm herself, notify your supervisor of the incident, fill out an incident report
 - C. Go through the apartment and put away all sharps, document the incident in the medical record and in an incident report, call the ambulance
 - D. Call the ambulance and your supervisor . Pull the necessary information to send with her on the ambulance. Refuse to talk to Therese in the event that she cut herself in order to gain attention. Clean up the glass in the kitchen. Document the incident both in the medical record and on an incident report.
- 4) At one point after scratching herself repeatedly with a safety pin, Therese tells you that she has had a bad day and that she is mad at everyone. You have determined that Therese has not been injured significantly and that other sharps have been secured. What is your response to Therese?
- A. Leave her alone until she tells you she is ready to talk. It is more important to document well.
 - B. Let her know that her care and want to help her understand and cope better.
 - C. Let her know that she is likely to endanger her placement in the community if she continues these behaviors.
 - D. Look for opportunities to reflect how she is feeling and get her to tell you more about what upset her.

5) Therese is repeatedly stating that she feels like harming herself. She has tried to run into the street in front of cars today and has broken a window seeking glass to cut herself with. Your supervisor has asked that you call the police and have her transported to the local emergency room to have her evaluated for suicidal ideation. After calling the police, what is your next step?

- A. Gather her emergency contacts and medication list. Gather up clothing for a few days at the hospital.
- B. Determine which staff can go with her to the emergency room and begin documenting the incident in records and incident report
- C. Begin calling Therese's emergency contacts to notify them that she is being admitted to the hospital
- D. Gather necessary information for the evaluation including info in a) and current and historic behavior information.

Answers

Answers to Arleen scenario questions:

- 1. B
- 2. D
- 3. C
- 4. A
- 5. B

Answers to Therese scenario questions:

- 1. C
- 2. B
- 3. A
- 4. D
- 5. D