

Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies

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Interest Group on
Para Professionals
in the Social
Service Workforce

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Preface

This document represents the work of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Interest Group on Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce (IGPP) co-chaired by Nathan Linsk and Zeni Thumbadoo. To see the names of the many people involved in developing this document, please refer to the acknowledgments section. As a global network, we bring people together to advance knowledge and identify new solutions to social service workforce challenges.

The social service workforce is critical to supporting the healthy development and well-being of children and families. The workforce is a vital element of strong social service systems and delivery of quality services. Those working at the community level are often para professionals, utilizing their knowledge of the context and culture of their communities to support the most vulnerable. However, these workers often fall outside of an organized social service system. Most countries do not have a way to count the number of community level volunteers or ensure the consistency and quality of their training, supervision and remuneration.

The work of the IGPP aims to bring more support and recognition to para professional social service workers in the hopes of filling some of these gaps. The group developed a set of guiding principles for working with para professionals to form a base from which to develop programs and activities related to how these workers can be trained, developed, deployed and supported. The group also decided that an important contribution to this area of work would be the development of a competency framework for para professionals that would outline the functions and competencies of para professionals and could be used to provide program guidance, accountability and ultimately inform both training and supervision.

This document presents those two tools, which have evolved out of much discussion and input from the many members of the IGPP and others over the past year. Initial drafts were presented and discussed at conferences in the Philippines and South Africa. The IGPP has supported two validation exercises in Kenya and Uganda with four groups of para professional social service workers and their supervisors.

We should note that even given this extensive initial input, this document is in its first edition. Its continued improvement relies on each of you who reads it, uses it or references it. Our hope is that you will let us know ways in which it can become more relevant, more applicable to different contexts and more useful. A subsequent second edition will be produced in the near future based on your feedback.

Thank you to those who have spent considerable time contributing to the development of this document and to those who will do so for future editions.

Amy Bess
Coordinator, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

A. Introduction and Overview

Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, especially children and their families, is a compelling issue throughout the world, and is magnified in lower resource countries where there are rarely sufficiently financed, developed and staffed social welfare systems. Many governmental, non-governmental and specialized programs have used community-based workers to provide direct support to vulnerable people and their families. Communities benefit by receiving support from people in their own communities who are adept at the community and cultural context. These workers also often augment other social service programs, which may not be fully developed, accessible or have sufficient staff. Community level workers, often para professionals, serve in a variety of roles and carry out various functions. They may be generalists or may be tied to specific social service disciplines, such as social workers, child and youth care workers, or community developers.

This document represents a year of work by members of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance Interest Group on Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce. The document outlines a set of guiding principles for utilizing para professionals as well as delineating functions and competencies for para professionals to be used in implementing practice programs and training programs.

Background

The **social service workforce** (SSW) can be broadly defined as a variety of workers, paid and unpaid, professional and para professional, governmental and nongovernmental, which make the social service system function, and contribute to promoting the rights and ensuring the care, support and protection of vulnerable groups, especially children.

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance was established in June 2013 as a result of a November 2010 conference on social service workforce strengthening funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The conference brought together country teams from 18 countries to identify strategies to strengthen the social welfare workforce. Attendees recommended the formation of a network that would serve as a convener, advance knowledge, and advocate for changes to better support the social service workforce. The Alliance was launched with a vision to work toward a world where a well-planned, well-trained and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations. The Alliance's mission is to promote the knowledge and evidence, resources and tools, and political will and action needed to address key social service workforce challenges, especially within low- to middle-income countries.

The Alliance consists of individuals with various organizational relationships. The Alliance maintains a Secretariat and a Steering Committee that oversees all activities. With few exceptions, the Alliance functions through volunteer input of its members and leadership.

This includes members who engage in Alliance Interest Groups to work on specific topics and projects. Two interest groups have been developed:



- Interest Group on **Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce** (See below)
- Interest Group on **Building the Evidence Base for Social Service Workforce Strengthening**

Who are Para Professionals in the Social Services?

Until now, there has been no agreed upon and recognized definition for para professional social service workers at either the global or national level. This is especially true within the African context, where a range of different kinds of para professionals have rapidly been trained and deployed to fill existing gaps of professional social service workers.

The term *para professional* refers to someone who is typically not university educated (i.e., does not have a degree in the social service field). Para professionals take on a myriad of titles and roles within the larger social welfare system (Davis, 2009; Bess, Lopez & Tomaszewski, 2011; Mendenhall, 2012; Mwansa, 2012). They work under supervision of professionals in various fields and may be trained to help make decisions about services and supports. More detailed definitions for para professionals as well as the disciplines they relate to can be found in the glossary section of this report.

Para professional workers can be paid or volunteer and can work within government structures, as well as in civil society organizations (Linsk, et al., 2012; Mendenhall, 2012). They may be identified as volunteers, community workers or by other names specific to a particular program or function. Where more specific professional categories exist, they may have titles related to these groups, such as para social workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers or social work assistants. Where specialty areas are not present workers may simply be called outreach or community workers. Para professional social service workers receive specialized courses providing foundational skills in basic social service delivery, which can vary by context and need and often consist of a series of short courses and field experiences in order to quickly produce graduates who can begin working with communities in need.

Convening the Interest Group on Para Professionals in the SSW (IGPP)

As the Alliance launched and members joined, one of the most prominent areas of interest amongst the membership was around the issue of community level workers. The Interest Group on Para Professionals in the SSW (IGPP) was announced in September 2013 and has been open to all members of the Alliance. Zeni Thumbadoo, National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers in South Africa, and Nathan Linsk, PhD, University of Illinois at Chicago, co-facilitate the group. Currently there are more than 30 member participants who represent seven countries from North America, Europe and Africa.

The group's activities include conference calls, development and review of materials, and various types of resource sharing. Initially the members participated in a survey to highlight key issues that they felt needed attention.

The IGPP identified a number of areas to address. These included sharing of experiences and

resources across countries, both in terms of programs and education and training activities. The group developed a set of guiding principles for working with para professionals, drawing on the input from a survey. The group also decided that an important contribution to this area of work would be the development of a competency framework for para professionals that would also outline the functions of para professionals and could be used to provide program guidance, accountability and ultimately inform both training and supervision.

Development of Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies

Members of the IGPP identified key guiding principles for para professionals serving communities in the social service workforce. An iterative process was used to obtain input and refine the guiding principles as they appear in this document. The principles are intended to provide guidance for how a para professional would typically work as a direct care worker in the social service sector next to or supporting the work of a professional in the same field.

Using a similar process, the IGPP singled out key functions of para professional social service workers. Initially these focused on community level para professionals identified with social work, child and youth care work or community development. However after consulting with the Alliance Steering Committee, we understood that focusing on specific fields within the social service workforce was premature and there was a need for a set of generic/core functions and competencies that would apply or cut across a variety of workers including those in areas where these professions are not developed or available. These cross-cutting functions and competencies are referred to as generic/core and may be applicable in various contexts.

These functions and competencies have received several levels of review to date and are being validated by para professionals and their supervisors in several contexts.

In the case of para professional Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs), a more specific set of functions and competencies has been further developed at two levels. The IGPP is in the process of developing specific functions and competencies for other groups as well, including para social workers and para professional community development workers.

Using the Principles, Functions and Competencies

We are eager to learn about any efforts to use or adapt these principles, functions and competencies. Please register your use of these materials and keep us up-to-date about changes made, results, and comments by e-mail (contact@socialserviceworkforce.org).

Joining the Interest Group on Para Professionals in the SSW

The IGPP is an open group which you can join, after becoming a member of the Alliance, to participate and share your experience working with para professionals in the social service workforce as well as help develop these and future materials. Please visit www.socialserviceworkforce.org, join as a member, and then once signed in as a member, click on "Interest Groups" under the "Get Involved" tab to subscribe to the IGPP.

B. Glossary

Allied worker – Professional or para professional involved in sectors such as education, health or justice who have a role to play in social service workforce. Examples include parole officers, health extension workers and early childhood educators. *Source:*

www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/composition-social-service-workforce-hiv/aidsaffected-contexts

Competency – Measurable practice behavior that is comprised of knowledge, values and skills. *Source: Council of Social Work Education's Educational Policy 2.1—Core Competencies*

<http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=41861>

Child and Youth Care – Professional Child and Youth Care practice focuses on the infant, child and adolescent, both normal and with special needs, within the context of the family, the community and the life span. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and the physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings. Child and Youth Care practice includes skills in assessing client and program needs; designing and implementing programs and planned environments; integrating developmental, preventive and therapeutic requirements into the life-space; contributing to the development of knowledge and professions; and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation and advocacy. *Source: International Child and Youth Care Definition, adopted at 1992 meeting of the International Child and Youth Care Education Consortium.*

Child and Youth Care Worker – A professional practitioner who promotes the optimal development of children, youth and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centres, rehabilitation programs, paediatric health care and juvenile justice programs. *Source: International Child and Youth Care Definition, adopted at 1992 meeting of the International Child and Youth Care Education Consortium.*

Anglin (2001) simplifies the international definition referred to above in the following description of child and youth care work: Child and youth care is work with children and youth, as whole persons, in order to promote their social competence and healthy development, by participating in and using their day-to-day environments and life experiences, and through the development of therapeutic relationships, most importantly the relationship with the particular child or youth who is the focus of attention. (The word 'therapeutic' is taken to mean 'having healing or curative powers; gradually or methodically ameliorative').

Para professional – The term "para" is defined as "next to" or "alongside of." The para professional would typically work next to or support the work of a professional in the same field. A para professional worker is trained to perform certain functions, but not always legally certified or licensed to practice as a full professional, which in some fields requires college or university degrees or specialized training (see Professional below). *Source:* Adapted from www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/composition-social-service-workforce-

[hivaidsaffected-contexts](#)

Para Social Worker – A supervised para professional staff person or volunteer – often community based – who serves the needs of vulnerable individuals including children and families, particularly where social welfare systems are underdeveloped or severely stretched. *Source: Adapted from Linsk, et al., Building the social welfare workforce through para social work, 20102 used by PEPFAR in defining Para Social Work as an indicator.*

Professional – Typically denotes membership in a profession that is well recognized, often for the specific degree or level of education that it requires, a particular ethical or moral code of conduct, and/or licensing or certification to practice. Among social service workers, refers to those workers with at least a bachelor’s degree in a field directly related to social services, such as social work. *Source: www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/composition-social-service-workforcehivaids-affected-contexts*

Social service – Services provided by public or private organizations aimed at addressing the needs and problems of the most vulnerable populations, including those stemming from violence, family breakdown, homelessness, substance abuse, immigration, disability and old age. *Source: Better Care Network Toolkit. www.bettercarenetwork.org/bcn/toolkit*

Social service workforce – Describes a variety of workers—paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental—who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations. *Source: The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. www.socialserviceworkforce.org/social-service-workforce*

Social work – The International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers revised the international definition of social work in 2014: Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. *Source: The International Federation of Social Workers. <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work>*

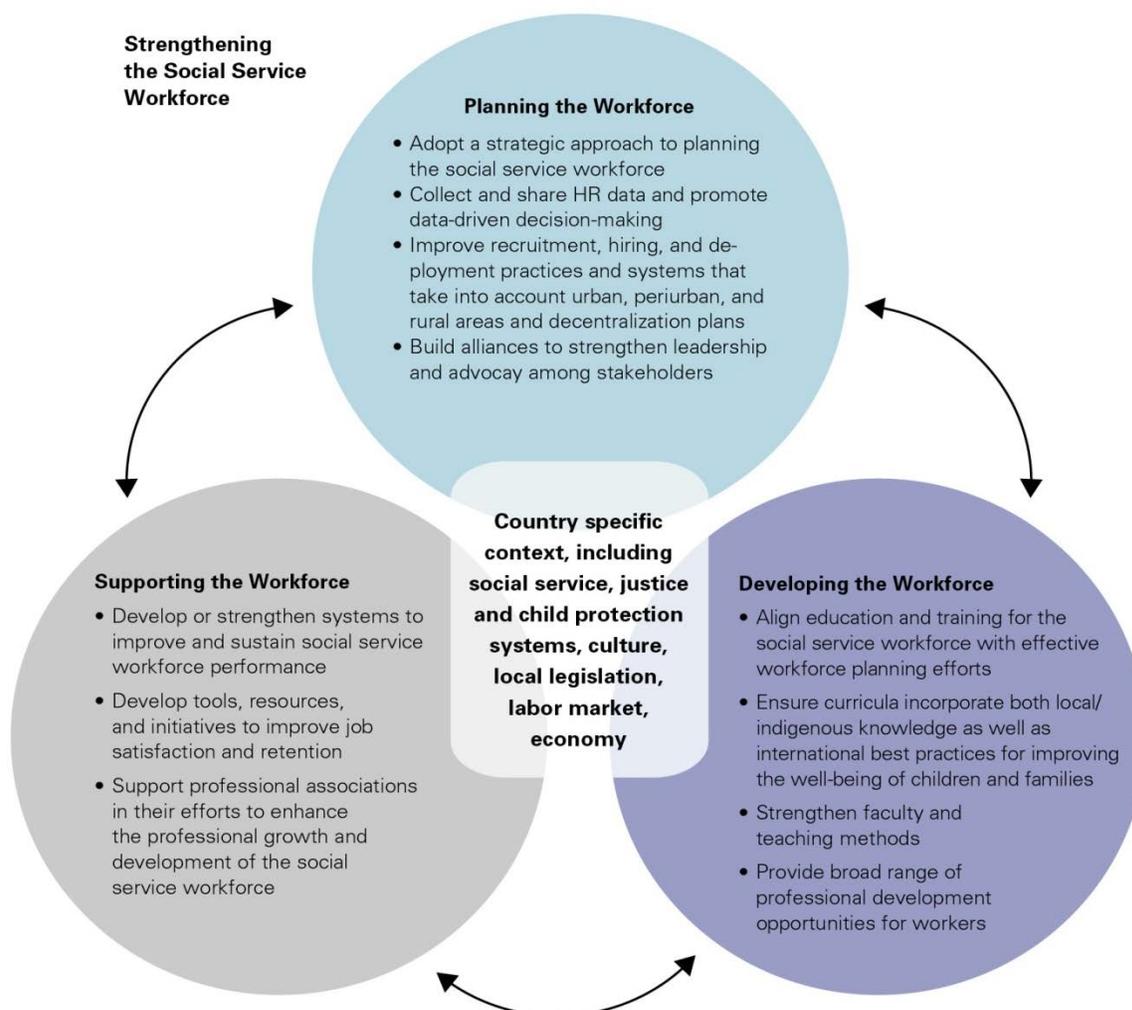
Social worker – Graduate of a school of social work who uses his/her knowledge and skills to provide social services for clients (who may be individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations or society in general). Social workers help people increase their capacities for problem solving and coping, and they help them obtain needed resources, facilitate interactions between individuals and between people and their environments, make organizations responsible to people, and influence social policies. Social workers may work directly with clients addressing individual, family and community issues, or they may work at a systems level on regulations and policy development, or as administrators and planners of large social service systems. *Source: Barker, 2003, cited in <http://www.naswdc.org/practice/intl/definitions.asp>*



C. Guiding Principles for the Development of Para Professional Social Service Workers

The purpose of this section is to provide a set of principles that will be a useful base from which to develop programs and activities related to how social service para professionals can be trained, developed, deployed and supported. Social service para professionals play a critical role in helping vulnerable groups including children and their families as part of governmental, non-governmental, private sector and local responses. A para professional would typically work as a direct care worker in the social service sector supporting the work of a professional in the same field and receive supervision from the professional. Given that the social service workforce is conceptualized as an inclusive concept, these workers may be related to various professional groups, e.g., social work, child and youth care work or community development, among others.

Figure 1: Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce



Overarching Principles

1. The para professional social service workforce should receive recognition by their peers, the broader professional social services workforce, civil society, as well as organs of state. This should be underpinned by a certification process and the development of policies and procedures that documents the competencies, functions and occupational standards developed. This should encompass general as well as contextual competencies, functions and occupational standards – taking the specific context of a country into consideration.
2. The strengths perspective, which views the wisdom, assets and knowledge of individuals, groups and communities as potential resources, should be at the core of the competencies being sought for para professional social service workers.
3. Para professional social service activities should respect and incorporate knowledge of community and familial cultural contexts to sustain equity for diverse groups incorporating understanding and commitment to ethical principles.

Principles Related to Planning the Workforce

4. Clear descriptions of functions, roles and the skills necessary to fulfil the responsibilities at each level in each field should be outlined in job descriptions.
5. While definitions and job descriptions concerning para professional social service workers may vary between countries and programs all should meet some minimum functional definitions and standards.
6. Employment opportunities, inside and outside of government, should be developed. Public-private partnerships need to be actively sought to facilitate the absorption of new graduates of training programs, with positions already approved in the schema of services offered.
7. Opportunities for research that can demonstrate the impact of para professional social service workers need to be identified, promoted and utilized.

Principles Related to Developing the Workforce

8. A career ladder should be accessible to all social service para professionals. It should be underpinned by further education where credit for prior training and work experience is given, and which leads to professional advancement. This includes the ability to take on higher level roles and increased salaries when demonstrating the necessary abilities and competencies.
9. A “lattice” approach should enable para-professionals to shift focus laterally across professional areas as well as vertically up the career ladder, so that they can realize their interest and talents for on-going professional growth.
10. Training that addresses core specified learning outcomes within the context of standardized and regularly updated curricula should be provided for para professionals. Training should be framed in courses that can be used as stepping stones/career ladders through the advancement of their education. Training should culminate in the awarding of certificates.

11. Recognition should be given to the fact that when a para professional worker attains a higher level of education or progresses to a more advanced level of social service work, this is a positive outcome. However programs need to take into account the need for follow-up, refresher courses and training to replace workers who were thus promoted.

12. Opportunities for training and deployment of para-social service workers should, as far as possible, be situated in their places of residence or as close as possible to the ward/villages where they come from.

13. An adult-learning approach, which is participatory and problem-solving-oriented, should be taken in all training of para professional social service workers.

14. As a core strategy, training should incorporate indigenous knowledge and approaches and be adapted to specific national and cultural contexts.

Principles Related to Supporting the Workforce

15. Retaining competent and trained para professionals at the community level to support the development of effective services where they are most needed (proximate to the children, families and communities they are to serve) should be a key objective of the development and support for a para professional social service workforce.

16. Appropriate incentives and compensation should be given to para professionals for the work they are doing as well as to help them sustain their work over time. All para professional social service providers - whether volunteering or being compensated - need to be provided with basic materials and wherever possible, refunded for expenses such as transportation. Minimum remuneration levels should be established for different types and levels of para professional work, recognizing the skills, knowledge and effort involved in undertaking the work and allowing for a basic decent level of living for the workers and their dependents.

17. All para professionals should work under supervision of qualified para professionals or professionals. Supervision and support mechanisms should be put in place in order to support para professional social service workers in their work and for their personal and professional growth. Innovative approaches to supervision and support including job sharing and shadowing should be considered. This will also create stronger and more positive linkages between para professional and professional social service workers. Supervision also helps to ensure that the practice and performance of para professionals stays within any policy or legislative framework that clarifies roles and responsibilities and guarantees accountability and rights.

18. Para professionals require specific provisions for support and care and encouraging self-care to empower and sustain them in their work. They often come from the very communities that they work in and provide services in difficult conditions that could threaten both their well-being and the sustainability of their services. It is imperative that mechanisms for support, management, supervision and empowerment are established to ensure social connectedness and that these mechanisms and relevant wellness programs are appropriately planned and financed.

D. Generic/Core Functions and Competencies for Para Professionals in the Social Services

While community level workers provide an array of social services in various countries across the globe, the functions and activities of these workers are not well described or delineated within or across countries. Training, credentialing, supervision and evaluation of para professional community social services vary as well based on local context, the existence or lack of formal social services or social welfare structures as well as the professional and local cultural stance on how vulnerable people are to be supported and helped. The focus is often upon vulnerable children but may apply to other vulnerable populations as well, such as elderly, disabled, people with mental health issues, among others.

A number of professional fields of practice have deployed community level para professionals as a way to support vulnerable groups as well as a way to fill gaps in the social service workforce. These include social work, child and youth care work and community development, among others.

The purpose of this section is to provide a set of functions and competencies that will be useful in more clearly defining the work of this cadre. The framework can then be used toward the development of service and training programs for para professionals working as direct care workers in the social service sector. These functions and competencies should serve as a useful base to develop such programs; however, they will always need to be supplemented by functional areas and competencies specific to the context or discipline related to those served by the para professional workers.

The functions and competencies are generic in that they may apply to most para professional cadres, but at the same time not all para professionals are expected to need all of these competencies. Specific groups (e.g., Child and Youth Care Workers, Para Social Workers) may have more specialized functions and competencies that can be combined with these generic functions and competencies in training and service programs.

These functions may be viewed as a "menu" of competencies that may be helpful in developing service programs as well as training and supervising workers who do this work. They may be useful as well in developing credentialing or qualifying descriptions of these workers, including job descriptions, scopes of work or schemes of service. Potentially they may also be used to ensure ethical practice and enforce related laws and professional standards that relate to para professionals practicing in these fields.

The document presents eight overall functional areas as follows:

1. Communication skills
2. Direct work with children, youth and families
3. Applies knowledge related to client needs
4. Community work



5. Collaboration skills
6. Organization and leadership
7. Monitoring and evaluation
8. Developing self and others

Each functional area is divided into a series of specific para professional functional areas that provide more detail about areas of work for para professional social service. Practice competencies are specific expected abilities that a worker may use in their work; these competencies can be used to develop or evaluate their skills and may be a part of a work description. Training competencies can be used to develop training objectives and evaluate training success.

Function # 1: Communication Skills

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professionals Training Competencies
<p>Communicating with families and other workers in the unique cultural context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows cultural competency through the correct use of body language, greetings and who is addressed first (protocol) • Understands ethical values and cultural practices of the local community and uses this understanding to facilitate effective communication • Gathers, conveys, and receives information, along with completing assigned written information under direct supervision • Communicates child protection, violence and abuse messages effectively to families and groups • Uses child/client friendly basic communication methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates cultural competency in various settings, especially related to the local context • Demonstrates ethical values at the community level • Demonstrates clear, concise and correct verbal and written communication • Demonstrates basic listening and responding skills • Demonstrates the use of child-friendly communication methods • Explains how communication with children differs from adults • Demonstrates ability to promptly and appropriately following instructions • Demonstrates ability to communicate regarding available services
<p>Engaging client and family members in discussions about services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops rapport with the adults and children/young persons • Knows what services are available in the community • Has basic knowledge of social protection and social insurance programs available to support child well-being, including particularly vulnerable populations, and how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to engage client and family • Demonstrates ways to facilitate child participation in the process • Demonstrates understanding of dynamic of power relations and its impact on the engagement process and ethical/safe

	<p>to access to these services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Builds goodwill and confidence• Knows what resources are available in the community	<p>participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to describe available services in the community• Can identify key social protection programs and criteria for receiving resources available in the community
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Function # 2: Direct work with children, youth and families

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professionals Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
<p>Facilitating psychosocial assessment of needs and strengths of clients and families, including health, social protection and basic social service concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows an approved assessment protocol to identify household or individual assets and strengths, as well as gaps or needs • Identifies concerns (needs) and strengths of client and family members • Assists clients to prioritize needs and identify potential support sources, both formal and informal • Makes use of basic questionnaires, recording forms, and observation tools • Educates and empowers households to demand for services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates use of assessment indicators and range of potential supportive actions • Demonstrates ability to use assessment tools to gather relevant information to plan services for client and family • Demonstrates ability to follow instructions for the approved assessment and care-planning protocol without making unsubstantiated promises, but with honesty, dignity and respect for all parties concerned • Able to provide information obtained in a timely manner for data-entry and approval of the assessment and recommended actions • Knows what to record, when and how

<p>Participating in development of basic service plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves clients and families in decision making regarding a plan of action to address needs • Develops a recommended service plan with recommended actions and/or support • Identifies specific country local government body for provision of services at local level • Manages emergency cases • Provides referrals to other service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to identify a problem list linked to assessment findings • Demonstrates ability to identify strengths and assets linked to assessment findings • Can suggest appropriate services or supports, to fit each of the problem areas, in consultation with supervisor • Able to engage client and family in selecting services/interventions • Demonstrates ability to link planned interventions in a recorded plan of service/care • Demonstrates ability to use specific country's government and non-governmental resources in the provision of services to clients at local (i.e. village and ward) levels • Demonstrates ability to provide referral services to clients to other service providers
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<p>Providing supportive counseling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides supportive counseling to individuals at risk, their family members or members of the community • Identifies the need for consultation from supervisors or colleagues who can provide support on counseling issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates empathy and understanding of client’s feelings and situation • Demonstrates ability to motivate the client to take action that will generate an improvement in his/her situation and an increase in self-advocacy skills • Able to indicate issues that the worker feels competent to handle with supervisory support • Able to explain how to make referrals for those issues that exceed the worker’s competency
<p>Providing support, referrals and information about other services as needed, ranging from basic needs such as housing and food to psycho-social support services, including acute mental health needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers clients to resources and provides follow-up, based on identified needs or gaps • Assists families to select and access available programs/resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates use of appropriate referral format and procedures, including follow-up • Demonstrates basic support skills consistent with psychological first aid –including empathetic listening and non-judgmental communication skills • Demonstrates ability to conduct referral processes • Can document referral and linkages

<p>Implementing and coordinating related referrals and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggests alternatives when a planned course of action is not working/or is slow paced • Implements an approved service plan/interventions • Provides guidance, information, and one-on-one support to address gaps in service and meet needs • Supports client/families to obtain appropriate legal/administrative documentation needed to access available social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to explain how to implement aspects of the service plan within the worker's competence, vis-a-vis identified needs or gaps in service. • Can regularly observing and communicating individual or family conditions (status) , including any changes or additional recommendations for action • Can explain legal and statutory requirements related to specific services and referral guidelines
<p>Documenting assessments and services provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices basic record keeping including principals of record keeping • Identifies results of services • Assesses what is working in the service plan or intervention • Conducts ongoing monitoring of individual and/or family conditions to determine change, benefit, or need to modify services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to explain and demonstrate use of the reporting system of the specific country • Demonstrates ability to record and document using acceptable forms and write-ups • Can assess service progress or gaps

Function # 3: Applies knowledge related to client needs

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
Applying basic knowledge of child/human development and psychosocial well-being to individuals and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the need for psychosocial support and coping skills among clients • Provides and promotes good psychosocial functioning in response to a specific loss, trauma, or ongoing stress • Identifies age- and stage-related issues as they apply to the client's behavior or needs • Gives practical advice to parents about positive parenting and alternatives to corporal punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates basic understanding of human development that underpins psychosocial functioning • Able to explain the benefits of good psychosocial functioning and how can be this achieved to clients • Able to explain the basics of the stages of development • Demonstrates basic understanding of positive practices in children's care, including the role of families in child development and well-being • Able to explain parenting style in relation to cultural values and ethics of the community

<p>Applying knowledge of legal and ethical guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes adherence to relevant laws and global standards, e.g., to promote children’s protection and to discourage harmful cultural practices such as FGM and early marriage • Uses knowledge of legal and policy issues related to field of practice • Identifies possible legal or ethical situations and circumstances that may involve violations of national or international laws related to child protection • Seeks consultation regarding legal or ethical situations • Helps client(s) seek legal or advocacy resolution as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates knowledge of relevant legislation and ethics related to services provided • Demonstrates commitment to values and philosophies underpinning work in the sector • Demonstrates ethical conduct when working with clients at community levels • Able to identify needs for legal or advocacy intervention • Able to describe how to engage in legal- or policy-related actions on client’s behalf • Can explain how to help clients decide on course of action due to legal or ethical concerns • Able to describe how to access needed consultation on legal or ethical issues from supervisors or others
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<p>Applying knowledge of the rights of child, young people, families and other vulnerable groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses knowledge of rights of children and other vulnerable populations including international guidelines/conventions and country specific rights protections (constitutional, laws and policies) • Participates in the promotion and upholding of the rights of children and other vulnerable populations • Uses knowledge regarding indicators of rights violations • Promotes gender issues in decision-making • Uses knowledge about issues impeding enjoyment of rights among marginalized groups as well as advocacy skills • Advocates in collaboration with clients from non-dominant groups for their full rights to ensure inclusion and participation in community-based activities and services • Engages in conversation with children, youth and families about human rights and responsibilities using everyday examples • Using child-friendly language, asks direct open-ended questions to children and youth when making decisions that affects them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to state specific rights of children and other vulnerable populations they serve • Demonstrates ability to address various laws that protect the child and their family • Demonstrates knowledge of specific actions that a para professional can take to protect rights of children and other vulnerable populations • Able to specify indicators that a child or other vulnerable person's rights are potentially being violated • Demonstrates ability to include gender issues in decision making at family and community levels • Explains knowledge of the different regional and internationally sanctioned human rights
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<p>Promoting participation in decision-making by the children, young people, families and other vulnerable groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotes participation of vulnerable populations in decision making• Ensures that children are not subjected to a reprisal as a result of what they say• Uses age-appropriate methods that allow children to safely express themselves when making decisions that affect them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates ability to use methods that ensure participation of vulnerable groups in decision making at individual and community levels
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<p>Recognizing signs of violence, neglect or abuse and implementing services to ensure social protection of vulnerable children and other populations and taking appropriate action (e.g., counseling, referral)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies potential abuse, neglect, or violence situations • Identifies gaps in existing information, services and resources regarding violence or abuse • Applies basic knowledge on how to promote legal protection on behalf of vulnerable individuals and families • Makes use of community resources to identify family structures and whereabouts. • Links and advocates with legal services, police and health service providers to facilitate emergency response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates understanding of the different types and common causes of violence in the family and in the community as well as domestic violence, abuse, or exploitation • Can recognize signs and symptoms of violence, neglect, and abuse • Can recognize protective and resilience factors in protecting a child and the family • Can describe the emergency procedures to follow when learning of (or suspecting) domestic family violence/ child abuse or exploitation • Demonstrates understanding of specific country referral systems used in abuse and violence cases • Can describe what additional protocol to follow in abuse and violence cases, including procedures for follow-up monitoring and support • Demonstrates awareness of government programs and NGO services
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<p>Addressing the particular needs for support of children with disabilities and parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides assistance and information, under supervision, to parents who have a disability or a child who has a disability • Identifies the different needs for support of children with disabilities and their parents and the availability of community level services to address those needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates basic understanding of the particular needs for support of children with disabilities in terms of access to social services, support for caregivers, etc. • Demonstrates empathy and understanding when communicating about disability-related needs with clients and families • Demonstrates understanding of the challenges faced by children with disabilities • Can provide locally relevant resources for referral • Demonstrates knowledge of different disabilities and how the environment can have an impact on them
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<p>Participating in developing and implementing household economic strengthening and financial support activities, such as income generation, micro-finance, water and sanitation, and health projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under supervision, gathers basic data required to use recognized development tools to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in terms of identifying new, evaluating existing, and implementing possible economic strengthening programs • Conducts assessment of the household members in terms of economic vulnerability • Identifies who could assist in the implementation of the programs • Helps destitute households access available social protection programs including financial or economic assistance • Applies knowledge of community dynamics (market) and how they can influence the choice of enterprise • Identifies types of economic strengthening programs that can be implemented and managed easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to discuss the pros and cons of different kinds of income generating, entrepreneurial and household economic strengthening activities • Able to discuss the basic implementation of programs • Able to use an example to show the stages of development of an economic strengthening program • Demonstrates ability to use developed criteria to assess vulnerability of households and needs
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<p>Applying basic knowledge on home, sanitation, nutrition and hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies issues related to home environment, nutrition, and hygiene that need to be addressed in client situations • Discusses topics related to home safety, nutrition, and hygiene with vulnerable individuals and families and refers to services to assist as needed • Instructs and shares knowledge to ensure that sanitation, nutrition, and hygiene practices are strengthened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a clear understanding of relevant, up-to-date information on home health, sanitation, nutrition and hygiene • Demonstrates a basic knowledge of home, health, sanitation, nutrition, and hygiene, and specific country or organization health and nutrition requirements
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Function # 4: Community Work

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
<p>Conducting outreach and case identification to document status of children and other vulnerable people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies vulnerable populations and child protection issues • Documents and records related to risk and vulnerability • Use pre-designed formats to document status of children and other vulnerable people at risk • Understands the concept of the best interest of a child and methods for making best interest determinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to conduct risk assessments • Demonstrates ability to complete case identification forms • Able to collaborate with others to identify risk and vulnerability • Demonstrates understanding of child development and child rights • Demonstrates ability to contribute to best interest determinations of children • Shows ability to write up and complete forms
<p>Working with community leaders and representatives of different groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops community level responses and action plans to support wellbeing of vulnerable groups and implementation of rights of children and other vulnerable populations • Participates in assessment of social service needs, infrastructure and barriers to accessing them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to work with community leaders • Identifies understanding of community assessments and action plans related to vulnerable groups and how these affect services provided

<p>Ensuring identification and services for children and families at risk of family violence, child abuse, or exploitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses community awareness of domestic, gender, family violence/child abuse or exploitation • Promotes community awareness of domestic, gender-based, and family violence and exploitation issues to enable the community to work towards the prevention of domestic and family violence, child abuse or exploitation. • Identifies community level risks and protective factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can explain methods to raise community awareness of needed child protection interventions and programs • Can explain how to advocate for individual clients and families to intervene or prevent family, gender-based violence and child protection issues • Demonstrates ability to describe legal protections regarding family violence and abuse • Demonstrates understanding of country specific policies with regard to gender-based violence and violence against children • Demonstrates ability to use methods to identify community-level risks and protective factors • Demonstrates understanding of the ways in which information can be gleaned
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<p>Encouraging and supporting community participation in planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates local leadership around ideas and efforts emerging from community members • Participates or leads community meetings using culturally appropriate practices • Encourages clients to participate in community meetings and data collection efforts regarding future planning • Links with local organizations, representation on local community based committees to address vulnerable groups including children, disabled, elderly • Facilitates children's safe participation in decision making and leadership roles • Facilitates and encourages others to mobilize and to find their own solutions • Links with Local Government Authorities to prepare budget projections from lowest level of authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to invite community participation • Demonstrates group facilitation skills
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<p>Disseminating information and policies and programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes use of relevant information systems, such as radio and community notice boards • Makes use of indigenous oral systems of relaying information • Makes use of social and print media as available • Makes use of specific country mode of communication in relation to government reporting system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to discuss what kind of information is best shared using which method of dissemination • Able to discuss different strategic points and methods for information dissemination within the community • Demonstrates understanding of the specific social welfare structure through which all communications on issues related vulnerable children must pass • Demonstrates knowledge of specific country mode of communication in relation to Government reporting system
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Function # 5: Collaboration Skills

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
<p>Working as part of a team with individuals from one's own organization as well as from other community organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts community outreach and communicates with other service providers • Accesses appropriate information and applicable work-related guidelines, policies, and procedures • Identifies relevant stakeholders to involve in helping the client and family • Communicates and collaborates with community and community-level actors • Identifies and accesses available services in collaboration with programs within their organization, as well as outside of their organization • Mobilizes groups or communities for action, as well as mobilizing local resources to support community-wide action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to work in a team • Demonstrates ability to work within the work environment (organizational) rules and regulations • Demonstrates ability to participate in collaborative planning meetings • Able to conduct or participate in case conferences to identify needs and plan services • Demonstrates skills and knowledge in supporting team members to ensure goals are met • Demonstrates personal behavior and relationships with co-workers and/or clients that are consistent with ethical standards, policy, and guidelines • Demonstrates ability to work in an multidisciplinary environment and jointly meet individual, household, and/or community needs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates ability to collaborate with partners within and outside organization• Demonstrates ability to follow procedures to work with groups or communities in mobilizing local resources
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Function # 6: Organization and Leadership

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
<p>Following a time plan developed jointly with supervisor or with a work team consisting of other para professionals who provide peer support to each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows a plan developed individually or jointly with supervisor or work team • Breaks down a given task into smaller sequential steps [a couple of steps may run parallel] • Assigns/suggests time required for each of the sequential steps • Uses leadership skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to develop and follow work plan to accomplish tasks • Demonstrates competence in visualizing various components that will complete a given assignment • Demonstrates ability to use information of estimated time for completion of component steps and work out a realistic time plan with supervisor support • Demonstrates leadership skills and qualities of a good leader

Function # 7: Monitoring and Evaluation

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
Participating in monitoring and evaluation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists supervisor in creation of M&E tools • Provides timely information required for M&E tools and processes • Applies quality standards and participates in quality improvement programs • Utilizes recording and communication tools—may be written reports or use of personal computer, mobile phones, internet, social media, electronic communication • Uses pre-designed formats to capture basic demographical, statistical, and narrative data in the field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to observe and describe grass roots situation vividly from which tools can be created • Demonstrates ability to identify approaches to improve services or programs • Demonstrates ability to use recording methods and tools and understand formats used
Documenting assessments and services provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices basic record keeping • Identifies results of services • Assesses what is working in the care plan or intervention • Conducts ongoing monitoring of the individual and/or family conditions to determine change, benefit, or the need to modify services • Contributes to monitoring systems and data gathering for operational research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to record and document using acceptable forms and write ups • Able to assess service progress or gaps

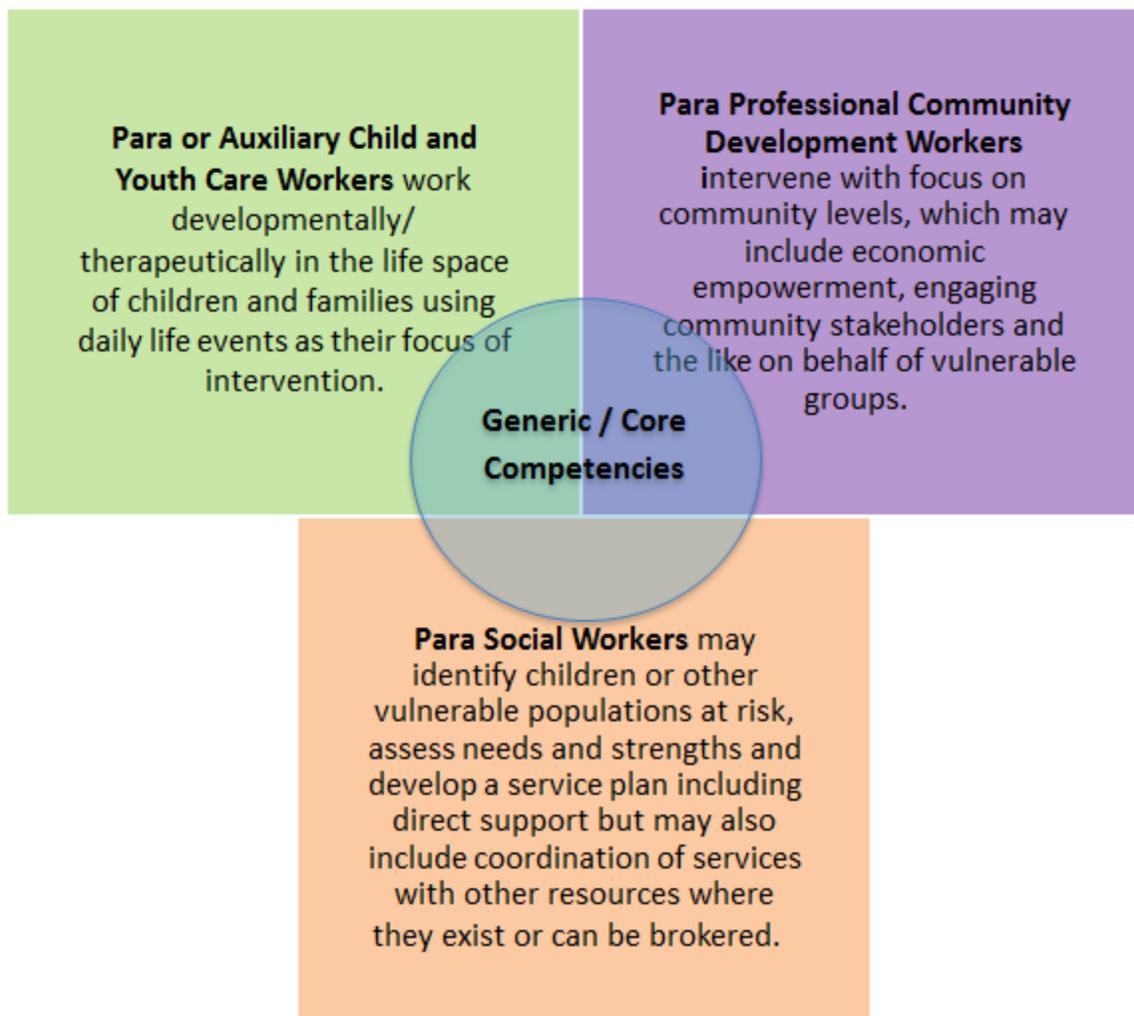
Function # 8: Developing Self and Others

Para Professional Functional Areas	Para Professional Practice Competencies	Para Professional Training Competencies
Identifying future training or learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of skill development needs • Participates in training and personal development opportunities to expand abilities as available • Refers others to learning opportunities as appropriate • Ability to help develop those who work alongside or under them, e.g., other volunteers or staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate ability to identify and access future learning opportunities • Demonstrate ability to work with others and encourage future learning
Identifying and developing needed skills for future development of self and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and documents a plan for future development • Participates in supportive supervision • Participates in performance review or evaluations with supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ability to identify future career opportunities • Demonstrates ability to act on feedback from clients and colleagues • Demonstrates understanding of basic leadership skills (confidence-building) • Can implement an appropriate supervisor/ supervisee relationship

E. Functions and Competencies Related to Specific Para Professional Groups: Example of Child and Youth Care Workers

While the generic/core functions and competencies may be used alone to describe and measure the activities of para professional social service workers, they may also be used to inform or support a specific set of functions and competencies for more specialized groups or a specific discipline. Similarly, the country context or social service structure may inform how these functions and competencies are adapted to develop training programs, service programs, and/or a supervision, monitoring and/or evaluation process. This section will illustrate how functions and competencies created for a specialized group of para professional social service providers—para professional CYCWs—align with the generic/core functions and competencies. We anticipate that as the generic/core competencies are disseminated and utilized, future applications to other groups will emerge, such as community development workers or para social workers per the graphic below.

Figure 2: Example Types of Para Professionals and the Role of Core Competencies



What is a Child and Youth Care Worker (CYCW)?

The child and youth care worker is a unique social service worker, different from social workers and other social service workers like community development workers. In Europe and Scandinavian countries, these workers are called Social Pedagogues. In Canada, USA, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, Zambia and many other countries they are called child and youth care workers. More information on child and youth care work, including journals and academic programs, can be found on CYC-NET (<http://www.cyc-net.org>).

The International Child and Youth Care Education Consortium has defined Child and Youth Care Work (CYCW) as follows:

“Professional child and youth care practice focuses on the infant, child, and adolescent, both normal and with special needs, within the context of the family, the community and the life span. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and the physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings. Child and youth care practice includes skills in assessing client and program needs; designing and implementing programs and planned environments; integrating developmental, preventative and therapeutic requirements into the life-space; contributing to the development of knowledge and practice; and participating in systems intervention through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation and advocacy (Mattingly, 2006).

Anglin (2001) simplifies the international definition referred to above in the following description of child and youth care work:

“Child and youth care is work with children and youth, as whole persons, in order to promote their social competence and healthy development, by participating in and using their day-to-day environments and life experiences, and through the development of therapeutic relationships, most importantly the relationship with the particular child or youth who is the focus of attention. (The word ‘therapeutic’ is taken to mean ‘having healing or curative powers; gradually or methodically ameliorative’)”.

Developing Functions and Competencies for Para Professional CYCWs

The internationally accepted child and youth care competencies for the **professional** CYCW can be found online (<http://www.acycp.org/practice-standards>). The competencies described in this document are designed for the **para professional** CYCW (sometimes referred to as auxiliary CYCW, as in South African policy and legislation). These competencies have been developed at two levels and are different and distinct from the generic/core para social service worker competencies developed that also appear in this document. While the generic/core competencies can apply to specific cadres of workers such as CYCWs, community development workers, and social workers at the para professional level, these professions are unique, may apply these competencies differently and will always also require some competencies that differ. For the CYCW profession, the adaptation of the generic/core competencies and the unique, specialized competencies that apply to para CYCWs alone are described separately. Their division into two tables emphasizes this difference.

Like the generic competencies, these child and youth care work competencies are structured with functions, practice competencies and training competencies. However, different from the generic competencies, they are disaggregated into two levels. Level one refers to workers who receive a basic training of less than one year. Level two refers to workers who receive a basic training of between one and two years. The competencies in this way allow for child and youth care workers to be developed from the grassroots level. It allows for child and youth care training and practice to be developed incrementally and developmentally, with a career ladder in mind. This approach to training and workforce development allows for the articulation of the level one training into level two and hence the incremental development of the para child and youth care worker. This approach to developing the child and youth care workforce is also reflected effectively in both South Africa (www.naccw.org) and Zambia (<https://zaccw.wordpress.com/about/>).

Validating the Para Professional CYCW Functions and Competencies

In order to validate the para professional CYCW competencies, the IGPP sought to test them among workers in the field. The IGPP co-chair identified an opportunity to test the Level One competencies in Kisumu County, Kenya, where a FICE-Kenya (International Federation of Educative Communities) chapter has recently been formed and the need has been recognized to standardize training for and professionalize CYCWs. One of the lead organizations in FICE-Kenya, Make Me Smile, offered to assist with identifying participants for the validation process, namely through the organization of two focus groups and completion of a questionnaire by relevant workers. These activities, particularly the focus groups, proved to be an effective way of learning more about child and youth care work in Kenya and the relevance of the competencies in this context. The para professional child and youth care worker does not yet exist in Kenya and so the validation process can be understood to have focused on supporting the appropriateness and relevance of this category of worker in Kenya, as well as identifying knowledge and skills gaps which would need to be addressed through training should this category of worker be developed. Theresa Wilson, an experienced facilitator, was engaged to moderate and summarize this process.

The information gained through the testing activities highlighted:

- **Need to reformulate the competencies whereby there is a 'macro' competency statement (as currently formulated) followed by more specific and detailed mezzo/micro descriptions.** Many of the concepts used in the para CYCW functions and competencies are specific to the child and youth care profession, and given that none of the participants in Kenya had been trained in child and youth care theory and practice, it was not surprising that some concepts, e.g., working in the moment, were unfamiliar. Explaining each competency in terms of actual behaviors and practices, in other words bringing the competency down from a 'macro' level to a more 'micro' level, was found to be helpful in finding out how relevant and/or important the competency was to the para profession.

- **In future testing, workers could report on how frequently he/she performs the function, how important they think the competency is to responding to the needs of the child/youth/caregiver, and how essential they think the competency is to someone entering the para-profession.** This information could respond more directly to finding out how relevant and/or important the competency is, rather than only providing insight into knowledge/skills gaps and validation of the need for training in these areas.

Following this validation exercise, the para professional competencies for child and youth care work were revised to reflect some of the findings from the testing activities. The process of validating the specific para CYCW functions and competencies was also found useful by participants as it helped to identify a need for additional training in several areas as well as professionalization.

Generic/Core Functions, Practice Competencies and Training Competencies for Para Child and Youth Care Workers

Level 1 (Less than 1 year training – Experiential training that orientates learners to generic core elements in that field)

Level 2 (1 – 2 years training in practice and theory of child and youth care work, including substantial continuous assessment)



PP CYCW Level 1



PP CYCW Level 2

Function # 1: Applying basic communications skills

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Communicates with children and youth at risk during daily interactions through using child and youth care-specific skills</p>	<p>Language and non-verbal communication skills are demonstrated in daily interactions that enrich, teach, and develop a child/youth without disrupting day-to-day interactions</p>	<p>Shows understanding and ability to practice basic child and youth care-specific communication skills in the life-space of young people</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Communicates with children and youth at risk during daily interactions, moments of minor crisis and development through using child and youth care-specific skills</p>	<p>Language and non-verbal communication skills are demonstrated in daily interactions to enrich, teach, develop, assess and counsel a child/young person without disrupting day-to-day interactions</p>	<p>Shows understanding and ability to practice child and youth care-specific communication skills in the life-space of young people as well as for child and youth development and minor crisis management purposes</p>

Function # 2: Applying knowledge of legal and ethical guidelines

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Applies knowledge of code of ethics and basic legal guidelines around non-compliance by fellow team members as well as of process of reporting non-compliance</p>	<p>Works in ways that are consistent with the code of ethics of child and youth care practice</p> <p>Knows when, where and how to report misconduct of co-workers</p>	<p>Demonstrates basic knowledge of working in ways that are consistent with the ethics of the professional field and specific workplace</p> <p>Able to describe the process of reporting misconduct of co-workers</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Applies knowledge of code of ethics and legal guidelines as well as of process of reporting non-compliance</p>	<p>Works in ways that are consistent with the ethics of the professional field and specific workplace with special regard to the impacts on the safety and well-being of the children/youth.</p> <p>Knows when and where and how to report misconduct</p> <p>Works in a manner that respects confidentiality in work with children/youth</p> <p>Maintains appropriate personal boundaries in work with children and youth</p>	<p>Demonstrates knowledge of working in ways that are consistent with the ethics of the professional field and specific workplace with special regard to the impacts on the safety and well-being of the children/youth.</p> <p>Able to describe the process of reporting misconduct</p> <p>Demonstrates understanding of the meaning of confidentiality in the context of risks</p> <p>Able to describe the concept of maintaining personal boundaries</p>

Function # 3: Working with others: teamwork and basic leadership skills

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Participates in a multi-disciplinary team, keeping the well-being and best interests of the child/youth in the forefront of the discussions	Supports team members in the assessment and implementation of routines and activities with children and youth at risk through contributing observations of the child/youth in everyday living situations	Demonstrates knowledge of the importance of team work, its functions and professional boundaries
LEVEL 2: Participates in a multi-disciplinary team keeping the well-being and best interests of the child/youth in the forefront of the discussions	Reports back on observations and basic assessments and discusses with the multi-disciplinary team, making recommendations and following up on actions and decisions taken based these	Knows the dynamics of effective team work, its functions and how to work within and across professional boundaries

Function # 4: Engaging children and families in services

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Engages with parent(s), siblings and other extended family members of children/youth through modelling developmental interactions	Works to improve the quantity and quality of the child/youth’s contact with family members including absent or deceased family members where this is in the best interests of the child/youth	Shows an understanding of the importance of family relationships in the life of a child/youth and demonstrates developmental interactions
LEVEL 2: Engages with parent(s), siblings and other extended family members in understanding the needs of the child/youth and responding in a developmental manner	Respects family functioning and encourages engagement and connection between all family members	Able to explain how to offer support to family members while ensuring the safety of the child/youth

Function # 5: Facilitating child/family assessments and participating in development of basic care plans

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Participates in developmental assessments by contributing a perspective on the well-being and best interests of the child/youth</p>	<p>Provides information through communicating basic but specific information about interactions involving the child/youth in their life-space</p> <p>Engages with the child/youth in the assessment process in a manner that is age-appropriate and minimizes anxiety and fear</p>	<p>Able to explain the purpose of a developmental assessment and Individual Development Plan (IDP) and the information that needs to be provided at this basic paraprofessional level</p> <p>Demonstrates an understanding of the application of a child/youth-friendly approach to the assessment process that reduces fear and anxiety</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Participates in developmental assessments and development of basic care plan and Individual Development Plan (IDP) by contributing a perspective on the well-being and best interests of the child/youth</p>	<p>Conducts basic observation for the purposes of assessment across the dimensions of development as well as the quadrants of the circle of courage</p> <p>Contributes to the development of the basic care plan in consultation with other team members</p>	<p>Can explain the purpose of a developmental assessment and IDP, the information that needs to be provided at this higher paraprofessional level, the components of the IDP and how these are developed</p>

Function # 6: Supportive Counseling

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Makes use of planned and spontaneous life-space moments to create predictable, regular and consistent experiences that lead to growth and development	Implements basic life-space work techniques in order to ensure routines and basic developmental activities take place	Can explain the importance of routines and how these are used to help foster development
LEVEL 2: Provides child and youth care-specific life-space counselling techniques within routine interactions with children, youth and their families to ensure that developmental and basic therapeutic activities take place, under the guidance of a supervisor	Conducts life-space counselling by using techniques such as reflective listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, problem solving, reframing in interactions such as individual conversations, group conversations and other activities	Shows an understanding of basic life-space counselling techniques as well as how and when to apply these. Able to describe different ways in which grief and trauma are expressed by children and their parents and other caregivers

Function #7: Documentation and Contributing to monitoring systems

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Undertakes basic child and youth care work administration such as logging and checklists that document interactions in the life-space as well as basic data relating to services provided	Logs and uses checklists and other data gathering tools consistently and meaningfully	<p>Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of and reason for logging and reporting</p> <p>Shows the ability to implement the relevant tools</p>
LEVEL 2: Observes, records and provides feedback using child and youth care-specific tools in a routine child and youth care work context	Observes, records, analyses and compiles basic reports using both quantitative and qualitative data, gathered through the use of specific child and youth care tools that document life-space interactions	<p>Demonstrates an understanding of the importance of and reason for reporting</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of the tools used, what to focus on and how to synthesize information into a report</p>

Function #8: Applying knowledge of the rights of children and young people and promoting their participation in decision-making

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Promotes and upholds the rights of children and youth and promotes their participation in decision-making	Promotes the rights of children and youth in their daily life-spaces and provide opportunities to make choices	<p>Able to describe the rights of children and youth</p> <p>Able to describe different opportunities where children and youth could make their own choices</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Promotes and upholds the rights of children and youth, both in their life- space and in relation to other role players</p> <p>Promotes children’s participation in decision-making</p>	<p>Promotes the rights of children and youth in their daily life-spaces and through proactive interactions with other role players</p> <p>Provides children and youth with and prepares them for opportunities to make age-appropriate decisions affecting their lives</p> <p>Advocates for children and youth with no or limited voice and creates opportunities for their opinions to be heard</p>	<p>Able to describe the rights of children and youth</p> <p>Able to describe what “age-appropriate decisions” mean and in which ways different opportunities can be used to allow children and youth to participate in decision making</p>

Function # 9: Addressing the needs of disabled children and parents

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Addresses the practical needs of children and youth with disabilities and their parents, within their life- space in order to facilitate healthy development and independence</p>	<p>Under supervision, provides practical assistance and information to parents who have children and youth who are disabled</p>	<p>Demonstrate basic understanding of the needs of children and youth with disabilities in terms of daily functioning</p> <p>Demonstrate empathy and understanding when communicating about the above with parents and other caregivers</p> <p>Provide locally relevant resources for referral</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Plans for and addresses the practical needs of children and youth with disabilities and their caregivers, within their life-space in order to facilitate healthy development and independence</p>	<p>Under supervision, provides practical assistance as well as stimulation and developmentally focused activities in the life-space to children and youth with disabilities</p>	<p>Can explain with examples how to identify that children and youth have different types of developmental disabilities</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of locally relevant resources for referral</p> <p>Demonstrates basic understanding of the needs of children and youth with disabilities in terms of daily functioning as well as how to use daily life-space events to foster development</p> <p>Demonstrates empathy and understanding when communicating about the above with parents and other caregivers</p>

Function # 10: Promoting and running community activities for children to engage them in healthy activity

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Implements play and recreation activities with children/youth individually and in groups	Creates a variety of recreation opportunities such as sports, gardening, reading	Can outline a variety of activities for children /youth, individually and in groups
LEVEL 2: Implements developmental play and recreation activities with children/youth, individually and in groups, in support of their personal and social development	<p>Creates a variety of developmental recreation opportunities such as sports, gardening, reading</p> <p>Ensures full participation of children and youth in design and implementation of all activities</p>	<p>Can outline a wide range of activities with an understanding of how to promote individual development and social skills</p> <p>Demonstrates an understanding of child/youth participation in activity planning</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #1: Providing basic daily and developmental care of children and youth that supports their development

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Provides basic and developmental care of children and youth, using basic life-space practices, as described in CYCW literature</p>	<p>Performs basic tasks and activities which contribute to holistic care and development of the child/youth</p> <p>Demonstrates basic caring skills for children and youth at risk within routines and the life-space</p> <p>Creates a physically and emotionally safe environment</p>	<p>Demonstrates a basic understanding of the fundamentals of child and youth care practice</p> <p>Able to describe and demonstrate the key elements of creating a safe emotional and physical space for children and youth</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Provides basic and developmental care of children and youth where their physical, emotional, spiritual cognitive and social needs are protected, using life-space techniques, as described in the literature</p>	<p>Performs tasks and activities which contribute to holistic and specific care and development of the child/youth</p> <p>Demonstrates basic caring skills for children and youth at risk so as to address their physical, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and social needs</p>	<p>Shows an understanding of the rationale behind care routines in terms of encouraging development and protection as well as the implementation thereof</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #2: Applying basic behavior management with children

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Applies basic behavior management and support techniques in routine child and youth care work contexts within the scope of the child/youth's Individual Development Plan (IDP)</p>	<p>Implements skills such as the use of natural consequences and positive reinforcement as well as diversion.</p> <p>Creates environments that promote positive behavior</p>	<p>Can explain the difference between positive discipline and coercive or punitive practices</p> <p>Can explain the concept of behavior management</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Applies proactive behavior management and support techniques in line with the child/youth's IDP</p>	<p>Proactively uses behavior management techniques in the life-space such as proximity control, diversion, basic de-escalation techniques, and negotiated consequences to address issues highlighted in the child/youth's IDP</p>	<p>Can explain the principle of positive discipline</p> <p>Demonstrates techniques such as proximity control, diversion, basic de-escalation techniques, and negotiated consequences</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #3: Maintaining planned environments in child and youth care work

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Participates in basic maintenance of planned environments which support development in the life-space</p>	<p>Creates a calm, predictable, safe and child/ youth-friendly environment</p>	<p>Demonstrates practical understanding of what is required to plan and create a safe and supportive environment</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Participates in maintaining planned environments to ensure routines and activities support development in the life-space and promote growth and development of the child/youth</p>	<p>Creates a calm, predictable, safe, and child/youth-friendly environment which supports belonging through social spaces, mastery through furniture and fixtures that allow for a child/youth’s size and independence through providing choice</p>	<p>Can explain the connection between space and growth and development by means of practical examples</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #4: Implementing basic life-space work

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Implements basic life-space work practices in order to ensure routines and basic developmental activities take place, under the guidance of a supervisor	Implement everyday activities and routines to help children/youth and their families feel a sense of belonging, learn skills, make choices and care for others	Able to describe routines and activities in the life-space and give basic examples of how these can help children and youth develop
LEVEL 2: Implements specific life-space work within routine interactions with children, youth and their families to ensure that routines, developmental and basic therapeutic activities take place, under the guidance of a supervisor	Under supervision, and based on the child/youth's individual development plans, allocates and adjusts routines, tasks and activities to children, youth and their families, in a way that suits their individual developmental strengths and needs, within the context of individual or group interactions	Shows an understanding that the life-space constitutes the container within which all developmental and therapeutic work takes place Can explain how life-space work can be developmental and therapeutic Can explain the concept of individualized responses to children and youth

CYCW Specialized Function #5: Supporting other workers in their work with specific children at risk

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Helps new staff develop professional boundaries and professional attitudes	Supports self-reflection of new co-workers on unprofessional personal behavior and attitudes	Demonstrates an ability to understand how a child/youth's behavior expresses a need and how to respond to the need as well the behavior
LEVEL 2: Decreases the focus on the worker's feelings and increase awareness of the child's needs	Demonstrates approaches that build resilience and are strength-based	Demonstrates the ability to see behavior as development information

CYCW Specialized Function #6: Providing basic and developmental care of children and youth where their physical, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and social needs are protected

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Provides basic and developmental care of children and youth using basic life-space techniques, as described in CYCW literature	Performs clearly defined basic tasks and activities which contribute to care and development of the child/youth	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the fundamentals of child and youth care practice
LEVEL 2: Provides basic and developmental care of children and youth where their physical, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and social needs are protected, using life-space techniques, as described in CYCW literature	Performs clearly defined tasks and activities which contribute to care and development of the child/youth	<p>Demonstrates knowledge of the application of lifespan developmental theories for application in child and youth care work</p> <p>Demonstrates knowledge of the application of a developmental approach to therapeutic work with children and youth at risk</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #7: Providing assistance with the implementation of programmes and activities for children and youth on the basis of their identified developmental needs

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Provides assistance with the implementation of planned programmes for children and youth within their life-space to stimulate normal development</p>	<p>Under supervision, implements activities in the life-space of children and youth that provide them with choice, practice and repetition</p> <p>Chooses from a variety of activities and individualize activities for the specific child/youth</p>	<p>Demonstrates awareness that activities can stimulate development within child and youth care work</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to choose from a variety of activities and individualize activities for the specific child/youth</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Provides assistance with the implementation of programmes and activities for children and youth on the basis of their identified developmental needs</p>	<p>Implements group and individual development directed activities in child and youth care contexts</p> <p>Creates a variety of choices the suit needs of different children/youth</p>	<p>Demonstrates knowledge of the function of activities within a programme</p> <p>Demonstrates creativity and resourcefulness in developing and identifying activities and programmes for children and youth</p>

CYCW Specialized Function 8: Supports ECD (Early Childhood Development) goals through non-centre based care

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Provides basic intentional stimulation activities for the child in their life-space in order to support early childhood development (ECD) goals	Implements and gives feedback on intentional stimulation activities as discussed with supervisor	List and demonstrate basic intentional stimulation activities that support ECD
LEVEL 2: Implements spontaneous and planned intentional stimulation activities for the child in their life-space in order to support early childhood development (ECD) goals	Implements, observes, assesses, records, makes recommendations and gives feedback on intentional stimulation activities as discussed with supervisor	Shows understanding of basic ECD needs of children and how activities can stimulate their development

CYCW Specialized Function #9: Use of Self

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Shows basic understanding of the use of self in life-space of child and youth care work</p>	<p>Demonstrates basic self-awareness in the use of interpersonal skills with children and youth at risk, and their families in the life-space of the child/youth</p>	<p>Shows awareness of own values, beliefs and values and their potential impact on those with whom they work</p> <p>Demonstrates the ability to see the child/youth's point of view</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Develops self as a resource for child and youth care work, including ability to reflect on personal actions and behavior</p>	<p>Makes use of consultative supervision, training opportunities and personal development and self-care strategies to ensure personal and professional growth and learning</p>	<p>Able to describe the use of relationships as the core of child and youth care work</p> <p>Can explain the Knowledge, Skills and Self model (KSS) and how this applies to life-space interactions</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #10: Maintaining planned environments for children and youth

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
LEVEL 1: Provides assistance with the implementation of planned programmes for children and youth within their life-space to stimulate normal development	Assists with the implementation of planned activities in the life-space	Demonstrates knowledge of the use of activities within child and youth care work
LEVEL 2: Provides assistance with the implementation of planned programmes and activities for children and youth on the basis of their identified developmental needs	Facilitates planned activities and programmes in such a way as to meet the developmental needs of the children/youth	<p>Can explain different types of developmental needs and how activities and programmes can meet these needs</p> <p>Can explain how different activities meet different developmental needs</p>

CYCW Specialized Function #11: Applying basic knowledge of child/human development and basic parenting information to individuals and families

Para Professional CYCW Functional Areas	Para Professional CYCW Practice Competencies	Para Professional CYCW Training Competencies
<p>LEVEL 1: Models and communicate to parents and family good child/youth care approaches</p>	<p>Provides care for children and youth alongside parents, demonstrating and assisting with basic care techniques and activities</p>	<p>Able to describe and give examples of basic good child/youth care approaches to activities and routines</p>
<p>LEVEL 2: Conducts observations, assessments, planning and evaluation using basic knowledge of child and youth development to structure routines and activities in the life-space</p> <p>Provides parents and family members with basic parenting information using different methodologies</p>	<p>Applies basic knowledge of child and youth development during observation and assessment and, under supervision, apply this to planning for, implementing and evaluating activities and routines within the life-space of the child/youth</p> <p>Communicates basic parenting information to caregivers and families, through modelling, life-space counselling and family group conferencing</p>	<p>Demonstrates basic knowledge of lifespan development theories</p> <p>Demonstrates basic knowledge of the developmental approach as it applies to the life-space of children and youth at risk as well as their families</p>

F. Conclusions and Next Steps in Utilizing the Principles, Functions and Competencies

The IGPP recognizes that this document represents a “first edition,” as the guiding principles, generic/core functions and competencies are yet to be applied in a variety of settings. Specific functions and competencies are still to be developed for other specialized groups. Findings from these experiences will need to be addressed in a second edition for future use. At this time, the IGPP has outlined next steps for utilizing the principles, functions and competencies, which include:

- Publishing the Principles, Functions and Competencies in both web-based and written formats and documenting their use
- Promoting the Guiding Principles in planning, developing and supporting the para social service workforce globally
- Field testing and finalizing the generic/core functions, practice and training competencies
- Finalizing the functions, practice and training competencies for para professional CYCWs
- Engaging community development workers, para social workers and other groups in developing and/or finalizing of their specific functions, practice and training competencies
- Consider how these functions and competencies can be incorporated into certification programs that are based within specific country policy frameworks as they develop occupational standards that also help define a career ladder.
- Build on the practice and training competencies described in this document in order to identify, develop and/or apply standards for the training, supervision and support of para professionals using methods such as enhanced supervision, peer review and case management as they apply to specific fields of practice to assure coordinated linkage service and maximize quality.

As part of its focus, the IGPP also encourages members and others in the field to share promising practices and overcome challenges in deploying para professionals. The following are recommendations for how you can contribute to these efforts.

- **Use the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance as a resource for sharing ideas** through webinars, blog postings, interest groups, etc. The Alliance convenes an inclusive, representative network of stakeholders, creating a unique forum for discourse and collective learning on the social service workforce.

- **Advocate with government and civil society organizations** to establish guidelines for para professional functions, competencies and expectations and to utilize para professionals in appropriate roles.
- **Recognize that para professional practice is a first step on a career ladder to professional credentials** and that a para professional seeking out further education or a higher level job is a successful outcome.
- **Collaborate with professional schools** on curriculum, certification and managing infrastructure. This collaboration could be with schools or programs for social work, community or social development work, child and youth care work, etc.
- **Include para professionals as associate members in professional associations** to assist with the development of a professional identity within the larger workforce.
- **Network with other countries who have developed policy and legislative frameworks** to include para professionals in their workforce planning.

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