

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

Professional competencies for the perinatal care in contexts of vulnerability

Coords

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Introduction

The CAPEvFAIR project dedicated the Intellectual Output 5 (from now IO5) to focus on professional competencies. The focus of competencies allows to improve processes, the quality of services and to incorporate new competencies according to the reality and new developments by reviewing action and intervention in context. The present document aim to define the competencies required to carry out the work with women and her children in context of vulnerability during the perinatal period.

To achieve this goal we start to agree a common definition of “**Professional competence**”. According to the reality of the CAPEvFAIR partners, we found employees, paid or voluntary, who play a fundamental role in delivering social attention to the women and her children. Because of that, we agree to inspire in the definition National Occupational Standards of UK (2011, p.8) where professional competence has been used to mean the application of appropriate skills, knowledge, practice and values to work with parents, whether in a paid or unpaid role¹. So, competencies are abilities, knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes that are manifested in observable behaviors in professional practice. We decided to focus on transversal competences (those skills and knowledge that are associated with the development of various areas of professional activity) and specific competences (those technical knowledge and skills that are necessary for a specific function, know and use specific language and use of specific instruments and tools).

Nevertheless, we realize that to develop the competences framework in this field it's needed to go down a level and specify the behavior and resources of the professional to cope with the specific situations of the intervention with women and their children. That is what we called **micro competencies** (from now MC), or in other words, the professional needed skills to cope and resolve with a specific situation of the daily work.

¹ National Occupational Standards. (2011). Lifelong Learning Uk. Work with parents. Available in: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2024/1/work-with-parents-nos-jan-2011.pdf>

Our aspiration is to help professionals to know what they should do, how to do it and apply it in this particular context and try to help them later with training resources. So, the definition of these competences is the key bond to build training program which help people to develop the necessary behavior for performance in the field of perinatal care in the context of vulnerability.

Method to identify the competences

The IO5 has been elaborated through different phases following a process of action research process. It has started from a theoretical model² and it has rebuild to the local and European perspective through a systematic process of reflection with the professionals who accompany women in situation of vulnerability and their children in the perinatal process. The process has been developed all along January 2016 to August 2017 within in-person activities and online work. The following phases describe the process:

1. Approach to transversal and specific competencies from theoretical model. Graphic representation of the competences in a **tree 1**. Initially the starting point include four areas of competencies (Evaluation and intervention procedures, Creating and applying action plans, Building professional frameworks, Interpersonal relations)
2. Group reflection on the theoretical model from a European perspective. As a result the transversal and specific competences were redefined and the tree 1 was modified and we created the **tree 2**. Six areas of competencies were defined: Building professional frameworks, Creating and applying action plans, Evaluation and intervention procedures, Interpersonal relations, Intrapersonal skills, and Theoretical framework.

² Rodrigo, M.J.;...Ochaita, E. (2015). Guía en buenas prácticas de la parentalidad positiva. Madrid: Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias (FEMP) y Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad. (Pg. 27) Available in http://www.observatoriodelainfancia.es/oia/esp/documentos_ficha.aspx?id=4795

3. Validation of the tree 2 competencies' through a qualitative research which aim to identify examples of those competences in a specific service (**R.M. Antaviana**). As a result the competencies where reformulate and enrich each of them with a definition of the transversal and specific competences associate at each area of competencies (i.e. area of intrapersonal competencies: emotional engagement, managing the culture of origin and managing the life history).
4. Looking to a practical approach to build qualified professionals we start to identify MC of the transversal and specific competences in two **Multiplier Event in Barcelona** with expert professionals in the field of vulnerability and perinatalty from social and health services. As a result we've got a first rapprochement of MC arising from professional situations.
5. Description of professional situations to identify MC from a European perspective (**5th learning week**). As a result four areas of competences where defined: Interpersonal relations from a positive perspective; Interpersonal skills; Theoretical framework and assessment process; and Creating and applying action plans from the professional and institutional context.
6. Collaborative working on the definition of MC between the partners and final validation of the competences framework.

The whole process allows to the CAPEvFAIR partners to identify areas of competencies, competencies and MC adjusted to the European Level. Introduce the MC in this IO approach responds to the fact to find practical solutions to cope with the daily work and help to build a comprehensive and useful competences framework. The final result can be seen on the chart 1.

CHART 1. Professional competencies: areas of competencies, competencies and micro-competencies

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS FROM A POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE		
Resonance relationship	Capacity to build the relationship of help as the composition of emotional resonances of the professional facing with the situation (mother, child, father and dyad) in which he/she is involved in his/her work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to detect our affects in order to optimize the diagnosis and the professional intervention. - Ability to recognize and name data from one's own body (heartbeat, sweat) and the data from psychic quality (emotions). - Ability to attribute the meanings of sense and emotional data to one's own story, and to identify resonances helpful to build the relationship of help. - Ability to think and act based on listening to oneself and listening to the other identifying the resonance helpful to the work with the mother and her children, which will then be put into circulation with or without words in accordance with the setting.
Communication	Know how to establish a communication based on the recognition of the mother as a person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to be free of prejudice and to offer the mother a positive look. - Have strategies of verbal and non-verbal communication from the first encounter with the mother and her child and know how to activate them. - Ability to create tools and situations that allow the mother to express and discuss her own perspectives and beliefs. - Ability to share, transmit and discuss with the mother the process of evaluating her child's possible risks. - Be able to active listening to the discourse of the mother, detecting the characteristics that are going to be useful in the process of maternal-filial bonding. - Be able to introduce the child to her mother as a person who can learn to be autonomous. - Be able to give all the necessary information. - Be able to apply different open interviews techniques (like motivation interviews). - Ability to communicate through the use of cultural linguistic mediation setting.

Negotiation	Be able to compose the different perspectives (of the mother, the professional, the institution) in a shared negotiation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know and apply different strategies to achieve agreements. - Know how to transmit different perspectives about the same situation. - Know how to create a climate of trust and respect for the mother to feel confident about herself.
Mediation	Be able to facilitate understanding of the conflict between the mother and other parties, by knowing how to recognize the ongoing power mechanism and adapting the focus of intervention to each particular intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know and apply different strategies to face the conflict. - Be able to facilitate assertive and non-violent communication between two or more parties. - Know how to create a climate of respect between both parties. - Be able to lead and direct the dialogue between the parties so that both feel legitimized and recognized. - Be able to facilitate that both parties reach an agreement that favors to all. - Be aware of the ways in which each professional relate to the dimensions of power starting from one's own gender, geopolitical, institutional belonging when involved in the mediation.
Capacity to legitimate	Be able to help the mother recognize her values and abilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to recognize the potentialities of the mother and the child and to help them to develop them. - Know how to apply strategies that activate the process of empathy of the mother. - Be able to apply different strategies to help the mother recognize and prioritize the needs of her child in front of their own in situations of incompatibility (when their needs and those of their child are different). - Ability to be accessible, receptive and open to respond to the needs of the mother and her child.
Flexibility and creativity	Be able to adapt professional responses based on the situation and needs of the mother and her child in a creative way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to find the right intervention based on the specific needs of the mother and her child. - Be able to adapt the intervention according to the specific needs of the mother and her child. - Be able to apply creative strategies in the professional relationship with the mother and her child. - Know how to differentiate the rhythms of the mother, of the child and of oneself as a professional - Be able to offer the mother creative strategies that favor their relationship with their child, such as the use of the game - Know how to prevent institutional violence.

Stress management	Ability to apply a set of strategies and mechanisms to prevent burn out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know how to identify the source of stress, whether its origin is personal or professional. - Be able to look for mechanisms to manage personal and professional stress. - Be able to cope with stress situations resulting from professional intervention (user, team, institution) - Be able to look for personal care spaces. - Be able to share the stress-generating professional situation with the professional team.
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INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS

Emotional management (Positioning oneself emotionally)	Recognize, identify and regulate the expression of one's emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to recognize our own feelings and emotions that can be different from the ones of the mother and the child (Recognize the differentiation). - Be able to recognize that we have our own representation of maternity or paternity according to our experiences and that this construction can be different for the mother. - Capacity to identify our "femininity" representation, our place as a female, our relation with our body - Be able to give time to the mother but also for oneself. - Know how to regulate emotional proximity in the professional relationship with the mother and her child. - Legitimate one's own capacity to feel alive and to feel emotions.
Positioning oneself culturally	Be able to take into account culture as a key of understanding when analyzing concrete situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to question aspects of one's culture. - Be able to accept and understand the experience of cultural shock. - Capacity to conceive an accompaniment that takes into account multiple dimensions such as the social context, the culture and also legal framework as well as all the different narratives of the people who participate (mother, child, professional, foster care family). - Be culturally sensitive and open: be able to take into account the cultural difference. - Be able to take into account culture as a key of understanding when analyzing concrete situations.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to give a geopolitical, historical, economic and cultural reading in the analysis and understanding of the concrete situation. - Be able to show interest and curiosity in understanding the culture of the mother and her child. - Be able to focus on the mother and her abilities, not on cultural prejudices and myths.
Positioning oneself about my history	Know and understand the elements of our story, so that they might be a resource to be used to the right extent in the professional relationship with the mother and child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to accept the "truth" expressed by the mother during the meetings. - Give as much value to the words and the discourses of the mother as much to the one of the professionals. - Be able to detect and analyse what is at stake for us in the relational dynamics - Know how to stay on the threshold between what a professional knows and what a professional feels. - Know how to recognize the thresholds between oneself history/story and the woman history/story.. - Be able to legitimate one's own capacity to feel. - Be able to remember the words of the woman and her/his own words during the meeting. - Be able to perceive the confusion that the encounter with the woman can generate in the professional. - Be able to recognize the need to be helped by another professional if the degree of confusion is too high.

Commenté [N2]: Please review

Commenté [N1]: History or story? If we want to refers to the interpretation of own history, so "story". In the next chart we also use story. If you agree we can state "story"

Commenté [N3]: Idem

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS / ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Knowledge of models and professional approaches	Focus intervention on the mother and her child in their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to question one's own professional approaches. - Promote the sense of agency (subjective awareness) to help mother to have the sense that it is "I who is acting" and her ownership of action by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Promote the mother to question herself. o Help the mother to understand her situation. o Help to enrich the mother perspective. o Help the mother to find support in their environment. - Be able to active a reflexive way of thinking.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Work in relation of the situation and history of the mother and the child.- Be able to reconsider the story of the mother and child in a perspective of acceptance taking into account their resources and potentialities.- Work in an ecosystemic perspective.
Application of instruments and protocols	Know how to use the instruments and protocols in the intervention with the mother and child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Know how to analyze mother's situation and know all the tools that can be offered.- Be able to choose the right tool for each moment.- Be able to adapt the tools for mother and her child needs and capacities.- Be able to create new tools when it's necessary.- Be able to derive the mother and the child to other services that can attend them.- Be able to recognize that an instrument it's not working and take the necessary measures.- Capacity to share tools or protocols with the other professionals to optimize the intervention.- Introduce instruments and protocols in which the mother can participate.

CREATING AND APPLYING ACTION PLANS/ PROFESSIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Identify needs and abilities together	Ability to identify together (the mother and the professionals) the needs of the mother and of her child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know how to collect and take into account the information received by other professionals and the mother. - Be able to manage different situations with different languages to facilitate the approach to the mother. - Know how to give the mother space to make her comfortable to express her needs. - Know how to collect the same information from different points of view (mother, family, friends, experts).
Intervention focused on the mother, her child in their environment	Ability to build the action plan together (the mother and the professionals) according with the needs of the mother and of her child, their potentialities and their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize the mother in her different roles (she is a woman, she is a teenager, she is a mother, she is a daughter) - Be able to create a pair relationship (horizontal relation) - Be able to allow the mother to place herself in the context - Be able to read with the mother the contexts in which she is involved, and to encourage/improve relationships. - Be able to apply mother empowerment strategies. - Ability to stimulate the development of the mother's ability to freely express her wishes, opinions related with her life and also with the intervention. - Be able to adapt the instruments and protocols of intervention in each situation.
Transformation for change	Work in and with: the organization, the culture of assessment, the continued training, the innovation and processes of institutional change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know the culture of the institution: the mandate, the application of the legislation, the tools, the definitions of users, the professionals' functions. - Be able to critically analyze the services, promoting good practices. - Question the institutional practices in order to propose changes that could better respond to the situation - Discuss with colleagues and heads of service the meaning of the institutional practices. - Take into account interculturality in the institution (the differences in the definition of violence, the concept of protection, motherhood ...). - Know how to work as a team. - Know how to discuss with "the expert user" or "informal expert" documentation and tools for improvement. - Produce and share a documentation of professional work.

Commenté [N4]: Please review.



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be engaged in a dialogue with political institutions in order to produce changes in the normative and institutional framework which takes into account the voice of users and professionals.- Be engaged in a dialogue with political institutions in order to share with them the evolutions of the reality "in the field"- Be able to promote action research in the institution.
Coordination with other services	Be able to create collaborations and synergies with other professionals, services and organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Know the networks and resources (including non-formal ones) in the field- Be able to identify and share among professionals all the resources available for the mother (including the informal support) in order to involve them in the intervention- Be able to be aware of the actions of the service and its limits- Be able to favor a global vision that includes different points of view, not to fragment the history of the mother- Be able to develop a method for working with a professional network (sharing purposes, methods of communication, protocols of action, definition of situations ...)

Conclusions

To conclude we would like to highlight some remarks of this Intellectual Output:

- The resulting competencies and MC respond to the social context in interaction with other sectors such as health. The framework can be understood as the bases to adapt the intervention to the complexity of women during perinatal in vulnerable situations.
- The use of action research methodology conducting during the in-present meetings (i.e. learning weeks, multiplier events, interviews of professionals) and online work have allowed building a proposal framework of competencies and MC within a spiral of validation.
- The research action process itself has allowed participants to develop the reflexive competence and transform their way of looking at and understanding their work. The process also arises the need of discuss the criteria with professionals who work the same situations but from different contexts.
- This collaborative approach, with partners from other EU countries, allows combining the local perspective with the European perspectives, as well as with the different contexts of intervention.
- Having defined the areas of competences, the competences and MC help to build a comprehensive and useful competences framework for develop the training in this specific field it supposes the beginning to improve the professional action and to introduce the best practices approach.



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