

CORE COMPETENCIES IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

A. FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES

1. Relationships

The Forensic Specialist (FS) recognizes and appreciates potential role boundaries with all parties involved in forensic work by demonstrating sensitivity to the welfare, rights, and dignity of others and an ability to relate to individuals, groups and communities in ways that enhance the effectiveness of forensic services provided. The FS is aware of his/her impact on others and maintains a respectful, unbiased attitude toward the examinee, legal system, and those who serve the legal system. The FS knows his/her role, whether serving as evaluator, consultant or treatment provider.

Behavioral anchors include describing how potential role conflicts may be avoided or resolved, describing or demonstrating appropriate responses to direct and cross examination, and demonstrating effective negotiation of conflictual relationships.

2. Individual and cultural diversity

The Forensic Specialist (FS) recognizes and values individual and group differences, diversity, and culture and appreciates their impact in the psycho-legal context. The FS recognizes the effect his/her own cultural worldview and biases may have on professional work. The FS is sensitive to and skillful in working with individuals, groups and communities representative of all aspects of individual and cultural diversity (e.g., ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability status, and special populations). The FS understands how interactions between and among individuals and communities are shaped by diversity variables, and understands and responds to the potential impact an examinee's ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability status may have on the forensic evaluation process.

Behavioral anchors include articulation or case-based demonstration of the impact of one's own individual and cultural diversity characteristics as these influence his/her functioning across competency domains and interpersonal interactions in the psycho-legal context. The need to educate oneself about unfamiliar cultures and subcultures, and the need to address common challenges inherent to working with diverse populations in the forensic arena, is articulated in discussion or demonstrated in past cases.

3. Ethical Legal Standards Policy

The Forensic Specialist (FS) has an advanced knowledge of relevant ethical and legal standards that are intended to guide forensic practice. These include ethical and professional codes, standards, and the Forensic Specialty Guidelines; the law and legal system as they pertain to forensic practice; and applicable statutes, administrative codes, and case law in the FS's jurisdiction of practice.

Behavioral anchors include articulation of legal and ethical standards applicable in particular situations; evidence in practice and professional activities that manifests the relevant ethical

standards; and identification of potential ethical or legal dilemmas when posed, describing ways to manage complex ethical and legal dilemmas in an appropriate manner.

4. Professionalism

The Forensic Specialist (FS) exhibits a professional obligation to obtain and maintain an advanced knowledge and skill level related to the intersection of legal theory, precedent, and procedures with clinical practice, psychological science, and professional ethics. The FS recognizes the distinct differences between the forensic and clinical roles of psychologists. The FS understands how his/her proffered opinions may be used by fact finders and clients and is ready, willing and able to fully explain and document the basis for an opinion offered in a manner that can be reasonably evaluated by decision makers.

Behavioral anchors include articulation of a breadth of legal theory and its intersection with psychological science, and identification and expression of evolving legal precedent and relevant developments in psychological science. The FS demonstrates an awareness of the essential differences between the forensic and clinical roles and produces work in accordance with that awareness. When questioned, the FS shows how his/her opinions are supported by the salient legal issues, facts, scientific theories, and findings. The FS's public representations, websites and work products manifest the elements of professionalism.

5. Reflective Practice/Self-Assessment/Self Care

The Forensic Specialist (FS) engages in ongoing self-reflection and routine assessment of his or her forensic professional practice. The FS practices with personal and professional self-awareness, within the boundaries of professional and forensic competencies, and demonstrates evidence of continued development based on self-reflection, self-assessment, and appropriate self-care.

Behavioral anchors include evidence that the FS reads relevant literature that updates practice, regularly engages in continuing education activities, can articulate recent advances relevant for effective forensic practice, and has consulted colleagues in the course of ordinary forensic practice.

6. Scientific Knowledge and Methods

The Forensic Specialist (FS) articulates a sound scientific basis for practice activities and is knowledgeable about scientific and scholarly developments in the field.

Behavioral anchors include articulation of relevant scientific knowledge when asked to describe the basis for one's practices and opinions.

7. Interdisciplinary Systems

The Forensic Specialist (FS) demonstrates awareness of the relevant knowledge from disciplines outside psychology that are important for forensic practice. Among these are law, psychiatry, sociology, criminology, and psychopharmacology. The FS possesses an understanding of the structure of the legal system and principal precedents, statutes, and regulations.

Behavioral anchors include accurate description of these matters when queried and in work products.

8. Evidence-Based Practice

The Forensic Specialist (FS) bases his/her practice on methods that have evidence regarding their reliability and validity. When methods with less evidence for their known value are used, they are supplemented with evidence-based methods.

Behavioral anchors include evidence of evidence-based methods in the work products of the FS.

B. FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

1. Assessment

The Forensic Specialist (FS) who engages in assessment obtains data from multiple sources using multiple methods to ensure that forensic assessments are comprehensive, non-biased, reliable, valid, and culturally sensitive. The case conceptualization and diagnostic assessment is grounded in science-based theory, research and practice. The FS conducts assessments that may range from the administration and interpretation of standardized tests to behavioral observations and clinical interviews, and uses instruments to test hypotheses relevant to the psycho-legal question. FSs who do not engage in assessment know the value of these assessment practices.

Behavioral anchors include evidence in work products demonstrating attention to the following: appropriate choice of assessment methods/approaches used to address diagnostic issues and/or case formulation; use of methods that are evidence-based; and proficiency in administration, scoring, and interpretation of tests used in work products. The FS is able to clearly explain the rationale for test selection, the strengths and weaknesses of tests used, and the description of test results for the trier of fact. The FS's work products offer a clear expression of assessment information in the written report. The work product shows careful attention is paid to relationships, individual and cultural diversity, ethics and legal foundations, and professional identification as related to assessment. Work products and replies to inquiries clearly convey the limits of diagnosis, assessment and conceptualization for the case, as well as articulation of the uses and empirical limits of relevant assessment methods.

2. Intervention

The Forensic Specialist (FS) knows the value and limits of various interventions typically employed in forensic settings or with persons who appear before courts. The FS appreciates the impact of the forensic setting on therapeutic relationships and goals and is able to apply his/her knowledge of mental health law to interventions in forensic cases. The FS must be proficient in any specific interventions that he/she employs.

Behavioral anchors include articulation of an in-depth understanding of common interventions used with forensic populations and the ability to discuss the rationale for interventions in forensic cases. Recommendations in work products show evidence of that understanding. The FS can

describe the legal and ethical issues regarding interventions in forensic cases and is able to describe strategies for dealing with treatment issues specific to forensic patients.

3. Consultation

The Forensic Specialist (FS) is able to advise attorneys, courts and policy makers regarding matters of mental health related to the FS's area of expertise (e.g., criminal, civil, juvenile). He/she is aware that the role of consultant can conflict with other roles that FSs play and recognizes potential conflicts of interest and threats to objectivity that may result from the adoption of multiple roles.

Behavioral anchors include the ability to articulate a strategy for assessing the questions of a consultee, proposing answers, and assisting the consultee in determining how to apply the solution. The FS is also able to articulate various roles of the FS and potential conflicts or ethical dilemmas that may arise from adopting multiple roles.

4. Research and/or Evaluation

The Forensic Specialist (FS) knows how to determine whether research and scientific procedures used in studies relevant to his/her practice have been employed properly. If the FS is engaged in ongoing research in the forensic arena, the FS applies appropriate research methods to the question at hand.

Behavioral anchors include the ability to analyze the adequacy with which a research study in the FS's area has been conducted. If the FS engages in research, the FS's research demonstrates appropriate research design, use of measures, statistical analyses, and interpretation of the results.

5. Supervision

The Forensic Specialist (FS) is able to translate relevant and current forensic knowledge and skills to provide high-quality supervision and mentoring to trainees and colleagues. The FS recognizes the scope and limits of the role of supervisor within a forensic context.

Behavioral anchors include describing a sound theoretical foundation for the supervisory role; articulating the manner in which that theory is applied in specific supervisory situations; identifying potential ethical conflicts which can arise in the supervisory relationship; and explaining ways in which those conflicts could be resolved. For the FS who regularly engages in supervision, ratings of past supervisory performance offer a behavioral anchor.

6. Teaching

The Forensic Specialist (FS) is able to provide formal didactic instruction regarding his/her area of forensic psychology (e.g., student classrooms, continuing education workshops, public forums). The primary proficiency is the ability to translate forensic psychology so that it can be understood by laypersons, and to communicate that translation adequately in a lecture format.

Behavioral anchors include a demonstration of the ability to organize information, simplify it, and make it accessible to the layperson. For the FS who regularly engages in teaching, student or CE participant ratings of past performance offer a behavioral anchor.

7. Management/Administration

The Forensic Specialist (FS) has a basic understanding of the administrative functions of the organizations, programs or agencies in which the FS works. If the FS plays a management role in those entities, the FS engages in effective and ethical practices in fulfilling that role.

Behavioral anchors include articulation of the administrative functions of one's organization, program or agency, including its connections with other such entities (e.g., courts or mental health agencies). If the FS engages in management and administration, evidence of effectiveness may be demonstrated in documents showing actual productivity, evaluations of one's performance, or descriptions of one's response to problems in management and administration.

8. Advocacy

The Forensic Specialist (FS) recognizes the difference between the role of practitioner and the role of advocate who seeks to have an impact on policy, law, and public reform activities. When the FS engages in activities that publically promote change at the level of institutions, communities or society, he/she engages in activities that advocate for or empower the recipients of the services they provide.

Behavioral anchors include the FS's description of differences between the role of practitioner and the role of advocate. When the FS engages in advocacy, the advocate describes evidence of effectiveness in his/her development of strategic alliances for the purpose of effecting change, organizing diverse affiliates (including institutions and agencies) for the purpose of a common cause, development and implementation of action plans for targeted change or progress toward a social, political, economic or cultural goal and evaluation of the effectiveness of those action plans.