



Career Counselor Assessment and Evaluation Competencies

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The purpose of these competencies is to provide a description of the knowledge and skills that career counselors must demonstrate in the areas of assessment and evaluation. Because effectiveness in assessment and evaluation is critical to effective career counseling, these competencies are critical for career counselor practice and service to students, clients, and other customers.

The competencies can be used by counselors as a guide in the development and evaluation of workshops, inservice, and other continuing education opportunities, as well as to evaluate their own professional development, and by counselor educators as a guide in the development and evaluation of career counselor preparation programs.

Competent career counselors strive to meet each of the eight numbered competencies and exhibit the specific knowledge, understandings, and skills listed under each competency.

Career Counselors are skilled in:

Competency 1. choosing assessment strategies. Career counselors ...

- can describe the nature and use of different types of formal and informal assessments, including questionnaires, checklists, interviews, inventories, tests, observations, surveys, and performance assessments, and they work with individuals skilled in clinical assessment.
- can specify the types of information most readily obtained from different assessment approaches.
- can identify the type of information needed to assist the client and select the assessment strategy accordingly.
- are familiar with resources for critically evaluating each type of assessment and can use the resources to choose appropriate assessment strategies.
- are able to advise and assist organizations, such as educational institutions and governmental agencies, in choosing appropriate assessment strategies.
- use only those assessments for which they are properly and professionally trained.

Competency 2. identifying, accessing, and evaluating the most commonly used assessment instruments. Career counselors ...

- know which assessment areas are most commonly assessed in career counseling, such as ability, skills, personality, preference work style, career thoughts and barriers, work values, and interests, including alternate formats.
- know the factors by which assessment instruments should be evaluated, including developmental procedures, target audience, purpose, validity, utility, norms, reliability and measurement error, score reporting method, cost, and consequences of use.
- obtain and evaluate information about the quality of career assessment instruments used.
- use the highest quality instruments available with their students, clients, or customers.

Competency 3. using the techniques of administration and methods of scoring assessment instruments. Career counselors ...

- implement appropriate administration procedures, including administration using computers.
- follow strict standardized administration procedures as dictated by the directions and resulting interpretation.
- modify administration of assessments to accommodate individual differences consistent with publisher recommendations and current statements of professional practice.
- provide consultation, information, and training to others who assist with administration and scoring and follow the guidance of others who are more extensively trained.

Competency 4. interpreting and reporting assessment results. Career counselors ...

- can explain scores that are commonly reported, interpret a confidence interval for an individual score based on a standard error of measurement, and always consider the impreciseness of assessment results.
- evaluate the appropriateness of a norm group when interpreting the scores of an individual or a group.
- are skilled in communicating assessment information to the client and others, including peers, supervisors and the public.

- d. evaluate their own strengths and limitations in the use of assessment instruments and in assessing clients with disabilities or linguistic or cultural differences.
- e. know how to identify professionals with appropriate training and experience for consultation.
- f. follow the legal and ethical principles regarding confidentiality and disclosure of assessment information, and recognize the need to abide by professional credentialing and ethical standards on the protection and use of assessments.

Competency 5. using assessment results in decision making. Career counselors ...

- a. recognize the limitations of using a single score in making an educational or career decision and know how to access multiple sources of information to improve decisions.
- b. evaluate their own expertise for making decisions based on assessment results, and also the limitations of conclusions provided by others, including the reliability and validity of computer-assisted assessment interpretations.
- c. determine whether the available technical evidence is adequate to support the intended use of an assessment result for decision making, particularly when that use has not been recommended by the developer of the assessment instrument.
- d. can evaluate the consequences of assessment-related decisions and avoid actions that would have unintended negative consequences.

Competency 6. producing, interpreting, and presenting statistical information about assessment results. Career counselors ...

- a. can describe data (e.g., test scores, grades, demographic information) by forming frequency distributions, preparing tables, drawing graphs, and calculating descriptive indices of central tendency, variability, and relationship.
- b. can compare a score from an assessment instrument with an existing distribution, describe the placement of a score within a normal distribution, and draw appropriate inferences.
- c. interpret statistics used to describe characteristics of assessment instruments, especially reliability coefficients, validity studies, and standard errors of measurement.
- d. can use computers for data management, statistical analysis, and production of tables and graphs for reporting and interpreting results.

Competency 7. engaging in professionally responsible assessment and evaluation practices. Career counselors ...

- a. act in accordance with ACA's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and NCDA's *Ethical Guidelines*.
- b. adhere to professional codes and standards, including the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*, to evaluate counseling practices involving assessments.
- c. understand test fairness and avoid the selection of biased assessment instruments and biased uses of assessment results.
- d. do not violate the legal and ethical principles and practices regarding test security, reproducing copyrighted materials, and unsupervised use of assessment instruments that are not intended for self-administration.
- e. obtain and maintain available credentialing that demonstrates their skills in assessment and evaluation and update their skills on a regular basis.

Competency 8. using assessment results and other data to evaluate career programs and interventions. Career counselors ...

- a. collect data to determine the impact of the career development activities on clients.
- b. use appropriate statistics when comparing groups, making predictions, and drawing conclusions about career programs and strategies.
- c. use evaluation results to improve current practices or implement more successful techniques to assist the client.
- d. can explain evaluation results to relevant persons, colleagues, agencies, and other stakeholders.

Definition of Terms

Competencies describe knowledge, understanding, and skills that a career counselor must possess to perform assessment and evaluation activities effectively.

Assessment is the systematic gathering of information for decision making about individuals, groups, programs, or processes. Assessment targets include abilities, achievements, personality variables, aptitudes, attitudes, preferences, interests, values, demographics, beliefs, and other characteristics. Assessment procedures include, but are not limited to, standardized and non-standardized tests, questionnaires, inventories, checklists, observations, portfolios, performance assessments, rating scales, surveys, interviews, card sorts, and other measurement techniques.

Evaluation is the collection and interpretation of information to make judgments about individuals, programs, or processes that lead to decisions and future actions.

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