CHAPTER 10

Competency-Based Evaluations

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we discuss the evaluation of work done by human service workers (social workers, psychologists, counselors, etc.). Their work often uses vague treatment techniques and often vaguer goals; hence, managers often use attendance, completion of paperwork, and other readily measurable work behaviors in evaluation, rather than attempting to determine the degree to which people are helped with problems that affect their social functioning (the ability to work, for example). Readers in other fields may understand from the content of this chapter that it is possible to measure more-significant work-related behaviors that really cut to what workers are hired to do with clients and consumers.

The human services have generally not done a good job of behaviorally defining expectation for workers. Some authors argue that what we do is often difficult to quantify and that, other than agency expectations regarding easily measurable behaviors such as attendance and report deadlines, the clinical work we do is too complex to measure. Witkin and Harrison (2001) point out that what human service professionals do may not be open to the same level or type of evaluation used in medicine because we often act as cultural bridges between systems, individualize clients in ways that may defy classification and evaluation, and work with oppressed people whose problems may not allow use of more traditional evaluative strategies.

We sympathize with this concern, but we don’t agree. If we can’t explain the impact of our work to the public at large, our clients, and to policy makers, how can we expect continued support? If we argue that what we do is too complex to measure, then we exist outside the definitions traditionally used to define professions. And more to the point, we ignore the progress made in finding evaluation strategies that actually do help us measure client change.

This chapter will take a very behavioral approach, one that argues that if you can’t set worker standards for performance and measure how well workers achieve or surpass those standards, you can’t really evaluate
workers. We should always be able to know how many clients a worker should see each week, how much improvement they should achieve, how many reports a worker should write and when they are due, and how long it takes, on average, to achieve desired results.

One of the reasons we have difficulty evaluating workers is that many work-related behaviors in the human services are stated in the vague and unhelpful language that policy makers find upsetting and courts find unhelpful whenever law suits are filed because a worker believes he or she has been mistreated. To better show what this means, consider the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (2008) statements regarding the skills, knowledge, and values that social work clinical supervisors should possess. The following was chosen at random: “The clinical supervisor is aware of how client outcomes can be affected by supervisor/supervisee bias about social work modalities when formulating treatment interventions” (p. 31). That certainly sounds good, but how could we possibly know if the supervisor is aware of biasing factors without some measurement? Being aware isn’t an active behavior. Supervisors might be aware but not change their behavior or that of the worker. Is there a connection between knowing something and doing something? Often there isn’t, but in competency-based evaluation, the relationship between expectations and the actual achievement of those expectations is the primary way to accurately evaluate a worker.

Similar vague language is used in agency practice to describe expectations of workers, which are equally difficult to measure. I can recall being on a tenure and promotion committee where we were asked to make decisions, important decisions, about people’s career without specific standards of productivity. How many refereed journals were required for tenure to associate professor level? We would ask our dean. He’d shrug and say, “That’s your decision to make. If I don’t agree with you, you’ll know it.” How many committees should a faculty member be on to suggest acceptable university service? “That’s up to you.” If a professor has evening courses should we cut them some slack on student evaluations? Are student evaluations even relevant? “That’s your decision,” he said “although I might not agree.”

And let’s remember that caught in the middle is the client who expects to be better as a result of the service we offer. How can he or she expect to be better if we have no way of knowing ourselves? To help give worker evaluation a more rational base, this chapter will argue that if it can’t be measured, it doesn’t belong. If it isn’t related to client
improvement and good agency citizenship, it must be irrelevant. Does coming to work on time affect the client? Yes, of course it does. Does getting reports in on time affect the client? Very often it does. Is being a good team player good for the agency? I think so, but what does that mean? Is knowing agency polices and procedures good for the client? Maybe, but do we have evidence that not knowing them very well is bad for clients? I don’t know, but I’d certainly want to find out if I were a supervisor.

And finally, let’s be clear about wrongful termination suits and worker grievances against supervisors. The best defense against wrongful termination charges are well-done evaluations that spell out how the worker’s performance compares with the agency’s standards of performance. If a worker isn’t performing and the standards are realistic, you have vital protection against a possible law suit if you terminate a worker.

EXAMPLES OF COMPETENCY-BASED STANDARDS THAT MATTER AND ARE MEASURABLE

Attendance
We expect workers to come to work on time, be on time for client interviews, stay through the entire day, and not take extended coffee or lunch breaks. We can measure all of these behaviors by using time cards or check-in procedures. We should not tolerate attendance problems unless, of course, we use flextime, which is the best way to take care of individual reasons for coming late (taking children to school, elderly parents to care for, etc.). I’m in favor of focusing on getting the work done and allowing wide variations including flextime and working from home. This assumes that the work will get done and that productivity won’t suffer. If it doesn’t, I’m all in favor of either alternative. But assume that for good reasons, you need workers to work from the office (I can think of child protective workers who worry about security problems, for example), then simple rules are always the best.

Attendance Objectives “All workers must be to work on time unless other arrangements have been made and approved by the worker’s supervisor in advance and in writing. Workers who come late will be docked in pay proportionate to the time they’ve missed. Staying late does not offset the late fee. The same can be said of workers who leave early.
Their pay will be docked. If lateness happens twice in a week, or more than four times in a month, the worker will be placed on probation. If the worker continues to be late the month of probation, he or she will be terminated.” Too tough? Maybe. Good for clients and others trying to contact workers? You bet.

Reports
Some agencies aren’t funded if worker reports are late. It’s a very important matter, particularly when there are late night or weekend emergencies that on-call workers have to cover. Reports are important when workers are on vacation and others have to cover cases, and when workers resign and leave the agency. It is also important that workers use the report format expected by the agency. That format represents the agency’s legal representation of what has been done in a case and the rationale for services provided. Reports should be constructed in ways that permit outside readers to understand what took place in the case and why. Hiding botched cases from legal scrutiny by indicating client confidentiality provides the worst message to the public. Often case records are so badly done and so full of errors and missing data that it would be highly embarrassing to the agency were they made public. Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that records are up to date and accurate. The following competency-based evaluative standard for report writing might serve as an example.

Report Writing Objectives “Workers must complete all written work on cases actively seen during the week by the end of every week. Workers are required to use the agency’s format for report writing. Failure to have all reports completed and up to date each week will result in the docking of pay at the rate of 2 hours per late report. If five reports are late during the probationary period, the worker will be terminated from the position. If the worker has achieved more permanent status, the same pay-docking system will be used and the agency will move to terminate the worker for cause. Report writing is vital and the agency takes seriously the lack of up-to-date, accurately written reports. Reports represent our contract to provide a service to clients and the public’s expectation that we provide that service in a timely and effective way.”

Ethical Conduct
Good work is work that is ethical. Workers who are unethical in their practice can’t possibly be providing the client with a positive service. For
that reason, knowing, understanding, and practicing the ethics of the agency and the profession are absolute musts. Ethical conduct means that we don’t manipulate the truth to make ourselves look better as workers. It means that we function in a way that models the highest ethical standards for clients. It assumes knowledge and agreement with the ethics of the agency and the profession. In matters of ethical conduct, competency-based objectives might read as in the following paragraph.

**Ethics Objectives** “The agency expects workers to know the policies of the agency and to abide by them. Those policies that deal with ethical issues are particularly important. A set of rules spelling out unethical behavior are provided in the policy manual of the agency and have been developed because of past problems encountered by the agency. For that reason, workers who conduct social and/or sexual relationships with clients will be terminated immediately. Workers who sexually harass other workers, clients, staff, or supervisors, if found responsible for that conduct by a sexual harassment committee of the agency, will face disciplinary actions which might include termination. Workers who share confidential material with non-professionals, unaffiliated members of the agency, or others who have no right to know the information, will be terminated. Workers who take files out of the agency without permission will be terminated. Workers who take agency property or make unauthorized long-distance calls must pay the agency back and will be subject to other disciplinary actions described in the policy manual. The agency accepts the ethical policies of the professions employed by the agency and expects workers at all times to abide by the ethical standards of their profession. If the standards of the agency conflict with those of the worker’s profession, the worker should discuss those conflicts with their supervisor and seek acceptable resolution.”

**Competent Practice**

While competent practice can be affected by many variables including the seriousness of the client’s problem, client motivation, and worker preparation to work with certain types of psychosocial problems, agencies need to have expectations of competent practice. If they don’t, how can anyone judge the quality of the service provided? For this reason use of a measure to determine whether the primary goals of treatment have been achieved in a timely manner is suggested. Goal attainment scales with single subject designs or common psychological instruments to measure
client improvement might also be used. Client satisfaction is also an important indicator, although when clients are required to get help from agencies when drug and alcohol treatment is required because of a DUI (Driving Under the Influence of Substances) or in sexual harassment or workplace violence cases, you can expect clients to be generally unhappy about the entire situation. Still, clients who are satisfied and believe that they’ve been helped provide strong support for workers who correctly believe they are doing a good job and that they should therefore be rewarded accordingly. Finally, evidence of improved social functioning is vital. To do this the worker must verify that change has actually occurred by going to primary sources such as employers and teachers to verify the extent of the change. Let’s consider the way this might be stated in an objective.

**Objectives to Measure Competent Practice**

“Workers are expected to provide competent service to clients and to do it in a timely manner. Over the years the agency has developed norms regarding the definition of competent practice. They are as follows: Workers are expected to develop contracts for service by the end of the first client session. Those contracts spell out the goals to be achieved, how long it will take to achieve those goals, the inclusion of the standard client satisfaction survey administered by the secretarial staff after every session, and weekly contact with primary people in the client’s life to determine actual changes in social functioning. Contracts must be approved by a worker’s supervisor in writing. Workers who achieve the norm can expect average evaluations. Workers who achieve above the norm can expect superior evaluations and compensation using the agency’s merit pay system. Workers below the norm will be placed on 6 months of probation. If the service they provide by the end of the 6-month probationary period is not at the norm for the agency, they will be terminated.”

**Good Agency Citizenship**

You may think this is of secondary importance in evaluations, but agencies that have internal squabbling and loose standards of acceptable behavior are often troubled agencies who are not serving clients well. For that reason we expect agency personnel to get along, to treat one another with kindness and respect, and to support the agency in the community. We expect people to be supportive and encouraging in group meetings and to help mentor one another. We would react strongly to workers who berate one
another or to workers who hold supervisors in low regard by continually ridiculing them or negating their role publicly. There are humane and professional ways to handle disagreements and they typically aren’t in public gatherings where others experience embarrassment and lose of respect. For those reasons, good agency citizenship is important. Let’s consider how this can be outlined in the standards for evaluation of workers.

Objectives for Good Agency Citizenship “Workers are expected to act in a professional manner. That includes treating others with respect, consideration, and dignity. Workers who openly disagree with others and cause discomfort to agency personnel and who fail to work differences out with other workers, staff, and supervisors will have this undesirable behavior identified in written evaluations. If the identified behavior is not resolved in a 6-month period, with help and assistance from the agency, the worker will be terminated. Undesirable behavior includes frequent public arguments with others, using derogatory names or terms with others either publicly or privately, shouting at others, and the use of words suggesting racial, religious, or gender bias. Problems with other employees are to be worked out using the supervisor as the mediator. If he or she is unavailable, the agency will provide mediators to help work out legitimate professional and work-related problems. If the problems causing the unacceptable behavior are personal, the agency expects the worker to seek assistance from the agency’s EAP or from a professional provider.”

Community Involvement

The human services are part of a broad community effort to help people. Involvement in community efforts and professional organizations should be an expectation of all human service agencies since it adds to the strength of our helping efforts and creates a helping community that may be a substantial force for change. I suggest released time to be a part of community efforts and that supervisors might even be proactive and suggest ways workers can be involved in community efforts. As Saleebey (1996, p. 297) writes in his discussion of the importance of healthy community life,

Membership [in a community] means that people need to be citizens—responsible and valued members in a viable group or community. To be without membership is to be alienated, and to be at risk of marginalization and oppression, the enemies of civic and moral strength (Walzer, 1983). As people begin to realize
and use their assets and abilities, collectively and individually, as they begin to discover the pride in having survived and overcome their difficulties, more and more of their capacities come into the work and play of daily life.

**Objectives for Community Involvement** “Workers are expected to be involved in community or professional groups that directly lead to stronger community life and better assistance for our clients. The agency will provide up to 2 hours a week of released time for workers to attend community and professional meetings that are acceptable to the agency and supported by the worker’s supervisor. We particularly encourage workers to take leadership roles on community boards.”

**Attaining New Knowledge**

Agencies change and improve as workers gain knowledge of the many new approaches available in the helping professions. We hope that what they learn will be passed on to others and the investment made by the agency to offer workers paid opportunities to attend workshops, conferences, or to receive special training will pay off in cutting-edge services to clients that keep the agency competitive.

**Objectives for Gaining Knowledge** “Workers are encouraged to learn new work-related behaviors that will assist our clients and help the organization. We will provide workers up to $1,000 a year for attendance at approved conferences, workshops, courses, or tutorials on subjects of special need to the agency. Workers are expected to give formal presentations about what they’ve learned and to mentor other workers. Released time will be given for approved mentoring activities.”

**PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO WORKERS**

Glicken (2008) notes that there are four types of evaluative feedback: positive, negative, evaluative, and developmental.

- Positive feedback recognizes aspects of the worker’s performance that are well done and provides reasons the work is exceptional.
- Negative feedback focuses on aspects of a worker’s performance that are inadequate, insufficient, or inappropriate.
- Evaluative feedback compares a worker’s performance with agency standards and expectations. In competency-based supervision the appraisal involves objective facts and not merely judgment.
Developmental feedback helps workers understand why they did well or badly, confirms behaviors that should be retained, and identifies behaviors that should be changed.

Glicken indicates that, for feedback to be effective, it must be: useful; frequent; timed so that the worker is listening and receptive to the feedback; directed to the specific problem without a preamble; helpful to the worker in doing the job more effectively and efficiently; understood by the worker as a behavior that needs to be reinforced or changed; and clearly understood by confirming that workers know what you mean and that they understand the reasons for the feedback.

In competency-based supervision, to be effective, feedback must be clearly tied to established expectations of practice; come from trusted and accurate means of monitoring performance; be based on information that is accurate and can be verified; be presented in a logical, helpful, and persuasive manner; be given in the context of a good worker-supervisor relationship; and be given in a way that supports the mission of the agency, benefits clients, and helps resolve relationship problems between the worker and other workers.

**PAY FOR PERFORMANCE: MERIT PAY**

Many human service organizations have decided that they no longer want to pay for mediocre work and believe that employees should be rewarded for the quality of their work and their value to the agency, including the new skills and competencies they’ve learned over the years. In merit systems, the better a worker’s performance, the higher their pay. Performance is determined by competency-based evaluations which are always behavioral and which focus, to the extent possible, on behaviors that are objective in nature and can be measured.

**In Opposition to Merit Pay**

This rational-sounding system has been widely criticized and widely touted as the solution to improving worker performance, reducing turnover, and improving morale. For those opposed to merit pay, the arguments are that merit pay creates tensions among workers because it stresses competition rather than teamwork and cooperation; merit pay decisions are usually reduced to whomever the supervisor likes best and are subjective and biased in nature; merit pay actually reduces productivity; the indicators of meritorious work are so easily manipulated by workers that the
real issue, the quality of their work with clients, often gets pushed back and other less important indicators are used to determine merit pay; it is not unusual for workers to argue for more merit pay for those aspects of the work for which they are most effective even though they may be of secondary importance; and that accountability-driven workplaces that focus on measuring effectiveness are real turnoffs to professionals. As Kohn (2003, p. 48) notes in discussing the reasons why new teachers leave education,

In 2000, Public Agenda questioned more than 900 new teachers and almost as many college graduates who didn't choose a career in education. The report concluded that, while "teachers do believe that they are underpaid," higher salaries would probably be of limited effectiveness in alleviating teacher shortages because considerations other than money are "significantly more important to most teachers and would-be teachers." Two years later, 44 percent of administrators reported, in another Public Agenda poll, that talented colleagues were being driven out of the field because of "unreasonable standards and accountability."

Kohn (2003, p. 51) believes that the following reasons explain why merit pay does not work.

1. **Control.** People with more power usually set the goals, establish the criteria, and generally set about trying to change the behavior of those below them. If merit pay feels manipulative and patronizing, that's probably because it is.

2. **Strained relationships.** In its most destructive form, merit pay is set up as a competition, where the point is to best one’s colleagues. It creates terrible tensions and leads to lowered morale and job turnover.

3. **Reasons and motives.** The premise of merit pay, and indeed of all rewards, is that people could be doing a better job but for some reason have decided to wait until it’s bribed out of them. This is as insulting as it is inaccurate. Dangling a reward in front of workers does nothing to address the complex, systemic factors that are actually responsible for poor service to clients.

4. **Measurement issues.** It’s an illusion to think we can specify and quantify all the components of good client services, much less establish criteria for receiving a bonus that will eliminate the perception of arbitrariness.

5. **Manipulating outcome measurements.** One of the sad facts of merit systems is that certain behaviors on the part of the person being evaluated can improve scores on effectiveness ratings even though
those scores aren’t deserved. In academia, for example, high grades on examinations are a prime way to increase students’ satisfaction scores, one of the significant ways in which merit is determined in academia. Another way is to have a party or to say excessively nice things about a class before the survey is given. I’ve known instructors who even tell stories about the personal problems they have to gain sympathy from students and improve satisfaction scores. As one might guess, these devices cause great unhappiness among workers who eschew them and who feel that they thereby miss out on valuable raises and promotions.

In Support of Merit Pay

On the other hand, it is demoralizing to good workers to see poorly performing workers receive the same salary increases. It tends to lower the quality of their work. Why work so hard if the rewards aren’t there? Applying the same salary increases to everyone fails to encourage the acquisition of new skills. As one of the participants in a workshop I gave recently said about merit pay, “We have a merit pay system. You get a 2% raise if you’re outstanding and a 1% raise if you’re terrible. What kind of merit system is that? I’m leaving social work because, hard as I try at work and much as I am told I do a terrific job, I’m not rewarded for my work. My husband who works in business got a 15% merit salary increase this year. Some of his co-workers got nothing. It’s a tough world out there. The ones who perform should get the rewards.”

Another student said, “I’ve been at my agency for 5 years. During that time I got a total of a 5% salary increase. It’s nothing. Before I came they had a merit system that increases a person’s salary for really good work up to 10% a year, but the workers rebelled and they bagged the program. The good workers left because they wanted to feel rewarded for their work. We’re left with mediocre to poor workers. I just took a new job and the response from the agency was, too bad, we’ll miss you. They didn’t even bother to ask why I was leaving.”

Recognizing the impact of inequitable salaries for exceptional workers, Van Ark (2002) reports that “dissatisfaction with performance appraisal systems is another of the most common complaints heard among human service workers” (p. 10). The options for workers are either to move into administration, where the rewards are better even though the work itself may not be satisfying, or to “continue their excellent service delivery without any tangible recognition, which only contributes to
poor morale” (p. 11). Clive (2004) says that when standard salary increases are given that do not factor in merit, “The message to the outstanding performers is that their efforts are not valued and they should either perform at an ‘average’ level or find an employer who is willing to pay for their skills” (p. 2), while the message to marginal workers “is that their performance is acceptable and no significant increase in performance is required” (p. 2).

There is evidence that merit pay has a positive impact on worker performance. Dee and Keys (2004) report that

Despite widespread pessimism among educators about whether merit pay systems can effectively reward good teachers, most of the limited empirical evidence has been surprisingly positive. For example, two studies (in 1992 and 1997) found that the math and reading test scores of students in South Carolina improved significantly when the students were taught by teachers receiving merit pay. Similarly, related and more recent literature suggests that mathematics students learn more when their teachers have certification in mathematics.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (2002) reports that, in organizations using competency-based measurement tools to evaluate workers’ performance, satisfaction of workers with the system was 97% while dissatisfaction with the old system of evaluating performance was 93%. The new system linked performance to pay while the old system gave everyone the same increase regardless of their performance.

Setting Up a Merit Pay System

In a merit system, the total amount available for raises is placed in a merit pool. Below you will see how points are given. Let’s say the pool is 3% of the agency’s budget for salaries for the year, or $100,000. Rather than giving the 3% out to everyone, based on their salaries and regardless of their performance, merit pay is based on each worker’s individual performance across several indicators. I’m using the following as an example. (1) Client improvement is worth up to 14 points while good agency citizenship is worth up to 6 points. A perfect score would be 20. The points are totaled and then each point is given a dollar worth. Let’s say that there are 500 points given out and that each point is worth $200. This is accomplished by dividing the total points (500) into the merit pool ($100,000). The worker who scores 20 points on their evaluation would get a raise of $4,000 while the worker who scores 5 points would get an increase of $1,000. This is irrespective of their salary. For a salary of
$30,000 the merit increase for 20 points would be over 13%, while 5 points would be a salary increase of 3%. There would be no raises given out at all for workers who receive fewer than 5 points since their work is considered unsatisfactory. By not giving out points for unsatisfactory work, the worth of each point increases.

**A COMPETENCY-BASED EVALUATION SCALE**

The following guide is tied to the above merit pay scheme. Each point will equal a certain amount of money, and raises will be based on point totals. In this approach it’s possible that workers will receive no increase at all if their work is at an unsatisfactory level. This is a very behaviorally oriented approach which requires accurate evaluation of work.

**A. Points for practice** (total points available: 0–14)

1. Client satisfaction score based on a 0–5 point scale with 5 the highest possible rating (4 total points possible):
   a. On a 0–5 point scale, an average score of 4.50–5.00 (4 points)
   b. On a 0–5 point scale, an average score of 4.0–4.49 (3 points)
   c. On a 0–5 point scale, an average score of 3.50–3.99 (2 points)
   d. On a 0–5 point scale, an average score of 3.00–3.49 (1 point)
   e. Below 3.0 (0 points).

2. Achievement of contracted-for goals (5 total points possible):
   a. 95%–100% of the goals achieved in the time contracted for (5 points)
   b. 90%–94% of the goals achieved in the time contracted for (4 points)
   c. 85–89% of the goals achieved in the time contracted for (3 points)
   d. 80–84% of the goals achieved in the time contracted for (2 points)
   e. 75–79% of the goals achieved in the time contracted for (1 point)
   f. Below 75% (0 points).

3. Better psychosocial functioning (5 total points possible):
   a. A 95–100% improvement over first client session (5 points)
   b. A 90–94% improvement over first client session (4 points)
   c. An 85–89% improvement over first client session (3 points)
   d. An 80–84% improvement over first client session (2 points)
   e. A 75–79% improvement over first client session (1 point)
   f. Below 75% (0 Points).
B. Points for good agency citizenship (0—6 points)

1. Reports and other written work (2 points):
   a. Reports are always on time and always very well done (2 points)
   b. Reports are always on time and done at the expected level (1 point).

2. Goes the extra mile in helping others (1 point).

3. Is a leader in teams (1 point).

4. Attains new knowledge and teaches it to others (1 point).

5. Is involved in the community and the profession through board memberships, leadership roles, consulting, and other activities (1 point).

To give you a better idea of how this would work, Tables 10.1 and 10.2 outline how points would be given and how they equate to an actual amount of money and a designated rating of worker performance.

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A Model Evaluation

End of the Year Evaluation: Sara Smith received three quarterly evaluations this year which outline her general functioning at the agency. This evaluation is a summary of the three former evaluations including any new behaviors noted in the fourth quarter of the year.

This is Ms Smith’s second full year with the agency. She continues to work at the norm established by the agency. Her work with clients, while consistent, is never beyond expectations and all aspects of her client work are average. Her reports are on time and use the agency format. While basically accurate, her reports sometimes use non-technical language and Ms Smith has been told on eight occasions not to use slang or familiar language when more descriptive professional language is available. Ms Smith is always on time and has missed only 4 days during the year because of illness. The agency’s policy is to pay the worker for unused sick days at 25% of their cost. Ms Smith will be paid for the 8 unused sick leave days for the year.

Ms. Smith has very good working relationships with her co-workers and is well liked by the support staff. On a number of occasions she has filled in for sick workers or stayed late to help with agency overloads. Her work is usually quite ethical but on a few occasions I have overheard her talking about clients in the lunch room. While she never identifies the client by name, it isn’t difficult to know who she’s talking about. In the times I’ve overheard her talking about clients it has never been derogatory or overly informative. Still, it’s against agency policy and she has been notified that this behavior should stop. To my knowledge it has.
Ms. Smith is a very good team member and is always willing to offer suggestions to other workers. She is always on time for supervision and takes our meetings seriously. To improve the quality of her practice with clients I have sent her to a conference on the use of the strengths perspective and another on competency-based practice. I see little evidence that she is applying either approach and her ability to use the Internet to answer practice questions, as I’ve instructed her to do, has been minimal. In her self-evaluation for the year, Ms Smith notes no community involvement, although she’s been encouraged to become more involved and has even been offered released time to join a committee working on problems of our clients.

While she is well liked by her clients as is evidenced by high scores on the client satisfaction scale (an average score of 4.5 on a 5 point scale) clients complain in the written portion of the survey that she is overly non-direct and much too passive. We have discussed this, and she agrees, but it is difficult for her to be more directive and she continues to allow clients to work things out by themselves and to be a passive participant in sessions. Nonetheless, her clients improve at an average level. I am therefore recommending a salary increase of 3 merit points for her client satisfaction (see the merit scale) as outlined in the agency’s merit pay schedule for salary increases, 1 point for better client functioning, and 1 point for achieving goals set for treatment. I’ve given her 1 additional point for her good agency citizenship. Each point is worth $200. Ms Smith’s salary increase will be $1,200.

In summary, Ms Smith is a good agency citizen who is well liked and regarded by others. She is hard working and goes the extra mile in filling in for others. Her work with clients remains average and she continues to be too passive and non-directive with clients. We will continue to work on this area of practice in the coming year.

Table 10.1 Appraisal Score, Salary Increase, and Evaluation Rating in an Example Merit Pay Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance appraisal score</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Salary increase at $200/point</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.00—20.00</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>$3,600—4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.00—17.99</td>
<td>Significantly exceeds expectations</td>
<td>$2,800—3,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00—13.99</td>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>$2,000—2,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00—9.99</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>$1,000—1,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.00—4.99</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Case to Evaluate

You are supervising a young woman whom you like very much as a person. She is warm, funny, and kind but does a very poor job with clients. It’s not that she doesn’t like them or want to help but her helping impulses often get in the way and she relates to clients, not as a professional, but as an overly involved parent. She’s taken clients home with her, she’s bought them gifts when they are feeling blue, she buys them food from her own pocket and often drives them to places when they are perfectly capable of doing this by themselves. In essence, she is developing severe dependency by doing what they should be doing for themselves if they are to achieve better social functioning. The clients aren’t

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18—20</td>
<td>Outstanding—Performance in this category is clearly exceptional. Must be properly documented with examples applicable to the individual performance category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.00—17.99</td>
<td>Significantly exceeds expectations—Significantly exceeds performance standards established for the position. Must be properly documented with examples applicable to individual performance category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00—13.99</td>
<td>Exceeds expectations—Exceeds performance standards established for the position. Must be properly documented with examples applicable to the individual performance category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00—9.99</td>
<td>Meets expectations—Meets all standards of performance established for the position.</td>
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<td>0.00—4.99</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory—Not acceptable. If an employee is not to be terminated for non-performance, a written plan for improvement must be developed with the supervisor. No merit raise will be granted for the performance review period in which an unsatisfactory performance rating is earned. A follow-up evaluation shall be provided as determined by management. In the case of a ninety (90)-day performance improvement plan, an evaluation session will be conducted each thirty (30) days and a final evaluation issued at the end of ninety (90) days.</td>
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getting better but have regressed. You have given her an unsatisfactory evaluation which means she is automatically placed on probation without a salary increase for the year which can result in the loss of her job if she doesn’t improve over the next 6 months. You need to develop a plan with her which will attempt to make her a sounder and more effective professional without destroying her strong desire to help her clients.

Questions
1. Why is she acting in such an unprofessional way? Surely her training would suggest to her that she needs to be more professional in her work with clients, or does it?
2. What readings would you give her to help her better understand that by causing her clients to be dependent on her, they meet her needs rather than the other way around?
3. What activities might you do jointly to help her move toward a professional role with her clients?
4. Some people would say that what your worker is doing is really what helping is all about. How can you help her see that her clients are actually not being helped?
5. Might this type of problem suggest the need to treatment because it so closely parallels co-dependent behavior? Go to the literature and find out what treatment approaches seem to help reduce co-dependent behavior in workers.

SUMMARY

In this chapter on competency-based evaluations special attention is paid to understanding the need for objective, measurable work objectives that are at the same time realistic, relevant, and ethical. Discussion includes merit systems and ways to set them up in a human service agency. In a case presentation at the end of the chapter, you are asked to consider how you might work with a member of your team whom you supervise who, while a wonderful person with concern for others and loyalty to the agency, at the same time isn’t very effective.

REFERENCES


