



National Center for
Professional Certification

ASSESSOR GUIDANCE (Effective 10/1/05)

NCPC will begin utilizing Expert Witness Testimony as an equivalent to Observations. For all awards where an observation is required in the Unit Evidence Requirements section, Assessors may now utilize an expert witness to provide testimony to the candidate's competence. Assessors are still responsible for the management of the of assessment process. The final judgment of competence continues to remain with the Assessor.

EXPERT WITNESS TESTIMONY GUIDELINES

Expert Witness Requirements

- 1.) Each expert witness must possess working knowledge of the award requirements to which their expertise relates. Candidates should provide the Expert Witness with a copy of the unit and or element of the competency standards the Expert Witness would be providing evidence for.
- 2.) Each expert witness must possess current expertise and occupational competence within the last 2 years as a manager or practitioner, for the competencies to which their expertise relates
- 3.) Each expert witness must possess a work role involving the evaluation of staff practice or have received an award from NCPC related to the competency for which they are providing testimony.

Each Expert Witness should receive a copy of the NCPC Expert Witness Guidelines, which includes the Expert Witness Registry Form to be returned to the Assessor, and kept on file at the agency.

Expert Witness Testimony Guidelines Information

1.)What is NCPC?

Introduction to Certification-

Partnership Goal: To improve the workforce in organizations serving children, youth, families, and adults based on certification of competence and improved performance management.

NCPC Concept of Operation: NCPC is a collaborative of agencies in several states, interested in improving practice through a comprehensive employee development strategy that leads to professional certification. This strategy was formally developed in the United Kingdom and is now available in 110 different countries. The results have been dramatic in improving competence for professionals caring for vulnerable populations as well as managers in these settings.

The model requires commitment from organizations to develop assessment capacity within their organization in order to assess and develop their employees. The power of the model is that it develops the capability of managers, supervisors and employees to recognize good practice, coach and mentor employees toward good practice, and offer a professional credential in the workplace.

It is empowering because the agency itself takes responsibility to improve practice with this system.

NCPC Structure: NCPC consist of an Executive Director and Board of Directors that oversee and coordinate the certification process in the United States. NCPC manages the national database to track registration and completion of professional certification. NCPC functionally manages and certifies a pool of Verifiers working in several different states. NCPC provides the professional standards, training materials, and consultant services. NCPC holds Annual Assessor Conferences and bi-annual Internal Verifier Conferences.

Current Certifications Available:

- [] Assessor
- [] Internal Verifier
- [] Human Services Practitioner (2)
- [] Human Services Professional (3)
- [] Foster Care Professional (3)
- [] Adult Services Professional (3)
- [] Promoting Independence (3)

- []Early Care and Education (3)
- []Training Professional (3)
- []Management 2 (Team Leader)
- []Management 3
- []Management 4
- []Management 5 (operational)
- []Management 5 (strategic)
- []Business Administration (2)
- []Business Administration (3)
- []Customer Service (2)
- []Customer Service (3)

Professional Certification-
The Players:

Candidates: Any individual seeking certification as an assessor, internal verifier or in any occupational certification.

Assessors: A candidate or certificated individual who is responsible for supporting a candidate through the certification process. The Assessor helps the candidate learn how to identify evidence develops plans and prepares the portfolio. When a candidate presents evidence, the Assessor judges the evidence against the standardized criteria.

Internal Verifiers (IV): A candidate or certificated individual that is responsible for overseeing the assessment process. The IV is appointed for the candidate and follows that candidate through the process, reviewing the Assessor's work to ensure uniformity and best practice. IV's train Assessors, register candidates, file results for candidates and appoint Assessors to candidates. IV's are responsible for "managing" the assessment work. If an Assessor is a candidate or newly certified, the IV will review all assessment decisions and support the new Assessor. If the Assessor is experienced, the IV will review each candidate's portfolio quarterly. If there is any question about an Assessor's decision, the candidate can ask for a review from the IV.

Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC): The individual who oversees all Internal Verifiers. The QAC is the individual who appoints an IV to a candidate. If there is a question about an Assessor decision that cannot be resolved by the IV, it is "appealed" to the QAC.

The current QAC is:

Heidi Holland, Executive Director of NCP
NCP
3300 Gaither Road
Baltimore, MD 21244
(410) 496-5632
heidi@ncpconline.org

NCPCC Policies-

Review of Decisions or Access to Appeals: All candidates have a right to request a decision be reviewed. Sometimes a candidate will disagree with an Assessor and this can be a healthy process to discover new ways to evidence information. NCPCC encourages candidates and Assessors not to view this as a negative process, but as a learning process.

Special Assessment Requirements or Special Needs: Some candidates may have special needs for assessment. For example, a candidate may have difficulty reading or writing or need an interpreter, etc. Another special need might be an ill family member or that the candidate is simply not prepared for assessment. All Assessors must ask each candidate if they have any special needs, and at assessment events, ask if the candidate is ready for assessment at that time. This ensures that each candidate has a fair opportunity to be successful in certification.

Assessment Feedback: After the Assessor has completed an assessment of any evidence presented by a candidate, they must provide timely feedback to the candidate about the results of the assessment. This will be done in a strength-based way, always providing positive results first and then areas that may need additional work.

Assessment: All candidates have the right to regular meetings with their Assessor, time within their job hours to complete work, and the right to progress through certification at a reasonable pace. If an Assessor cannot support a candidate because of his/her job responsibilities, personal issues, or other changes, the candidate should ask the IV to review the situation and appoint a new Assessor.

Equal Opportunity: NCPCC is an equal opportunity organization and provides services in a non-discriminatory manner. NCPCC is committed to supporting diversity, special needs and equal access to certification by supporting organizations to develop non-discriminatory selection methods for individuals seeking certification. NCPCC is not responsible for the EEO practices of satellite centers in relation to anything except certification services.

Competency Standards-

NCPCC Standards: Standards developed for different job levels and types which define the requirements for good practice in the workplace.

Unit: A specific competency that is required or selected by candidates to complete for their certification. With each certification there are:

Mandatory Units- Those which must be completed for the certification

Optional Units- Units from which candidates may select from to complete the required number of units for that certification.

The number of units that must be completed varies by certification. The number that must be completed can be found in the front of the standards book.

Evidence Criteria: The specific statement in a unit against which the candidate gathers evidence and against which the Assessor will judge the evidence. Evidence may not be required for anything which is not specified in the standards. All Assessors should be interpreting the standards in the same way. Evidence criteria include:

Performance Criteria- directly related to observable performance of work in the job setting (observations, witness testimony, work products)

Knowledge Criteria- relates to underpinning knowledge required to perform the competency. Underpinning knowledge is what allows a candidate to perform under different circumstances, demonstrates understanding of why things are important (reflective analysis, questioning record)

Evidence Requirements or Range: defines the various circumstances under which performance for the competency is required.

Evidence Guidance: Specific information in each unit or element which tells Assessors any specification required for assessment. For example, some awards require observation by an Assessor or a reflective analysis for each unit, sometimes only 2 of 3 of the evidence requirements (range) must be met, and then the assessor and candidate can pick which two they will use.

2.) Understanding the role of the expert witness.

Expert Witness Requirements

- 4.) Each expert witness must possess working knowledge of the award requirements to which their expertise relates. Candidates should provide the Expert Witness with a copy of the unit and or element of the competency standards the Expert Witness would be providing evidence for.
- 5.) Each expert witness must possess current expertise and occupational competence within the last 2 years as a manager or practitioner, for the competencies to which their expertise relates
- 6.) Each expert witness must possess a work role involving the evaluation of staff practice or have received an award from NCPC related to the competency for which they are providing testimony.

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3.)How to write an Expert Witness Testimony

The first key to writing a good expert witness testimony (ewt) is that you have to be there. An EW can give testimony to a candidate's practice if they have first hand knowledge of the situation. The EW must have been present or have been involved at some point during the incident or situation. (i.e. if expert witness is the "on- call Social Worker" and takes a crisis call from the candidate.)

There are two types of observations of practice. One is planned and is more formal. The other is unplanned and just happens.

In the Planned Observation, the candidate and the expert witness make a decision that an observation of practice will take place at a specific date and time. The Expert Witness then comes into the environment and is intentional about observing the candidate's practice. They then give feedback to the candidate about their performance. The Expert Witness is not allowed to coach the candidate during the observation, but can stop the observation if they feel the need.

An unplanned observation is when you happen to be there and see your candidate perform their job duties. An unplanned observation is more natural and the expert witness can usually get better evidence. This is one reason why NCPC recommends that supervisors become expert witnesses or Assessors. They have the job responsibility to observe and evaluate their staff. Supervisors are able to write observations on a wider range of experiences with a candidate than an expert witness that works in a different department or cottage. They also have access to the candidate's documentation and practice under policies and procedures.

Observations of performance are to be written like a behavior note on a resident. They should be behaviorally specific and only contain what was "seen", or discussed within the observation or after.

A common mistake made by an expert witness is that they include their own ideas as to the thoughts of the candidate.

For example, if I observe a candidate moving closer to a resident that is in crisis and the candidate lowers their voice when speaking to the resident, I am not at liberty to add to the observation that " the candidate lowered their voice knowing that by speaking quietly to the resident, he would not escalate or get any louder."

Now, if the candidate tells the EW the reason they took that action, then that can be added to the expert witness testimony. The EW must have those

types of conversations after the observation or during the observation in order for those comments to be valid.

Another common mistake is for the expert witness to add slang or clinical terms for behaviors that need to be defined.

For example:

“resident was acting out”, “staff processed with resident” , “staff de-escalated resident”

All of these terms need to be defined with statements or explanations such as:

“resident was acting out by talking back to staff and cursing at staff”

“Staff processed with resident by going through the steps of a life space interview and listened to what the resident wanted to say”

The more specific you can be the better the expert witness testimony.

Expert Witnesses may also use past work experiences for evidence. Again, the Expert Witness must have first hand knowledge of the candidate’s practice. They must have been there or involved somehow.

When writing an ewt, they must include dates and specific information to connect the candidate to the event.

If the EW has been the candidate’s supervisor or co-worker for an extended amount of time, they can be more general in their approach to the evidence, but they must still contain enough specifics to meet the performance criteria. It is always good practice to add your relationship to the candidate if you are going to first summarize the candidate’s experiences. This adds validity to your relation to the candidate and your ability to evaluate their performance.

For example:

I have been Julie’s supervisor for the last 4 years. In that time I have observed her intervening in many crisis situations involving residents that have run away, become physically aggressive with peers and staff, have threatened to hurt themselves and have actually cut themselves. Julie is always calm in these situations and does a good job of maintaining herself professionally. She does not raise her voice or do anything that will cause the situation to become explosive. She is direct with the residents as to what she needs them to do in order to comply and she will ask for assistance when she needs it. Julie has worked in this field for a long time, she is a role model for new staff on how to handle crisis situations and spends time with new staff talking about ways to intervene with residents that are new or that exhibit new aggressive behaviors.

On June 19th 2005, I observed Julie intervening with a resident that had recently moved into the cottage. The resident was not following the rules and was talking back to Julie. Julie redirected the resident to go to her room for bedtime and continued to remain calm. She did not raise her voice, but maintained eye contact with the resident and stayed close to her. The resident attempted to push Julie and grab another resident that was making fun of her. Julie immediately got in between the two residents and called me

to come and help her. I asked the second resident to go to her and she complied and we then dealt with the new resident by.....

EWT's can be written on the official NCPC form, but these forms are not mandatory. EW's can use whatever method they want to record a candidate's performance. The only requirement is that the document be legible and contains specific information to meet the performance criteria. The judgment of the evidence should be clearly documented as to which element, performance and knowledge criteria are contained in the expert witness testimony.

4.)Expert Witness Registry Form



National Center for
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EXPERT WITNESS REGISTRY FORM

Name of Expert Witness _____

Agency Name _____

Current Job Title _____

Job Responsibilities _____

NCPC Candidate Name _____

NCPC Assessor Name _____

Relationship to Candidate _____

Length of Time Have Known Candidate _____

Do you currently have an award through NCPC

Yes _____ No _____

Title of Award _____

Has the candidate provided you with a copy of the units and elements of competence you are provided testimony for?

Yes _____ No _____

Have you received a copy of the NCPC Expert Witness Guidelines?

Yes _____ No _____

Signature and Date of Assessor Approving Expert Witness Testimony

Signature and Date of Internal Verifier
