

Note to Supervisors & Facilitators

Overview

The Understanding Addiction course has been designed with a variety of contexts in mind. The impetus for the course, however, was the expressed need for basic training for community-based health and social service workers. The goal of Understanding Addiction is to help participants develop basic competencies related to working with people who may be engaging in addictive behaviours that are negatively impacting their lives.

Competency involves the synthesis and application of attitudes, knowledge and skills in a real-world context. That is a tall order for any course, and particularly for a short course delivered over the internet. We recognize the limitations of the medium we are using and have sought to mitigate those limitations as much as possible. Each lesson follows a simple structure of attitude-knowledge-skills-competence. We have tried to develop learning activities that participants can engage in to reflect on common attitudes, be exposed to new ideas and hone skills online. The course also suggests other activities learners can do on their own or with colleagues to further their skill development. At the end of each lesson, participants complete a fixed exercise that requires the participant to reflect on what they have learned from the lesson and how that might be relevant to, and make a difference in, their practice.

Hints for Supervisors

Supervisors can reinforce learning in several ways:

1. Have regular discussions with course participants about what they are learning through the course.
2. Where possible, have a group of employees take the course at the same time and provide opportunity for group interaction and discussion. All registered course participants have access to the Facilitator's Guide, which includes ideas for facilitating workshops and group sessions. If you have a group taking the course, it may be helpful to appoint a facilitator.
3. Periodically distribute one of the course readings (files available in the Resources section) to all staff and have a group discussion based on the reading at the beginning of a staff meeting.
4. Ask course participants to report on a case where they used a skill introduced in the course in their work environment. Discuss how it went and how to improve.

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In order to help supervisors monitor participant progress, Understanding Addiction has a built-in reporting mechanism whereby participants can send you progress reports on the lessons they have completed. There are two options: one simply reports what lessons have been completed while the other includes the participant's response to the competency exercise in which the participant reflects on what they learned in the lesson and how that might be used in their practice. If the participant agrees to share the more complete report, it can provide an aid for meaningful practice supervision.

Hints for Facilitators

The online course can be enhanced by in-person learning sessions. This might take a variety of forms including the following:

1. A group of participants, who are each taking the online course, might meet once a week to discuss what they are learning and to practice and reinforce their skills. These sessions might be led by a facilitator or co-facilitated by the participants.
2. A facilitator could develop and deliver a series of workshops based on the lessons in the course. In this case, participants might be assigned readings (handouts available in the Resources section) and then come together to discuss these and work through various exercises similar to those in the online course. If the needed technology is available, the facilitator might use some of the videos and online exercises in the classroom setting. Various worksheets that replace some of the online exercises are provided in the Resources section.
3. While the lessons can be taken in any order, they are designed to build on each other, and it is recommended that the lessons be presented in the order used in the online course. Facilitators should familiarize themselves with all course material before beginning to facilitate any training.

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