



Directions for the ASTDD State Oral Health Program

Competencies Assessment Process (Appendix A)

Purpose and Background

ASTDD developed *Competencies for State Oral Health Programs* in 2010 to accompany the *ASTDD Guidelines for State and Territorial Oral Health Programs*. While the *Guidelines* reflect roles and activities for State Oral Health Programs, the *Competencies* represent skills sets that are needed to successfully achieve the activities and roles. The *Competencies* are categorized under seven general Domains. Each *Competency* includes Four Skill Levels (in addition to a zero [0] skill level), starting from Level 1, the most basic, and increasing in complexity to Level 4. Although programs can work to attain Level 4 skills in all competencies, in reality most programs will be able to achieve significant program successes without reaching this ideal. In addition, eight Guiding Principles represent competency areas that apply to all the Domains.

Three *Competencies Assessment Tools* have been developed for use by State Oral Health Programs to determine what skills current team members perceive they have that contribute to program success, and what skills the team feels are needed for program improvement.

The value of doing Individual Assessments and a Program Assessment using the *Competencies* includes:

- Individuals are given an opportunity to analyze their own skills and to identify which are strengths for the program and which skills they would like to improve; this could serve as the basis for a professional development plan
- Individuals may have skills that are not recognized or currently being used in their job responsibilities but could be used to enhance the program or used to help them transition into higher level positions
- An analysis of all team member skills can be used to identify:
 - significant gaps in competencies that will require additional training or additional expertise
 - duplication of skills, which could be valuable for some activities but confusing and repetitive if too many people are doing the same tasks, especially at a basic level
 - the most appropriate work assignments or a realignment of responsibilities to increase effectiveness and efficiency
 - opportunities for team building or the need for small workgroups to accomplish tasks.
- A program assessment can be used with supervisors, other health officials, coalitions or legislators to:
 - show the breadth of skills needed for a successful state oral health program
 - highlight where there are strengths that contribute to overall program or health department successes
 - show gaps between current functioning and desired levels and where additional expertise or resources are needed
 - establish priorities or serve as the basis for strategic planning or quality improvement efforts.

Assessment Tools

1. **The Abbreviated Program Assessment Tool** allows a quick program assessment using only the Competency Domains and the Guiding Principles. Programs can then decide which areas are priorities for beginning a more detailed assessment using the other forms.
2. **The Individual Assessment Tool** should be completed by all program team members and any external consultants that are important members of the team, e.g., evaluators, epidemiologists.; If staff are part-time or if consultants or staff only focus on one particular area and it is unlikely they will be asked to perform more general skills, then it should be determined which domains or competencies they should complete. The tool assesses current and desired skill levels, relevance to current job responsibilities and a summary of strengths and areas for improvement.
3. **The Program Assessment Tool** compiles scores from the Individual Assessments to create a visual overview of team member skills available to the program or gaps in skills, and allows for discussion of desired levels for the program, skills that are not being used effectively, external expertise available, top strengths, priority areas for improvement, or need for additional expertise.

Recommended Process for Using the Assessment Tools

States will need to determine time availability for completion of forms and discussion, which individual team members or consultants will complete the assessment process, and if a facilitator should be used.

Abbreviated Program Assessment (Appendix B)

Team members can complete the Assessment Tool individually and then come together for a discussion comparing their perceptions, or the entire assessment can be a group process. Discussion should result in a summary of current program strengths and areas for improvement. This allows prioritization of areas for more detailed assessment using the other tools. The rating scales for the Competency Domains and the Guiding Principles are identical. The Summary part of the form should include overall perceptions for both sections and lead to a discussion of next steps.

Comprehensive Program Assessment

Programs may choose to select a few Competency Domains to begin the process in one session and then complete the Competencies in the rest of the Domains in a subsequent session. At some point, however, the entire group of Competencies need to be discussed as a “whole” to be most effective for program planning and evaluation. Programs also can assess all of the Competencies in one session.

Step 1. State Oral Health Program staff and consultants, if appropriate, should complete the Individual Assessment Tool (Appendix C). If you use outside expertise or want to at some point in the future, you may want to engage them somewhere in the process. It also might be useful to involve other members of the administration with the short tools or in an overview of the competency assessment process to help them understand the purpose of the exercise and the process and to get their perceptions of competency priorities.

Directions for Completing the Individual Assessment Tool

- Each person will need a complete copy of the *Competencies for State Oral Health Programs* (SOHP Competencies file) that includes the tables of all four Skill Levels for each Competency. All

Competencies are listed under their respective Domains in the left hand column of the Individual Assessment Tool with an alphanumeric designation for easier listing on the Summary page (e.g., 1a means Domain 1, first competency).

- Each staff/consultant participating in the assessment should complete the Assessment Tool electronically so the tool can be printed and the ratings can be easily transferred to the Program Assessment Tool. Time to complete the tool will vary; once you get used to the scoring, it goes faster. If you are completing the entire tool, then plan on about ½ hour.
- Each staff rates his/her own skill level on each Competency as zero (0) or 1, 2, 3 or 4 depending on the descriptions listed in the Skill Level table; record the number in the second column labeled Current Level. The descriptions are examples of specific skills for each level. Before starting this task, the team needs to decide if the ratings SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT be interpreted as just the level of skill you are using in your current job position but the level you feel confident you can generally perform. This will make a difference if some people have skills that are not being used effectively.
- In the third column, record if you feel this Competency is of Low (L), Medium (M) or High (H) relevance to your current job responsibilities.
- In the fourth column, note what skill level you would like to have for this Competency. Record any clarifying comments in the Comments column.
- Next, review your responses to all the Competencies and select the skills that you feel are particular strengths; record them on the Summary page of the tool.
- Now select a few Competencies that you most want to improve and record them on the Summary page.
- Print the completed tool for your use and email it to the designated person who will transfer the numeric ratings into the Program Assessment Tool.

Step 2. The person summarizing the ratings should adapt the Program Assessment Tool (Appendix D) for the number of program team members that have completed individual forms. Record the names of the team members and their job titles or functions at the top of the form. Make sure you have received each person's completed assessment tool electronically. Transfer all of the individual current Competency ratings onto the Current Individual Levels column. Email electronically or provide copies of the individual forms and the Program Assessment Tool containing the individual assessment scores to the person who will be facilitating Step 3.

Step 3. Assemble all members of the team for a 2-4 hour meeting and provide copies of the Program Assessment Tool with the Current Individual Levels columns completed. Participants should also bring the printed copy of their completed Individual Assessments.

Directions for Completing the rest of the Program Assessment Tool

- As a group, start with the Desired Level for the Program column on the form and go through each Competency to arrive at a consensus about the highest skill level that is needed for the program as a whole to be successful. This assumes that all of the lower levels will also be present.
- Next, for each Competency, review the array of Competency levels noted in the Current Individual Levels columns and identify if the project team already possesses the desired level. Note that in the Comments column.
- If the project team does not possess the current desired level, discuss if external expertise is available to the program and if it is 1) adequate, 2) accessible, given any funding or other limitations you might have,

and 3) if it is readily available when you need it. Record Yes (and who) or No in the External Expertise column and any notes in the Comments column.

- Note any other observations about duplications, strengths, etc in the Comments column
- Review the Guiding Principles on the next to last page. Using the 1-5 rating scale of Poor through Excellent, discuss how well you feel the program currently demonstrates each Principle and note the score. Then discuss how well you would like the program to demonstrate each Principle and note the score in the next column. Record any observations in the Comments column.
- Go back through the Competencies and Guiding Principles and determine your top strengths and your priority areas for improvement. You can combine Competencies and Guiding Principles into broader statements if you want. Record this information on the last page of the form.

Step 3a

In addition to the Competencies Assessment Tools, ATDD has also created a brief Guidelines Assessment Tool (Appendix E) based on the 10 Essential Public Health Services to Promote Oral Health in the US and the Core PH Functions of Assessment, Policy Development and Assurance. These Essential Services form the basis for the *Guidelines for State and Territorial Oral Health Programs* and the matrix of State Roles and Examples of Activities (link to document is on ASTDD homepage (www.astdd.org)). The Guidelines Tool uses the same rating scale as the one used in the Abbreviated Program Assessment. The information from this form can be useful for the discussion in Step 4.

Step 4. This step involves creating a plan for program improvement as well as how to celebrate and market your strengths. Suggestions include:

- realigning current job responsibilities to make the most of team member skills
- creating some higher level positions for promoting current staff
- creating individual professional development plans and allocating time and resources for individual or group training
- identifying outside expertise that you might be able to use
- identifying the need for additional staff and writing job descriptions based on the Competencies that are needed for the program
- developing interview questions for job applicants based on the Competencies
- estimating what additional budgetary or other resources are needed for program maintenance or improvements
- making decisions about program or personnel due to budget reductions, without compromising program priorities or core functions
- creating timelines that are phased according to priorities
- using the tools as part of a strategic planning process to build program capacity
- developing a report based on your discussions that highlights your program strengths and future needs to share with stakeholders and health department officials.

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