



Online CBT Training to Facilitate Therapist Competency: Criteria to Assess Competency in CBT for Psychology Interns

Navy Medicine is collaborating with Atheneum Learning™ to provide online CBT training that facilitates competency and improves treatment outcomes. It is accessed at: <http://www.atheneumlearning.com/navy-bumed/>

The immediate value for Navy Medicine clinicians is that they learn how to apply Cognitive Behavior Therapy to a wide range of patients in various life contexts. The online program (Flexible CBT) teaches the best of evidence-based cognitive behavior therapy in three modules, with comprehensive training in: foundational knowledge, assessment and the therapy relationship, skills training and psychoeducation, and principles of decision-making to match treatment interventions to problems.

The online program guides trainees through an active developmental process to learn the knowledge, and then the skills required to practice as a competent CBT therapist. This document addresses: I. General Competency Areas; II. Evaluation of Competency in CBT; III. Core CBT skills that must be learned.

Note: Also suitable for evaluating trainees/ clinicians of other disciplines (psychiatrists, primary care physicians, social workers, nurses, licensed mental health professionals).

I. General Competency Areas

- 1) **Knowledge:** Foundational knowledge in CBT is the first step towards competency. With the online program, a trainee uses active and interactive learning techniques to gain an understanding of the model. Motivational enhancement strategies are used to maximize the clinician's learning process. Competency in basic to advanced knowledge is assessed two ways: objective learning games, and case-based questions requiring a written narrative to answer the questions (see Section II below).
- 2) **Skills:** Objectives for competent application of CBT are as follows:
 - a) **Assessment and Treatment Planning:** Learn assessment skills directed to the context of a patient's life circumstance with attention to therapeutic relationship, the integration of which becomes the clinical formulation. From here, the clinician learns to establish priorities with a plan for focused interventions—skills training and psychoeducation. “Formulation-driven” treatment planning is the template for competent clinical decision-making.

- b) **Interventions: Skills Training and Psychoeducation:** Based on the priorities established, the clinician learns to select and implement skills from the clinician’s toolbox to match the patient’s needs for immediate functional improvements. See Section III below for list of core skills.
- c) **Metrics for Treatment Outcome:** Learn to set realistic outcome objectives for patients and measure progress. The emphasis is on modest, achievable goals that will have a significantly positive impact on the patient’s life. Less is more. Learn to think this way using metrics that are clearly understandable for patients.

II. Evaluation of Competency in CBT

1) **Atheneum Learning’s Online Technology to Evaluate Competency:**

The objective measures of learning games and the case-based narrative questions use the power of the technology to evaluate competency of each trainee. While conventional methods can still be used (see below), the benefits of the online system include:

- a. **Objective Metrics—Learning Games:** The online system is efficiently implemented and provides objective metrics for trainees to be evaluated. No need for a separate test of knowledge as measures (i.e., learning games) are fully integrated with the online CBT training program.
- b. **Case Based Evaluation:** The “Open Journal” in the online program presents case-based questions that require narrative answers that are reviewed by supervisors and master trainers at Atheneum Learning.
- c. **Augment Conventional Methods:** The online system augments conventional methods of evaluation. Some of conventional methods are still important (e.g., case presentations and discussions with clinical supervisors, observation of trainees with patients).
- d. **Confidentiality:** Because of unique user licenses, a database is developed for each trainee that is confidential and comprehensive.
- e. **Competency Evaluation and Continuing Education (CEU/CME):** The objective metrics of the learning games are also used as criterion measures for CEU/CME. In effect, earning credits requires a demonstration of competency in CBT.

2) **Conventional Methods:** The online system enhances the conventional approach of self-evaluation and supervisory strategies typically used to assess a trainee’s knowledge and skills:

- a. Self-report “tests” completed by trainee to assess knowledge base of concepts and skills (not necessary with online system)
- b. Rating scale completed by supervisor on knowledge (not necessary with online system)

- c. Rating scale completed by supervisor to assess skills with patients—this requires direct observation
- d. Rating scales completed by supervisor to assess skills with patient, based on trainee's self report (non-observational) of what he did with a patient.

III. Core CBT Skills to Learn as a Therapist and Teach to Patients

- **Objective:** Achieve competency in working with patients in each skill area
- **First Tier Core skills:**
 - CBT Triangle: Thoughts—Behaviors—Feelings
 - Behavioral Activation and Behavioral Scheduling (Behavioral Skills to address lack of activity and social Isolation)
 - Chain Analysis – Behavioral Analysis—(Learn sequences of behaviors leading to problematic outcomes)
 - Mood Monitor / Thought Record
 - Identify Cognitive Distortions
 - Cognitive Restructuring
 - Self-Assessment Skills to identify patterns and develop a structured self awareness.
- **Second Tier Core Skills (these build on first tier skills):**
 - Skills for Crisis Plan
 - Relapse Prevention Plan
 - Communication skills to Ask for Help
 - Impulse Control Plan (used with Chain Analysis)
 - Distress Tolerance (Diversion and Tolerance/Acceptance)
 - Basic Skills to manage anxiety (e.g., Normalized breathing)
 - Basic Emotion Regulation Skills
 - Cognitive Problem Solving techniques
 - Assertiveness Skills
 - Basic Communication Skills to improve Listening and Expression