



British Columbia College of Social Workers

Setting SMART Objectives

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What Do You Actually Want to Learn?

Be SMART

Setting SMART Objectives

The CPD learning plan helps you to identify your learning goals so that you can maximize the benefits of undertaking professional development activities. Most people normally identify learning goals at this planning stage which are broad and all-encompassing e.g. *'increase my knowledge of the impact of substance abuse'*.

While this may be a very relevant learning goal in meeting your expanding scope of practice, it would be very difficult to measure this goal and therefore difficult to know if you have achieved it.

It is better to break down a broad learning goal into key learning objectives i.e. *'what are the impacts of substance misuse on young people's psycho-social development during the latter stages of adolescence?'*

Identifying a set of key learning objectives that will help you achieve your learning goals is a more assured way for the CPD learning plan to be effective.

One way to create good learning objectives is to ensure they are S.M.A.R.T.

Specific: What do you actually want to learn?

Are you setting learning goals that are clearly defined by specifically stating what you are trying to accomplish?

Measurable: How will I know?

How will you (and others) know when you have reached your goal?

Attainable: Is it realistic?

*Is attaining this goal realistic with effort and commitment?
Do you have the resources to achieve this goal? If not, how will you get them?*

Relevant: How does it benefit my knowledge, skills and practice?

Why is this goal important to you? Hone in on why it matters to you and to the recipients of the services you provide.

Timely: When will you achieve this goal?

What is the timeframe to complete this goal and significant points of progress?

Life Changes

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Despite the best laid plans, change is usually a constant part of working life. This change may be due to a new job, expanding scope of practice, resource constraints, personal circumstances etc. Therefore you will need to review your learning goals from time to time to make sure that they are still current and relevant to your professional development.

You may find that some goals are no longer relevant, that you need to modify existing ones or formulate new ones. It is important to remember that you can meet the requirements for CPD even though you have not met all the goals set out at the start of the year in your CPD learning plan. Moreover, you need to continually review and adapt your professional learning needs to the way you are thinking about and practising social work.

All Learning Has Value

Reflection is an important aspect of social work practice. Therefore it is important to reflect on things that go as planned and those that don't. Valuable learning can be acquired from reflecting on things that did not work out as planned, as this can give insight on where we need to further develop, or what we need to do differently in the future.

Be Accountable

When working towards achieving a goal, it is helpful to have people with whom you agree to 'check in' on a regular basis and 'open up' your practice. Discussing your progress with others can be a little daunting at first but a useful reflective exercise and external motivator. Please refer to the 'Peer Feedback-Guide'.

"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

Theodore Roosevelt

Celebrate Success

Setting SMART objectives is an effective way of breaking down learning goals; then select the right learning activities that are relevant to achieving these goals. We encourage you to use the SMART tool to achieve your learning goals and then to celebrate your successes – however small!

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