

Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Competencies

These are entry-level competencies for the psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) and supplement the core competencies for all nurse practitioners.

The PMHNP focuses on individuals across the lifespan (infancy through old age), families, and populations across the lifespan at risk for developing and/or having a diagnosis of psychiatric disorders or mental health problems. The PMHNP provides primary mental health care to patients seeking mental health services in a wide range of settings. Primary mental health care provided by the PMHNP involves relationship-based, continuous and comprehensive services, necessary for the promotion of optimal mental health, prevention, and treatment of psychiatric disorders and health maintenance. This includes assessment, diagnosis, and management of mental health and psychiatric disorders across the lifespan.

See the "Introduction" for how to use this document and to identify other critical resources to supplement these competencies.

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Scientific Foundation Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critically analyzes data and evidence for improving advanced nursing practice. 2. Integrates knowledge from the humanities and sciences within the context of nursing science. 3. Translates research and other forms of knowledge to improve practice processes and outcomes. 4. Develops new practice approaches based on the integration of research, theory, 		Neurobiology Advanced Pathophysiology, Advanced Pharmacotherapeutics, Advanced Health Assessment Psychotherapy theories Genomics Developmental neuroscience Interpersonal neurobiology Recovery and resiliency

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	and practice knowledge		<p>Trauma informed care</p> <p>Toxic stress</p> <p>Adverse Childhood Events Studies (ACES) Studies</p> <p>Allopathic stress</p> <p>Advanced Practice and Interprofessional psychiatric theoretical frameworks</p> <p>Theories of change in individuals, systems</p> <p>Stigma issues</p> <p>Role of the PMHNP in changing policies</p> <p>Aging Science</p> <p>Caregiver stress</p>
Leadership Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assumes complex and advanced leadership roles to initiate and guide change. 2. Provides leadership to foster collaboration with multiple stakeholders (e.g. patients, community, integrated health care teams, and policy makers) to improve health care. 3. Demonstrates leadership that uses critical and reflective thinking. 4. Advocates for improved access, quality and cost effective health care. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participates in community and population-focused programs that promote mental health and prevent or reduce risk of mental health problems and psychiatric disorders. 2. Advocates for complex patient and family medicolegal rights and issues. 3. Collaborates with interprofessional colleagues about advocacy and policy issues at the local, state, and national related to reducing health disparities and improving clinical outcomes for populations with mental health problems and psychiatric disorders. 	Interprofessional practice competencies

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Quality Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Advances practice through the development and implementation of innovations incorporating principles of change. 6. Communicates practice knowledge effectively both orally and in writing. 7. Participates in professional organizations and activities that influence advanced practice nursing and/or health outcomes of a population focus. 	Evaluates the appropriate uses of seclusion and restraints in care processes.	<p>QSEN competencies</p> <p>Reflective Practice</p> <p>Self-awareness and self-care</p> <p>QI process in measuring outcomes of care</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uses best available evidence to continuously improve quality of clinical practice. 2. Evaluates the relationships among access, cost, quality, and safety and their influence on health care. 3. Evaluates how organizational structure, care processes, financing, marketing and policy decisions impact the quality of health care. 4. Applies skills in peer review to promote a culture of excellence. 5. Anticipates variations in practice and is proactive in implementing interventions to ensure quality. 			

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Practice Inquiry Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Provides leadership in the translation of new knowledge into practice. 7. Generates knowledge from clinical practice to improve practice and patient outcomes. 8. Applies clinical investigative skills to improve health outcomes. 9. Leads practice inquiry, individually or in partnership with others. 10. Disseminates evidence from inquiry to diverse audiences using multiple modalities. 11. Analyze clinical guidelines for individualized application into practice 		<p>Research knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research utilization • Research process <p>Skill in use of EBP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating outcomes • Integrating results into practice
Technology and Information Literacy Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrates appropriate technologies for knowledge management to improve health care. 2. Translates technical and scientific health information appropriate for various users' needs. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.a Assesses the patient's and caregiver's educational needs to provide effective, personalized health care. 2.b Coaches the patient and caregiver for positive behavioral change. 3. Demonstrates information literacy 		<p>Electronic medical records</p> <p>Electronic prescriptions</p> <p>Virtual patient care</p> <p>Distance linked services (Telemedicine/Telepsychiatry)</p> <p>Social networking</p> <p>Laws for technology</p> <p>Cultural and Linguistic literacy</p> <p>Data banks and quality assurance findings matched by evidence based best practices in Web-based, tele-, written, oral and electronic</p>

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	skills in complex decision making. 4. Contributes to the design of clinical information systems that promote safe, quality and cost effective care. 5. Uses technology systems that capture data on variables for the evaluation of nursing care.		communications to enhance care.
Policy Competencies	1. Demonstrates an understanding of the interdependence of policy and practice. 2. Advocates for ethical policies that promote access, equity, quality, and cost. 3. Analyzes ethical, legal, and social factors influencing policy development. 4. Contributes in the development of health policy. 5. Analyzes the implications of health policy across disciplines. 6. Evaluates the impact of globalization on health care policy development.	Employs opportunities to influence health policy to reduce the impact of stigma on services for prevention and treatment of mental health problems and psychiatric disorders.	Healthcare/public policy knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws and regulations (e.g., Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA], Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS], The Joint Commission, Accreditation Healthcare Organizations, documentation, coding/reimbursement, American with Disabilities Act, mental health parity), • Principles of advocacy to influence socially responsible policy, including consumer focused care . • Laws, procedures for seclusion and restraint for hospitals/psychiatric units, long term care (LTC is inclusive of nursing homes)
Health Delivery System Competencies	1. Applies knowledge of organizational practices and complex systems to improve health care delivery. 2. Effects health care change using		Interprofessional practice competencies Scope of practice knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and Standards of Practice • Legal/ethical issues

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	<p>broad based skills including negotiating, consensus-building, and partnering.</p> <p>3. Minimizes risk to patients and providers at the individual and systems level.</p> <p>4. Facilitates the development of health care systems that address the needs of culturally diverse populations, providers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>5. Evaluates the impact of health care delivery on patients, providers, other stakeholders, and the environment.</p> <p>6. Analyzes organizational structure, functions and resources to improve the delivery of care.</p> <p>7. Collaborates in planning for transitions across the continuum of care.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory agencies <p>Coordination of services knowledge of available resources (e.g., consultation resources, evidence based practice, community resources, government funded studies/grants, school resources)</p> <p>Models of integrative care skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining and utilizing appropriate collateral information • Providing and utilizing consultations and referrals • Communicating with other health care providers
Ethics Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrates ethical principles in decision making. 2. Evaluates the ethical consequences of decisions. 3. Applies ethically sound solutions to complex issues related to individuals, populations and systems of care. 		<p>Boundaries, duty to report, duty to warn, confidentiality, reporting abuse, seeks consultation, knowing scope of practice, knowing personal limits, safety</p> <p>State mental health laws</p> <p>State laws related to involuntary hospitalization and commitment</p> <p>Influence on policy by monitoring of policy and</p>

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Independent Practice Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functions as a licensed independent practitioner. 2. Demonstrates the highest level of accountability for professional practice. 3. Practices independently managing previously diagnosed and undiagnosed patients. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.a Provides the full spectrum of health care services to include health promotion, disease prevention, health protection, anticipatory guidance, counseling, disease management, palliative, and end of life care. 3.b Uses advanced health assessment skills to differentiate between normal variations of normal and abnormal findings. 3.c Employs screening and diagnostic strategies in the development of diagnoses. 3.d Prescribes medications within scope of practice. 3.e Manages the health/illness status of patients and families over time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develops an age-appropriate treatment plan for mental health problems and psychiatric disorders based on biopsychosocial theories, evidence-based standards of care, and practice guidelines. 2. Includes differential diagnosis for mental health problems and psychiatric disorders. 3. Assess impact of acute and chronic medical problems on psychiatric treatment. 4. Conducts individual and group psychotherapy. 5. Applies supportive, psychodynamic principles, cognitive-behavioral and other evidence based psychotherapy-ies to both brief and long term individual practice. 6. Applies recovery oriented principles and trauma focused care to individuals. 7. Demonstrates best practices of family approaches to care. 8. Plans care to minimize the development of complications and promote function and quality of life. 9. Treats acute and chronic psychiatric disorders and mental health problems. 10. Safely prescribes pharmacologic agents for patients with mental health problems and psychiatric disorders. 11. Ensures patient safety through the appropriate prescription and management of 	<p>active communication to appropriate parties to affect policy for optimal healthcare.</p> <p>Age Specific Psychiatric Disorders for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging adult (65 years and older) • Adult (18-64 years) • Adolescent (13-17 years) • Pre-Adolescent (10-12 years) • Child (3-9 years) • Infant (Prebirth-2 years) <p>Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and Physical Exam • Psychiatric Evaluation • Mental Status Exam Concepts related to screening instruments (e.g., specificity and sensitivity, reliability and validity) <p>Type of screening instruments (e.g., depression screening, Mini Mental Status Exam (MMSE), alcohol screening, ADHD screening, anxiety screening, drug screening, serum screening)</p> <p>Clinical guidelines</p> <p>Screening tools</p> <p>Clinical evaluation tools</p> <p>Medical co-morbidities and differentials</p> <p>Theoretical foundations of individual, group and family approaches</p>

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	<p>4. Provides patient-centered care recognizing cultural diversity and the patient or designee as a full partner in decision-making.</p> <p>4.a Works to establish a relationship with the patient characterized by mutual respect, empathy, and collaboration.</p> <p>4.b Creates a climate of patient-centered care to include confidentiality, privacy, comfort, emotional support, mutual trust, and respect.</p> <p>4.c Incorporates the patient's cultural and spiritual preferences, values, and beliefs into health care.</p> <p>4.d Preserves the patient's control over decision making by negotiating a mutually acceptable plan of care.</p>	<p>pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions.</p> <p>12. Explain the risks and benefits of treatment to the patient and their family.</p> <p>13. Identifies the role of PMHNP in risk-mitigation strategies in the areas of opiate use and substance abuse clients.</p> <p>14. Seeks consultation when appropriate to enhance one's own practice.</p> <p>15. Uses self-reflective practice to improve care.</p> <p>16. Provides consultation to health care providers and others to enhance quality and cost-effective services.</p> <p>17. Guides the patient in evaluating the appropriate use of complementary and alternative therapies.</p> <p>18. Uses individualized outcome measure to evaluate psychiatric care.</p> <p>19. Manages psychiatric emergencies across all settings.</p> <p>20. Refers patient appropriately.</p> <p>21. Facilitates the transition of patients across levels of care.</p> <p>22. Uses outcomes to evaluate care.</p> <p>23. Attends to the patient- nurse practitioner relationship as a vehicle for therapeutic change.</p> <p>24. Maintains a therapeutic relationship over time with individuals, groups, and families to promote positive clinical outcomes.</p> <p>25. Therapeutically concludes the nurse-patient relationship transitioning the patient to other levels of care, when appropriate.</p>	<p>Theoretical foundations of trauma-focused care and recovery models of care</p> <p>Gender differences and equality</p> <p>Foster care, caregiver stress</p> <p>Simulation of crisis intervention, risk assessment, other pertinent areas</p> <p>Epidemiology/risk analysis knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevalence of disorders or behaviors in diverse populations across the life span Contributing risk factors and potential barriers to health promotion and disease prevention (e.g., socioeconomic, biological, environmental, community specific variables) <p>Epidemiology/risk analysis skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk assessment (e.g., violence, abuse, neglect, suicide, psychopathology) <p>Health Promotion and Disease Prevention</p> <p>Health behavior knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health behavior guidelines (e.g., gender-based recommendations, exercise, lifestyle, familial factors that predisposes one to disease, cultural and societal influences/stigmas) <p>Health behavior skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting and implementing appropriate health behavior guidelines to specific situations based on individual patient

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		<p>26. Demonstrates ability to address sexual/physical abuse, substance abuse, sexuality, and spiritual conflict across the lifespan.</p> <p>27. Applies therapeutic relationship strategies based on theories and research evidence to reduce emotional distress, facilitate cognitive and behavioral change, and foster personal growth.</p> <p>28. Apply principles of self-efficacy/empowerment and other self-management theories in promoting relationship development and behavior change.</p> <p>29. Identifies and maintains professional boundaries to preserve the integrity of the therapeutic process.</p> <p>30. Teaches patients, families and groups about treatment options with respect to developmental, physiological, cognitive, cultural ability and readiness.</p> <p>31. Provides psychoeducation to individuals, families, and groups regarding mental health problems and psychiatric disorders.</p> <p>32. Modifies treatment approaches based on the ability and readiness to learn.</p> <p>33. Considers motivation and readiness to improve self-care and healthy behavior when teaching individuals, families and groups of patients.</p> <p>34. Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate use of seclusion and restraints.</p> <p>35. Documents appropriate use of seclusion and restraints.</p>	<p>Variances</p> <p>Growth and development across the lifespan knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and development theories and concepts (including spiritual, cultural, cognitive, emotional, psychosexual, physical abilities) • Variances <p>Growth and development across the lifespan skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental assessment <p>Screening instruments (including invasive and noninvasive screenings) skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting and implementing appropriate screening instrument(s), interpreting results, and making recommendations and referrals <p>Prevention activities knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary, Secondary and Tertiary <p>Prevention activities (e.g., health promotion, immunizations, anticipatory guidance, parenting skills, lifestyle modifications, psychosocial rehabilitation activities, in-home family treatments, risk reduction, pharmacology, CAM, self-care)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to care to underserved populations <p>Prevention activities skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance, teaching, coaching, collaborating (with patient, family, and community)

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing readiness and capacity (e.g., change, learning, health literacy) • Implementing early intervention activities <p>Assessment of Acute and Chronic Illness</p> <p>Anatomy, physiology, development and pathophysiology across the lifespan</p> <p>knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal anatomy and physiology (including genetics, normal aging) • Pathophysiology <p>Comprehensive psychiatric evaluation knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychopathology (including DSM V signs and symptoms and neurobiology) <p>Comprehensive psychiatric evaluation skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing clinical signs and symptoms of psychiatric illness • Differentiating between pathophysiological and psychopathological conditions • Performing and interpreting a comprehensive and/or interval history and physical examination (including laboratory and diagnostic studies) • Performing and interpreting a mental status examination • Performing and interpreting a psychosocial assessment and family psychiatric history • Performing and interpreting a functional assessment (activities of daily living, occupational, social, leisure, educational,

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			<p> coping skills) </p> <p> Diagnostic reasoning knowledge of: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostic reasoning process • Diagnostic criteria (e.g., DSM V current International Classification of Disease) <p> Diagnostic reasoning skill in: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and prioritizing a differential diagnoses list • Formulating diagnoses according to DSM V based on assessment data • Differentiating between normal/abnormal age related physiological and psychological symptoms/changes <p> The Nurse Practitioner and Patient Relationship </p> <p> Therapeutic communication knowledge of: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic communication principles, techniques and ethics (e.g., boundaries, phases of the therapeutic relationship, conflict of interest, self-awareness, negotiation and collaboration) • Principles of family dynamics and social support systems • Cultural competency (e.g., language, ethnicity, race, religious, spiritual, biopsychosocial, urban/rural, homeless, migrant, Gay-Bisexual-Lesbian-Transgender/Transsexual orientation, corrections/forensic, uninsured and underinsured, health disparities)

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			<p>Therapeutic communication skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating a therapeutic relationship with patient and family/support system (e.g., developing therapeutic alliances, assessing literacy, health literacy, spiritual needs, and barriers to communication) • Maintaining a therapeutic relationship with patient and family/support system (e.g., encouraging adherence and clinical engagement, maintaining therapeutic boundaries) • Terminating a therapeutic relationship with patient and family/support system (e.g., evaluating the effectiveness of a therapeutic relationship, appropriate closure and transitioning) <p>Legal/business/ethical issues knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical principles and issues (e.g., termination, risk/benefit of disclosure, professional boundaries, patient autonomy, advocacy, consent/assent to treatment, consumer focused care) • Legal principles and issues (e.g., conflict of interest, patient rights and responsibilities, Health Information Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA], professional obligations, duty to warn) • Business principles and issues (e.g., financial agreements, contracts for services)

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			<p>Clinical Management</p> <p>Pharmacotherapeutic knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current pharmacological concepts (e.g., pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, interactions, Complementary/Alternative medicines [CAM]) • Standards of practice and clinical guidelines, evidenced-based practice • Safety and continuous quality improvement <p>Pharmacotherapeutic skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting appropriate medication plan (e.g., risk/benefit, patient preference, developmental considerations, financial, the process of informed consent, symptom management) • Evaluating patient response and modify plan as necessary • Documenting (e.g., adverse reaction, patient response, changes to plan of care) <p>Psychotherapy, psychoeducation, complementary/alternative medicine knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of treatment modalities (models and practices) • Standards of practice and clinical guidelines, evidenced-based practice • Safety and continuous quality improvement

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			<p>Psychotherapy, psychoeducation, complementary/alternative medicine skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting appropriate therapeutic plan (e.g., risk/benefit, patient preferences, developmental considerations, financial, the process of informed consent) • Implementing appropriate therapeutic plan • Evaluating patient response and modify plan as necessary • Documenting (e.g., adverse reaction, patient response, changes to plan of care) <p>Crisis management (e.g., chemical and physical restraints, sedation, reporting abuse and neglect, involuntary hospitalization, safety assessment, duty to warn, end of life, institutionalization, residential treatment, foster care, military service) knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories and concepts associated with crisis management (e.g., intervention risk vs. benefit, level of risk, safety, lethality assessment, stress adaptation, crisis theories, disaster response) • Standards of practice and clinical guidelines, evidenced-based practice • Safety, continuous quality improvement, and patient rights <p>Crisis management skill in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting appropriate intervention (e.g., risk/benefit, patient preference, developmental considerations, the

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			<p>process of informed consent, least restrictive environment/invasive treatment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing appropriate intervention • Evaluating patient response and modify plan as necessary • Documenting (e.g., adverse reaction, patient response, changes to plan of care) • Seclusion & restraint <p>Neurobiology and genetics of mental illnesses Theories and application of behavior change</p>