**Ontario College of
Social Workers and
Social Service Workers**

CONTINUING COMPETENCE PROGRAM

Instruction Guide

SECOND EDITION, 2017

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

The primary purpose of the Continuing Competence Program (CCP) is to promote quality assurance with respect to the practice of the professions of social work and social service work, and to encourage registrants to enhance their practice in an ongoing way. This is one way in which the College fulfills its mandate of protecting the public.

In accordance with the Registration Regulation made under the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998* all registrants (except those holding a retired class of certificate of registration) must provide evidence of continuing competence to practise social work or social service work, according to the guidelines set by the College. The expectation that registrants remain current with knowledge and practice relevant to their area of professional practice is set out in the Standards of Practice. So too is the expectation that registrants demonstrate their commitment to ongoing professional development.

A major goal of the College is to encourage its registrants to strive for excellence in their practice. Careful consideration has been given to ensuring that participation in the CCP is feasible for all registrants, and that learning activities are accessible.

In developing its CCP, which was launched in 2009, the College carried out extensive research of the continuing competence, continuing education and quality assurance programs of other regulatory bodies in Ontario, other provinces and the United States. In 2014–2015 the College conducted an evaluation of the CCP, seeking feedback from registrants across the province. Based on the registrants' input, several program components and documents have been modified to facilitate the completion of the program requirements.

The CCP is based on an adult education model. All registrants (except those holding a retired class of certificate of registration) are required to participate. Registrants must, at any time required by the College, provide evidence satisfactory to the College that they have completed the CCP.

The Steps Involved in Completing the Continuing Competence Program (CCP)

STEP 1

- **Review** *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023* and any other documents posted for review in this CCP year

- **Reflect on the standards** as they relate to your practice or your readiness for practice

- **Complete the checklist** to indicate that you have completed the review

STEP 2

- Complete the **Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)** by:

  - Identifying **your strengths**

  - Asking **a peer, colleague, supervisor and/or client for feedback (if applicable)**

  - Considering **your learning needs and interests**

  - Developing **learning goal(s)**

STEP 3

- Transfer your learning goal(s) to the **Professional Development Plan (PDP)**

- Determine the **learning activities/experiences** you will complete to meet your learning goal(s)

- **Complete each learning activity/experience and record it on the PDP**

- **Retain all documentation** (receipts, certificates, slides, etc.) as proof of completion of your learning activities

STEP 4

- Complete the **Declaration of Participation in the CCP** as part of the Annual Renewal of Registration process

- Retain all CCP documents in your **CCP Portfolio[1]** for 10 years

- Begin to **think about goals and learning activities** you will undertake as part of the CCP in the year to come

- **Complete these steps each year** in order to comply with the College's CCP requirements
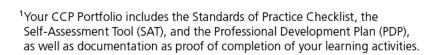
[1] Your CCP Portfolio includes the Standards of Practice Checklist, the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), and the Professional Development Plan (PDP), as well as documentation as proof of completion of your learning activities.

The Steps Involved in the Continuing Competence Program

It is important to familiarize yourself with the CCP, its requirements and the steps involved. Registrants are strongly encouraged to read the entire Instruction Guide and review the Frequently Asked Questions (pg.9).

Step 1. Review *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and Other Documents

In this step you are required to:

- Review *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023* and any other required documents.

- Reflect on the Standards of Practice as they relate to your practice or your readiness for practice.

- Complete the Standards of Practice Checklist.

As a regulated professional, you are accountable for your practice. You are expected to work from a sound knowledge base, and demonstrate well-developed skills and sound judgment in carrying out your professional responsibilities. It is also expected that you will engage in learning activities to enhance your practice on an ongoing basis throughout your career. Even if you are not currently practising, are on leave or are an inactive registrants, you are still required to participate in the Continuing Competence Program (CCP) each year.

The fundamental responsibility for continuing competence rests with you.

The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023 sets out minimum standards of professional practice and conduct for all College registrants. This is in accordance with one of the objects of the College as stated in the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998* "to establish and enforce professional standards and ethical standards applicable to members of the College."

The Standards of Practice are meant to be applied to your practice in conjunction with any applicable legislation and with your professional judgment. Reviewing the Standards of Practice will assist you in identifying your strengths as well as areas in which you need or want to learn and develop as a professional. After reviewing *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and any other required documentation, complete the Standards of Practice Checklist.

Click on this link for *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023*. Click on this link to review any other required documentation.

Step 2. Complete the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)

In this step you are required to complete the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) by:

- Identifying your strengths.

- Asking for peer, colleague, supervisor and/or client feedback (if applicable).

- Considering your learning needs and interests.

- Developing learning goals.

Reviewing the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice has assisted you in assessing your understanding of the minimum standards that guide your practice. Step 2 is intended to help you to reflect on your practice, identify your strengths, consider your learning needs and interests, and decide where you wish to focus your learning in the year ahead. If you are not currently practising, Step 2 will help you to focus on areas where you wish to enhance your knowledge and skills to assist you in being ready for your return to practice.

Feedback from others (peers, colleagues, supervisors and/or clients, if applicable) is another helpful way to identify your strengths and opportunities for learning and growth, and determine where you wish to focus your learning.

Complete the SAT using the information you have gathered.

Step 3. Complete the Professional Development Plan (PDP)

In this step you are required to:

- Transfer your learning goals to the Professional Development Plan (PDP).

- Determine the learning activities/experiences you will complete to meet your learning goal(s).

- Complete each learning activity/experience and record it on the PDP.

- Retain all documentation (receipts, certificates, slides, etc.) as proof of completion of your learning activities.

Now that you have identified your learning goals in Step 2, you will need to transfer them to the PDP. You will determine the learning activities you will complete to meet your learning goals, and record these on your PDP, as well as recording when you complete each learning activity.

It is essential that you retain all CCP documentation (e.g. receipts, certificates, slides) as proof of completion of your learning activities.

Step 4. Complete the Declaration of Participation in the CCP and Retain Your CCP Portfolio

In this step you are required to:

- Complete the Declaration of Participation in the CCP as part of the Annual Renewal of Registration process.

- Retain all CCP documentation (your CCP Portfolio) for 10 years.

- Begin to think about goals and learning activities you will undertake as part of the CCP in the year to come.

- Complete these steps each year in order to comply with the College's CCP requirements.

You will be required to complete the Declaration of Participation in the CCP as part of your annual renewal of registration process.

You are required to retain all your CCP documentation, (which forms your **CCP Portfolio**), for a minimum of 10 years. Registrants must, at any time required by the College, provide evidence satisfactory to the College that they have completed the CCP. Your portfolio may also provide a useful record for you to track your professional development over time.

The CCP documentation that you are required to keep each year, in your CCP Portfolio, includes:

- Standards of Practice Checklist

- Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)

- Professional Development Plan (PDP)

- Documentation as proof of completion of your learning activities. This could include: receipts, certificates, slides, or a list of books or articles you have read. Keeping an electronic folder of evidence may provide greater flexibility, however a paper folder is also acceptable. Generally, information provided by a registrant in connection with the CCP will only be used by the Professional Practice Department of the College, however, in certain circumstances, information may be shared with other departments of the College. For more information, refer to Frequently Asked Questions, Question 14.

Need Help?

If you are having difficulty completing any of the components of the Continuing Competence Program, require the material in an alternate format, or have questions, please contact the College's Professional Practice Department, 416-972-9882 or 1-877-828-9380, or email ccp@ocswssw.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the requirements of the Continuing Competence Program?

The Continuing Competence Program is based on *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023.* You will be required to:

- Review *The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Third Edition, 2023* and other documents posted for review (College articles, Practice Notes and Practice Guidelines, for example) in this CCP year.

- Complete the **Standards of Practice Checklist** to indicate you have completed the review.

- Complete the **Self-Assessment Tool (SAT)** by identifying your strengths, learning needs, and areas of interest.

- Develop learning goal(s).

- Transfer your learning goal(s) to the **Professional Development Plan (PDP).**

- Determine the learning activities/experiences you will complete to meet your learning goal(s).

- Complete each learning activity/experience and record it on the PDP.

- Retain all documentation (e.g. receipts, certificates, slides, etc.) as proof of completion of your learning activities.

- Complete the **Declaration of Participation in the CCP** as part of the annual renewal of registration process.

Although you are not required to submit your Continuing Competence Program materials to the College, you must retain your **CCP Portfolio** which contains the Standards of Practice Checklist, the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), the Professional Development Plan (PDP), and documentation as proof of completion of your learning activities. You must retain your CCP Portfolio for a minimum of 10 years. Registrants must, at any time required by the College, provide evidence satisfactory to the College that they have completed the CCP. (Refer to Questions 10 and 14.)

2. Why does the College have a mandatory Continuing Competence Program?

The implementation of a Continuing Competence Program is one of the legislated responsibilities of the College. According to the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998* the primary duty of the College in carrying out its objects is "to serve and protect the public interest." Among the objects of the College are:

- To establish and enforce professional standards and ethical standards applicable to College registrants.

- To promote high standards and quality assurance with respect to social work and social service work.

Further to this, the Registration Regulation made under the Act states that the following is a condition of a certificate of registration:

> "The member must provide evidence satisfactory to the College of the member's continuing competence to practise social work or social service work, as the case may be, in accordance with the guidelines approved by Council from time to time and published and distributed by the College to members of the College."
> O Reg. 383/00, s.6

3. What does continuing competence mean for me?

As a regulated professional, you are expected to display a sound knowledge base, well-developed skills and sound judgment in carrying out your professional responsibilities. You are accountable for your actions and are expected to engage in activities to enhance your practice.

The fundamental responsibility for ensuring continuing competence rests with you.

4. How do I know that the College won't evaluate me based on how I rate myself on the Self-Assessment Tool?

The purpose of the Continuing Competence Program is to promote high standards and quality assurance with respect to social work and social service work. In keeping with an adult education model, the program is based on the assumption that all registrants have areas of strength, as well as areas in which they can further develop their knowledge and skills. The College is mandated to ensure that all registrants (except those holding a retired class of certificate of registration) are actively involved in the process of self-evaluation, goal setting, and learning activities; however it does not intend to "police" the practice of registrants. The ongoing responsibility to maintain competence, and the specifics of a registrant's self-assessment, learning goals and professional development plan are the professional responsibility of the individual and not determined by the College.

5. Should I be collecting credits or hours?

It is not necessary to collect either credits or hours as the Continuing Competence Program is not based on either of these criteria. However, it is expected that you maintain a record of your learning activities and experiences.

6. How much time should I invest in continuing competence?

It is recommended that registrants spend a minimum of 25 hours a year on meeting their learning goal(s); however in many cases, registrants will devote far more time than this. The learning activities and experiences you identify will vary in time commitment. What is most important is that you take the necessary steps to meet your learning goal(s). While some goals will be met within a short period of time, others will require months or even years.

7. Can volunteer work count as professional development?

Professional development activities stem from the learning goals you've set for yourself through the self-assessment process. As long as a learning activity or experience clearly relates to a learning goal and the Standards of Practice, it is acceptable.

8. Do I need to send continuing competence accomplishments to the College?

No. However, you do need to retain your CCP Portfolio for a minimum of 10 years. (Refer to Question 1.) You will be required to make an annual declaration to the College of your participation in the program at the time of annual renewal. Registrants must, at any time required by the College, provide evidence satisfactory to the College that they have completed the CCP.

9. Why should I complete the Self-Assessment Tool? I'm already competent.

Learning is an ongoing process. By completing the self-assessment you will be able to assess your strengths and identify the areas that you can enhance. This will enable you to develop a learning plan based on your personal learning needs. By developing your own plan, you have a greater chance of attaining the goals you have set for yourself.

10. What will happen if I don't participate in the Continuing Competence Program?

Participation in the Continuing Competence Program means, on an annual basis, completing the Standards of Practice Checklist, the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), and the Professional Development Plan (PDP), and engaging in the learning activities identified in the PDP. As evidence of their participation, registrants are required to complete the Declaration of Participation in the CCP as part of their annual renewal of registration process.

According to the Registration Regulation made under the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act,* providing evidence satisfactory to the College of continuing competence is a condition of a certificate of registration. **The Registrar may suspend a registrant's certificate of registration for failing to comply with this condition.** If your certificate of registration is suspended, you will no longer be able to:

 • Use the protected title "social worker," "registered social worker," "social service worker," "registered social service worker" or their French equivalents.

 • Represent or hold out, expressly or by implication that you are a social worker, registered social worker, social service worker or registered social service worker.

It is an act of professional misconduct to engage in the practice of social work or social service work while your certificate of registration is suspended. In addition, a notation of the suspension and the reason for the suspension will be entered on the College's Register. This information is available to the public.

Not participating in the College's CCP, not providing evidence of participation or providing false information about your participation in the program may also be grounds for professional misconduct. Registrants must, at any time required by the College, provide evidence satisfactory to the College that they have completed the CCP. The College will take appropriate steps to respond to such conduct, including referring the matter to a statutory committee of the College.

11. How often do I have to complete the CCP?

Depending on your learning plan, some learning activities may be completed quickly while others may be more long-term. You will be required, however, to complete the Standards of Practice Checklist, the SAT and the PDP on an annual basis. These activities will help you develop your learning plan and identify appropriate learning activities and experiences. Continuing competence is just that—continuing. (Also refer to Question 6.)

12 I'm a new graduate. Do I have to participate in the Continuing Competence Program?

Yes. Learning continues throughout one's career, regardless of years of experience.

13. I'm on maternity/parental/sick leave. Do I still have to participate?

As a regulated professional, you are expected to participate in the CCP, regardless of your work status. However you can ensure that your learning plan and the learning opportunities you've identified are flexible and accessible. Note that learning activities and experiences can include self-directed reading, online learning, and other informal learning activities.

14. Is the information I submit through the Continuing Competence Program confidential?

Generally yes, but exceptions are possible, as described below:

You will be required to submit an annual declaration verifying that you are participating in the CCP according to the Guidelines for the Continuing Competence Program. The College may also require that you produce your CCP Portfolio (which includes the Standards of Practice Checklist, Self-Assessment Tool, Professional Development Plan, and evidence of completion of your learning activities). Registrants must, at any time required by the College, provide evidence satisfactory to the College that they have completed the CCP. Generally, information provided to the College by a registrant in connection with the CCP will only be used by the department of the College that administers the CCP.

Registrants should understand, however, there may be circumstances where information obtained in connection with a registrant's participation in the program or the registrant's failure to participate in the program may be shared with other departments of the College. For example, a registrant's failure to provide information regarding his or her participation in the program may raise a concern about whether a registrant has committed an act of professional misconduct (Refer to Question 10). In addition, if there is a complaint made about you, the Complaints Committee may examine "all the information and documents that the College has that are relevant to the complaint." The information regarding your participation in the CCP may be relevant to a complaint and shared with the Complaints Committee (and other departments of the College).

15. Will the College provide continuing education?

The College website has a "Resources" section which contains educational materials for registrants, such as Practice Notes, Practice Guidelines, informational articles (e.g. "Duty to Report under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act" and "Medical Assistance in Dying") and videos.

In keeping with the adult education model, through the CCP, each registrant is expected to identify their own professional learning needs and activities. The College's definition of learning activities is broad in order to allow all registrants to fully participate in the program. (See "Learning Activities/Experiences," page 14.)

16. Does the College approve courses and workshops for professional development credits?

No. As indicated in Question 5, the CCP is not based on credits or hours.

17. Can I substitute a copy of my annual performance appraisal for the
Self-Assessment Tool?

No. The CCP uses a Self-Assessment Tool, based on the Standards of Practice, to help you to evaluate your own strengths and learning needs. An employer's evaluation is more limited, focusing on your performance of workplace duties. These are different processes and documents. Certainly, your workplace performance appraisal may provide you with feedback suggesting practice areas in need of improvement, from which you may develop aspects of your learning plan and goals. Likewise, aspects of the CCP may complement your workplace performance appraisal. You may decide to retain a copy of your performance appraisal along with your CCP documents.

18. Is the material from the College available in French or in an alternate format?

Yes. If you have indicated on your registration form that you prefer all correspondence in French, then automatically the material will be forwarded to you in French. The CCP materials are available in alternate format upon request.

For more information, contact the College's Professional Practice Department at 1-877- 828-9380, 416-972-9882 or email ccp@ocswssw.org.

Learning Activities

To be used when completing the Professional Development Plan

A learning activity must relate to a learning goal identified through the self-assessment, and relate to the practice of social work or social service work. It is not solely a part of one's work assignment.

Learning activities are broadly defined in order to be accessible to registrants. Examples are shown in the following table:

Learning Goals	Examples of Learning Activities
1) Continuing Education As participant, organizer or presenter	• Conference • Course • Lecture • Seminar • Workshop
2) Research and Publication	• Conducting research • Preparation of an article for publication
3) Independent Study	• Reading books, journal articles • Distance education • Internet search, courses • Observation of other's setting/practice • Reviewing the College's website and other College communications such as eBulletins, newsletters
4) Applied Learning	• Structured supervision • In-service training • Co-therapy/co-leading group • Observation of other's setting/practice
5) Professional Networking	• Peer consultation • Study group
6) Teaching/Mentoring	• Course or seminar series • Supervision of staff or students
7) Professional Organizations/Committee Work	• Participate in a task group outside one's work setting • Participate in a committee of a professional association • Participate in a committee of the College • Board member of a professional association or other organization relevant to the profession