Capacity assessment for children and youth as excerpted from the *Practice Guidelines for Consent and Confidentiality with Children and Youth*

This resource is a quick reference of the two-part test for capacity found in Part 5: Decision-Making Process for Children and Youth Clients, page 14. Registrants are encouraged to read the entirety of the *Practice Guidelines for Consent and Confidentiality with Children and Youth.*

Sample capacity assessment questions and considerations for counselling

This is not prescriptive. It is provided as a sample only for ideas for how College registrants can test for capacity for counselling for a child or youth client. This can be customized for other social work and social service work treatments and services.

Two-part test for capacity	Questions College registrants can ask clients	Capacity assessment ideas
Part 1: Ability to understand the information about the decision	• Tell me in your own words what has been happening in your life. • Why are you here? • Do you know what counselling is? • Do you know anyone who has gone to counselling? Have you? • Tell me in your own words about counselling. • What do you think happens during counselling sessions? • Why do you think someone might want to go to counselling? • What have we discussed?	Listen for an understanding that counselling involves talking to a trained person to help with problems, emotions, etc. Check to see if they are only listening and complying because they are intimidated or scared; can they actually understand? Consider explaining what to expect in a variety of ways. Do their answers only repeat what they were told? Or are they able to bring their own words and thoughts to explain? Do they understand counselling includes talking, and being listened to, confidentiality?

Two-part test for capacity	Questions College registrants can ask clients	Capacity assessment ideas
	• What does this mean to you? • What questions do you have about this? • Is there any word you do not understand? • What does confidentiality mean to you? What are the limits?	Listen for ability to understand that the purpose of counselling is to get support, help with problem-solving, mental health supports. Have I provided the client with the necessary information, service and resources to facilitate the client's decision-making? If the client asks relevant questions, that is usually a good indication of the ability to understand – but may not be determinative.
Part 2: Ability to appreciate the foreseeable consequences of giving consent to the decision, or declining to consent to the decision	• What are the pros and cons of counselling? • How do you think counselling might help you? • What might be hard or uncomfortable about going to counselling? • What will happen if you say yes? Or no? • What do you think your choices are when it comes to counselling? • Do you think you could stop coming to see me if you wanted to? • What factors are you thinking about to come to a decision? • What are the possible risks and benefits of counselling? • How will you decide what to do? • Do you think counselling could be good for other people, just not you?	Do they know they can say yes or no and that it is voluntary? Check if they can differentiate between what counselling means in the abstract and then how it would apply to them. Check understanding of consent being ongoing and revocable. Look for recognition that it might help them feel better, cope, understand things. Do they realize that problems might continue or worsen without support? Assess critical thinking and whether they can evaluate alternative supports. Check insight into decision-making process and weighing of pros and cons.

Two-part test for capacity	Questions College registrants can ask clients	Capacity assessment ideas
	• What do you think the impact of your decision will be? • Do you think there are other ways to get help if you don't want counselling? • Do you have any questions about what can happen?	