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Getting More out of Your CCP: How to Set SMART Goals

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This article focuses on setting realistic and meaningful goals in your **Professional Development Plan** so that you get the most out of the Continuing Competence Program (CCP). As you know, you are required to review your practice and identify learning goals as part of the completion of the *Self-Assessment Tool*. Once it's completed, it's time to transfer the goals that you've identified to your Professional Development Plan (CCP booklet, p.26). Remember that you don't need to have a goal for every principle, and the number of goals you set is up to you, using your professional judgment. After identifying your goals in broad terms in the first column of the Professional Development Plan, you'll be asked to break them down into learning objectives which are "**SMART**" - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely. You may find it helpful to think of goals as broad statements, while objectives are more specific. For some of us, setting **SMART** objectives presents a challenge.

When you're establishing goals and learning objectives, it's important to be specific. It may be easier to think of a broad learning goal (learning more about elder abuse, for example) but the problem with this type of learning goal is that it's impossible to measure and therefore difficult to achieve. How will you know that you've learned more about elder abuse? *You might find it helpful to begin by framing your objectives in the shape of a question to be answered.* In the elder abuse example, this could be: "What are the legal requirements for reporting elder abuse in Ontario and how can I incorporate

this information into my practice by the end of the year?" The objective would then become: "To identify any legal requirements for reporting elder abuse in Ontario, and to incorporate this information into my practice by December 2012". By moving from the broad to the specific, it's easier to know if you've reached your goal.

It's also important to remember that your goals may occasionally change. Many things can occur in the course of a year that could affect your goals. These could include: changes to your employment situation or your job requirements, or perhaps personal health issues or a family crisis. Your goals may no longer be relevant or achievable. As you periodically review your progress toward your goals throughout the year, you may need to revise your goals and objectives to reflect these realities, and/or to add any new or unanticipated goals and learning. If you're unable to achieve one of your goals, this doesn't necessarily mean that you haven't completed the requirements of the CCP. Occasionally, goals may be carried over from one year to the next. Breaking your goals down into more manageable, **SMART** objectives will often mean that you will not need to do this, however.

The chart below gives some additional suggestions to help you set **SMART** learning objectives. Remember that, depending on your practice, your goals and **SMART** learning objectives may not be related to clinical or direct practice. If you identified learning needs related to managerial,

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administrative, and educational or research roles, these needs should be reflected in your goals and objectives.

SMART LEARNING OBJECTIVES

SPECIFIC: **What do you want to learn?**
Begin by stating your goal in the form of a question to help you identify a clear objective.

MEASURABLE: **You should know when you have achieved your goal.**
Identifying a specific objective will make this easier.

ATTAINABLE: **Constraints such as time limitations, funding, access to resources, or the need to be absent from the workplace should be considered.**
Take constraints into consideration and set goals and objectives accordingly.

REALISTIC: **Ensure that your goal is realistic and achievable, but also consistent with the learning needs you identified in your self-assessment.**
It's you who decides what's relevant to your practice and what will be meaningful.

TIMELY: **Be sure to identify a timeframe for your goals, and remember to be realistic about timelines.**
Timelines can be useful guides and will help you stay on track. You may need to adjust them if your needs or circumstances change.

Once you've identified your goals and **SMART** learning objectives, it will be easier to choose **learning activities**. Learning activities are something you *do* (read articles on elder abuse, for example) to achieve your goals and **SMART learning objectives**. A list of learning activities can be found on page 17 of the *CCP Instruction Guide*. You'll also find further information on learning activities on the CCP Resources page, under the Professional Practice tab on the College website www.ocswssw.org.

For further information on the CCP, as well as the CCP Instruction Guide and Self-Assessment Tool and Professional Development Plan Documents, visit the CCP Resources page on the College website www.ocswssw.org, or contact the Professional Practice Department at ccp@ocswssw.org.