

COMPETENCIES FOR DIABETES PARAPROFESSIONALS



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Executive Summary

Navigating the Competency Tables

**Domain 1: Pathophysiology, Epidemiology, and
Clinical Practice of Prediabetes and Diabetes**

Domain 2: Cultural Competency Across the Lifespan

Domain 3: Teaching and Learning Skills

Domain 4: Self-Management Education

Domain 5: Program and Business Management

Appendix: Diabetes Paraprofessional Levels

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of Diabetes Paraprofessional Practice Levels

The purpose of the practice levels is to increase access to DSME and achieve better patient care by:

1. Delineating the roles and responsibilities of the multiple levels of diabetes paraprofessionals.
2. Suggesting a career path for diabetes paraprofessionals. Levels of practice are designed to help individuals determine his or her appropriate entry point into the diabetes care team.
3. Clarifying the contribution that can be made by individuals who have the knowledge, capability, diversity, and language skills needed to assist diabetes self-management and support in a variety of settings.

Purpose of Diabetes Paraprofessional Competencies

The intent of the competencies is to provide:

1. A master list of the minimal knowledge and skills needed across the continuum of care for the various levels of practice
2. A basis for education, training, development, and performance appraisal of anyone engaged in diabetes education and support

The revised competencies reflect current practices and are intended to be a **general guideline** regarding the roles and responsibilities of each member of the diabetes education and support team.

The competencies **are not job descriptions**. Specific roles or job descriptions will reflect the requirements of the practice setting, program and support services offered, and the professional scopes of each member of the team.

The competencies provide structure for the **minimal** knowledge, skills and abilities required for practice at each level across the continuum of diabetes care. The knowledge base needed to provide quality diabetes education is multifaceted, so the competencies are structured into five domains. Within each domain, the competency is defined and specific objectives are identified for each practice level.

The roles and responsibilities described in the practice level are intended for use by all individuals and organizations involved in the facilitation and delivery of diabetes education and care for all persons with prediabetes or diabetes and their families/caregivers. However, diabetes education and support services are provided through a wide array of private and public practice settings. The size and composition of the diabetes care teams providing these services vary across the country and throughout practice settings. It is beyond the scope and intention of the practice levels and competencies to address the range of activities that diabetes paraprofessionals may be educated and authorized to perform based on facility and organizational policies and bylaws, protocols, clinical privileging, state practice acts, and state occupational supervision regulations.

How to Read the Competencies

Under each domain and within each practice level there are objectives that outline the roles and responsibilities for that level.

Each objective stated at the lowest level **carries through to any and all higher practice levels**. For example, an objective stated for a Diabetes Paraprofessional Level 1, holds true for Diabetes Paraprofessional Level 2. In addition, any competency included in one domain carries through to all other domains.

The competencies provide structure for the knowledge, skills and abilities required for practice at each level across the continuum of diabetes care. The knowledge base needed to support quality diabetes education is multifaceted, so the competencies are structured into five domains. Within each domain, the competency is defined and specific objectives are identified for each practice level.

- Domain 1: Pathophysiology, Epidemiology, and Clinical Practice of Prediabetes and Diabetes

Competency Statement: Demonstrates familiarity with pathophysiology, epidemiology, and clinical practice consistent with practice level.

- Domain 2: Cultural Competency Across the Lifespan

Competency Statement: Provides diabetes support and care in a culturally-competent manner across the lifespan.

- Domain 3: Teaching and Learning Skills

Competency Statement: Applies current principles of teaching and learning and/or behavior change to facilitate self-management skills. Pursues ongoing professional development

- Domain 4: Self-Management Education

Competency Statement: Works with an interdisciplinary diabetes care team to tailor interventions to individual self-management education needs.

- Domain 5: Program and Business Management

Competency Statement: Applies principles of program and/or business management to create a climate that supports successful self-management of diabetes.

Navigating the Competency Tables

At the top of each competency table there is a competency statement that describes the overall purpose of the competency.

Each practice level is described in detail in Appendix of this document. Appendix 1: Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1-2.

Under each domain and within each practice level there are objectives that outline the roles and responsibilities for that level.

Throughout the competencies the words “people” and “person” refer to someone who has diabetes.

Table 1: Diabetes Paraprofessional Practice Levels

	Diabetes Paraprofessional Level 1	Diabetes Paraprofessional Level 2
Background and Criteria	<p>Level 1 diabetes paraprofessionals are complementary workers who interact with those who have or are affected by diabetes. This level has various roles in the dissemination of information, acquisition of baseline skills and provision of self-management support.</p> <p>The Level 1 designation includes, but is not limited to lay health, community health workers, peer counselors, health navigators, health promoters, health coaches, and assistive school personnel with some level of preparation in a recognized healthcare field.</p>	<p>Level 2 diabetes paraprofessionals are complementary healthcare workers who have a defined role in a certified or recognized diabetes education or prevention program. They may also be aligned with practices that serve a dedicated or focused proportion of diabetes patients.</p> <p>The Level 2 designation includes, but is not limited to, Certified Nursing Assistants, Certified Community Health Workers, Medical Assistants, Dietetic Technicians Registered, Pharmacy Technicians, Physical Therapy Assistants, Dental Hygienists, Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Licensed Practical Nurses.</p>

Domain 1: Pathophysiology, Epidemiology, and Clinical Practice of Prediabetes and Diabetes

Competency: Demonstrates familiarity with pathophysiology, epidemiology, and clinical practice consistent with practice level.

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Identifies differences between prediabetes, type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and gestational diabetes.
	Lists signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia.
	Lists common complications of diabetes, e.g., eye, nerve, kidney, and so forth.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Describes the differences between prediabetes, type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and gestational diabetes.
	Recognizes the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia and treats as appropriate.
	Recognizes common complications of diabetes, e.g., eye, nerve, kidney, and so forth.

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF PREDIABETES and DIABETES DISEASE STATE

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Recognizes the current impact of prediabetes and diabetes in their community, county and/or state.
	Lists risk factors for developing prediabetes and diabetes.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Describes the current impact of prediabetes and diabetes in their community, county and/or state.
	Recognizes the risk factors for developing prediabetes and diabetes.

CLINICAL PRACTICE

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Lists the AADE7 Self-Care Behaviors™ framework.
	Identifies the policies and procedures for their specific practice setting.
	Recognizes when a person's questions need to be addressed by clinical staff.

Repeats, in basic health care language, the diagnosis and instructions given by the health care provider.
Collects physical assessment data, e.g., blood pressure, fingerstick blood glucose, weight.
Follows workplace-specific clinical practice protocols and guidelines applicable to diabetes management.

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Describes the AADE7 Self-Care Behaviors™ framework.
	Explains the policies and procedures for their specific practice setting.
	Directs a person’s questions to clinical staff when appropriate.
	Summarizes, in basic health care language, the diagnosis and instructions given by the health care provider.

Domain 2: Cultural Competency Across the Lifespan

Competency: Provides diabetes support and care in a culturally-competent manner across the lifespan.

CULTURE COMPETENCY

Level	
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Recognizes that attitudes about health and self-care vary across cultures and regions.
	Recognizes language barriers and works effectively with interpreters.
	Acknowledges the importance of emotional and spiritual preferences in diabetes self-management and support.
	Provides education in a culturally-appropriate manner.
	Works with health care team to identify and overcome cultural barriers to self-care or behavior change.
	Provides accurate information and health care provider recommendations in a culturally appropriate manner.
	Identifies own cultural humility and awareness as it relates to chronic disease and self-care behaviors.
	Incorporates sensitivity and respect when educating all persons irrespective of ethnicity, race, age, socioeconomic status, physical or cognitive disabilities, or gender choice.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Utilizes educational materials consistent with person’s age, literacy level, cultural or ethnic background, and physical or cognitive disabilities.
	Integrates cultural awareness and competence into all aspects of teaching the person and the healthcare providers.
	Acknowledges cultural traditions when providing diabetes education and care.

LIFESPAN

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Identifies person with prediabetes or diabetes that could benefit from DSME&S.
	Identifies age-appropriate community resources that can support AADE7 Self Care Behaviors™ and patient-specific social support systems.
	Encourages use of family and community support systems.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Discusses impact of diabetes across the lifespan, e.g., pediatrics, pregnancy, older adults.
	Recognizes that person with prediabetes or diabetes have different needs depending on their age and duration of illness.
	Recognizes the current impact of prediabetes and diabetes across the lifespan, e.g., pediatrics, pregnancy, older adults.

Domain 3: Teaching and Learning Skills

Competency: Applies current principles of teaching and learning and/or behavior change to facilitate self-management skills.

Pursues ongoing professional development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Reinforces information provided by health care team.
	Identifies and refers questions and/or needs of the person to the appropriate team member.
	Identifies and refers own questions or needs to the appropriate team member.
	Assists person in obtaining accurate and appropriate diabetes educational materials or resources.
	Uses the AADE7 Self-Care Behaviors™ framework.
	Recognizes basic literacy, numeracy, physical, cultural and cognitive barriers.
	Assists with addressing language barriers.
	Collaborates with person to develop behavior goals in alignment with the treatment plan; assesses progress toward goal achievement and modifies the education interventions accordingly or seeks assistance with barrier resolution / other identified issues from appropriate team member.

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Demonstrates adult learning techniques/participatory teaching in delivery of education, e.g., teach back method.
	Ensures the priorities and concerns of patients are identified and addressed.

**BEHAVIOR
CHANGE/SUPPORT**

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Reinforces individualized behavior change plan.
	Facilitates and supports communication between person and health care team.

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Identifies potential barriers to self-management.
	Promotes behavior change to improve health outcomes.

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Seeks ongoing education to keep current on diabetes education and standards of care.
	Participates in diabetes-related events.
	Maintains skills and knowledge consist with the AADE Practice levels competencies.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Identifies current health care technologies that person may be using, e.g. healthcare-related mobile apps, wearable technology, and social media.
	Maintains minimum continuing education units (CEUs) for credential and/or state requirements.

Domain 4: Self-Management Education

Competency: Works with an interdisciplinary diabetes care team to tailor interventions to individual self-management education needs.

HEALTHY EATING

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Identifies general principles of healthy eating.
	Assists person with how to read a food label.
	Helps navigate person in grocery store tours.
	Provides instruction on completing a food record.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Reinforces principles of healthy eating.
	Identifies challenges to healthy eating, e.g., food insecurity, food desert location of home, inadequate finances to pay for both food and medicine.

BEING ACTIVE

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Discusses the importance of physical activity in diabetes prevention and management.
	Reviews, reinforces, and encourages general principles of safe and effective physical activity.
	Provides instruction on completing personal health record for activity.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Reinforces physical activity plan.
	Assists qualified staff with exercise sessions.

MONITORING

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Demonstrates correct techniques in monitoring, e.g., blood glucose (BG), ketones, weight (wt), height (ht), waist circumference, body mass index (BMI).
	Identifies clinical measures that are out of range and appropriately refers to team members. Measures that maybe out of range include: A1C, BG, BP, wt, ht, waist circumference, BMI, and ketone testing.
	Reinforces standards of care for diabetes, e.g., preventive care, annual monitoring, follow-up care, DSME&S.
	Provides instruction on completing personal health record for glucose monitoring.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Teaches person the benefits of monitoring BP, BG, ketones, wt, ht, waist circumference, and BMI.
	Encourages person to create and maintain a personal health record and discuss results at each visit with primary care provider (PCP) or health care team.

TAKING MEDICATIONS

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Identifies problems / barriers with taking medications as prescribed.
	Provides instruction on completing personal health record for medications.
	Reviews and reinforce importance of taking medications as prescribed. As appropriate, teach person memory techniques to use as tool to support adherence to medications regimen.
	Reviews and reinforces techniques to assist with medication adherence.
	Teaches / reviews safe disposal of sharps.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Reinforces safe and effective insulin preparation, storage, and administration under the supervision of a licensed health care provider.
	Teaches and reinforces safe use of medications, e.g., storage, expiration dates, travel.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Assists person with accessing community resources for everyday living support, e.g., housing, food stamps, food assistance programs, prescription assistance, activity centers, etc.
	Assists person in identifying problems and recording questions in personal health record for next health care team visit.
	Identifies barriers to achieving successful self-care behaviors and communicates to diabetes team.
	Navigates access to community resources for DSME&S and medical nutrition therapy (MNT).
	Supports / reinforces survival skills as appropriate, e.g., monitoring, medications, hypoglycemia/hyperglycemia, sick day management, travel and disaster plans, etc.
	Assists / reinforces plan for contacting health care provider.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Maintains a current community resource list to assist clients with everyday living needs, e.g., housing, mental health clinics food and prescription assistance, etc.

HEALTHY COPING

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Reviews personal health records for completeness.
	Encourages journaling attitudes and emotions in personal health record as needed.
	Lists signs and symptoms of depression and/or stress.

	Encourages person to share stressors with clinical staff to receive help.
	Navigates access to community resources for DSME&S.
	Organizes and facilitates diabetes support groups under the auspices of an organizational or clinical entity.

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2

Identifies signs and symptoms of depression or diabetes distress and refers to health care team.

REDUCING RISKS

Level Objectives

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1

Lists and teaches signs and symptoms of hypo/hyperglycemia.

Reinforces the need for basic preventative and risk reduction measures, e.g., foot exams, eye exams, dental exams, lab measurements, smoking cessation, flu vaccines, and immunizations.

Identifies principles of sick day management.

Reinforces safety in activities in daily living.

Uses guidelines to assist person in treating hypoglycemia when needed.

Teaches and reviews options for medical alerts IDs.

Teaches and reviews safe disposal of pen and pump needles, syringes, and lancets.

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2

Teaches importance of preventive examinations and vaccinations.

Teaches importance of and techniques for daily foot care.

Identifies medical emergencies and calls for immediate help.

Domain 5: Program and Business Management

Competency: Applies principles of program and/or business management to create a climate that supports successful self-management of diabetes.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Level Objectives

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1

Identifies the roles of the health care team members.

Works under the direction of a designated health care team member.

Integrates all aspects of person care consistent with laws and regulations governing professional discipline.
Assists person in obtaining accurate and appropriate diabetes educational materials or resources.
Develops community network to help market program.
Participates in program evaluation and quality improvement activities.
Assists with recruitment and retention of clients and participants in DSME&S.

Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2

Operates within professional lines of responsibility and communication.
Participates in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, procedures, and protocols relevant to program management.
Helps identify and review education materials, resources, and equipment needs.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Level	Objectives
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 1	Reinforces the value of self-management skills to clients/patients.
	Demonstrates knowledge of current and new information work-place technologies, e.g., email, data entry, word processing, database management, spreadsheet, slideshow, audio-, video-, web-conferencing.
	Demonstrates knowledge of social media technologies and mobile apps relevant to self-management support of person.
	Demonstrates priority and time management skills.
	Keeps aware of facility / organization changes in diabetes-related policies, procedures, and equipment.
	Complies with facility or organization policies and procedures in addition to DSME&S program policies and procedures.
	Participates in community screening events.
	Adheres to the National Standards for Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (NSDSME&S)
	Adheres to Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements.
Diabetes Paraprofessional, Level 2	Assists with development, review, and revision of policies, procedures, and protocols.
	Supports an integrated, multidisciplinary team approach to the care and support of patients, families and communities.
	Supports diabetes coalition building to provide more access and resources for people with diabetes.
	Supports advocacy for people with diabetes.