

Public Abstract

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Title:UNDERSTANDING LEARNING ACTIVITIES
OF CASEWORKERS FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR
PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

This research project consisted of learning about how professionals develop competence. I interviewed 11 caseworkers who worked in one of two community mental health centers located in the midwest. Interviews consisted of asking these caseworkers questions about how they developed their competence. I also interviewed supervisors and co-workers about their ideas of how these caseworkers became competent. From the data that I collected, I discovered that caseworkers developed competence in four areas: in their personal qualities, how they worked, in networking, and in learning. There were two major learning categories that developed: formal learning and experiences/situations from work. These categories developed into four patterns of learning that contributed to the competence of the caseworkers: establishing relationships with people and using technology, engaging in job related activities, solving problems, and developing personal qualities. Caseworkers learned from the technology and people that they encountered during work situations, from doing their job, and from learning in formal activities such as educational classes and training sessions.