Professional Development Plan and Role Review

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Abstract

Being involved in firefighting and entertainment both require performing and dealing with high-pressure situations. They are two services that exist in life designed to uplift people. Firefighting involves high-risk and can lead to life or death, while entertainment is often times fabricated or created but involves a lot of viewers and being perceived. One thing they have in common is that firefighters and performing artists must know how to effectively connect with their audiences or patients. Before they can do that, they must learn to effectively connect within themselves and their surroundings. In the following paper, I describe my intentions for one day becoming a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC) in order to help people optimize their performance through using psychological skills and educating them on the physiological and psychology effects of stress on their performance.

Introduction

To achieve this plan, it is important to consider future professional collaborations, supervision requirements, how to obtain and maintain licensure, specialty training, the self-evaluation process, and the current labor market. National licensing and recertification requirements may differ from those of different states. For the purposes of focusing on becoming a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC), this paper will describe the route one must take as per the suggestion of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP; n.d.) and the necessary information a mental performance consultant may need to be aware of if working under the jurisdiction of New York State.

Practice Plan

I hope to become a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC) in the future and help clients optimize their performance through the use of psychological skills (Association for Applied Sport Psychology, n.d.). I hope to educate clients on the psychological and physiological effects of stress on performance. I intend to work in the state of New York, specifically with both the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) and with dance and music performers, although the CMPC is recognized as a national certification. I would eventually like to open a private practice, but I know it may be more beneficial to work for a larger agency, first.

Some advantages of this plan are that I have experience in both fields, currently being a firefighter with the FDNY and having previously studied and worked in big budget entertainment. I feel that my training in firefighting as well as in entertainment can be useful in creating interventions towards achieving specific goals. Simultaneously, the reasons for my advantages might also be the reasons for disadvantages. Challenges can include being too narrow-minded or assuming I know what may be best for someone based on my own biased

experiences. Another challenge, particularly in the fire service, is being a queer Asian woman with less than five years who will be consulting with a predominantly White male workforce that prides itself in tradition and time on the job. Because the FDNY is a city job, it would be very difficult to create a new full-time role within the fire service that caters specifically to working on mental performance skills with members.

This plan would probably need to be reevaluated every six months. I would need to stick with something long enough to see if the protocols I am implementing are effective. I would consider the demographics of the clients I commit to and decide whether I should increase or decrease the number of clients at a time. Some major changes could include deciding on whether to work with multiple firefighters who do not know each other or working with a team of firefighters all from the same firehouse. As far as entertainment goes, I would consider whether I would work with performers from different shows, or performers who are in the same company. It would realistically take me about eight to ten years to find stability with this plan.

It will be important to seek out support from family, friends, colleagues, and mentors from both fields as well as new CMPC's who are in the same pool as me. Some self-care strategies I can implement to support my professional role as a CMPC would include self-reflection, journaling, breathing exercises, physical training, reconnecting with nature, and remembering to balance. I think it will be imperative for me to practice the psychological skills myself in order to be of service to others. It will be necessary to be intentional with my time and uphold boundaries with my workload.

Professional Collaboration

An FDNY firefighter is considered to be a municipal firefighter, serving the five boroughs of New York City: Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island (City

of New York, n.d.). The fire department of the City of New York (n.d.) started in the early 1600's, mostly comprised of volunteers. The FDNY became a municipally controlled and paid organization in 1865, and it was common to see men who served in the military on the rigs (City of New York, n.d.). Today, the FDNY still upholds its roots in military service in identifying as and training as a paramilitary organization. Some professionals a CMPC working with the FDNY can expect to collaborate with would include other agencies within NYC such as the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the City of New York Department of Sanitation (DSNY), Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel (City of New York, n.d.). Because the FDNY is also represented by the Uniformed Firefighter's Association Local 94 under the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), it would be no surprise to potentially collaborate with military and federal personnel at some point as a CMPC with the FDNY (Uniformed Firefighters Association, 2021).

Understanding how the larger system works and how firefighters fit into the bigger picture can be helpful in finding ways to optimize overall performance. It would also be beneficial to collaborate with other professionals such as behavioral psychiatrists, physical therapists, and medical doctors to understand the scientific effects of first responder stress on human bodies. Going into the specific details about why the FDNY's customs are the way they are and how they have evolved can be pertinent information in helping firefighters advance further and work more efficiently. It would be important to consider firefighters from a holistic standpoint and address the challenges they face not only on duty, but within their personal lives. An example can include further research on firefighters' cardiovascular and mental health and how it relates to sleep deprivation, stress management, and diet. We can even go as far as talking about the filtering and assigning of 9-1-1 calls and the long-term effects of newer gear. The

FDNY is not limited to fire responses, but we respond to medical calls and other novel emergencies.

Some professionals CMPC's within the entertainment world might find themselves collaborating with include instrument makers, designers, fabricators, set builders, composers, choreographers, and behavioral psychiatrists. It would be interesting to work with these professionals to better understand the environments our dance and music clients deal with.

Supervision Requirements

According to the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP; n.d.), applicants must undergo a mentored experience either while pursuing a graduate education or as a post-graduate. There is a minimum of 400 total hours of mentored experience in which 200 of these total hours must be with sport populations (AASP, n.d.). Exercisers, performing artists, military organizations, and high-risk occupations are not included under the scope of sport populations. AASP (n.d.) requires 100 of these hours to be in direct client contact with sport populations, 25 of these hours to be spent in mentorship, and at least 5 of these hours to be direct knowledge of services. Group mentoring requires that a mentor may only meet with 10 mentees or less in a group (AASP, n.d.).

Mentorship allows a mentor to develop and enhance a mentee's professional practice while monitoring their provision of services (AASP, n.d.). This can include a minimum of 30 hours in in-person meetings and 10 hours in distance meetings or electronic communications. Mentors can be searched and reached out to via the AASP's Registry of Approved Mentors, which lists both certified and non-certified mentors who are approved under the Certification Council (AASP, n.d.). According to the AASP (n.d.), certified mentors must go through recertifications

every five years, and non-certified members who are not CMPC's must renew their registration every five years and complete at least 15 Continuing Education Units (CEU) in professional practice areas.

Different mentors list their own prices for mentorship on the Registry of Approved Mentors (AASP, n.d.). The FDNY will not pay for these expenses, so it will be a personal investment to continue forward with the mentorship process in order to qualify to take the CMPC exam. I would be very engaged with my mentors and make sure to search for mentors who have been practicing for a long time in the fields of performing arts, high-risk occupations, and sport. I would also want to find mentors who are very new to the field as they may have important information to pass down in regard to the current challenges new CMPC's face. I would request formal documentation on the things we have been covering together in our mentoring sessions, and how things have either improved or not over time. Reflection and active listening will be very helpful in this process.

Obtaining Licensure

The University of Western States (UWS) Master's of Science in Sport and Performance Psychology (MS-SPP) Program with an applied practice concentration is designed to help lead graduates towards obtaining the CMPC certification (UWS, 2023). This does not guarantee the certification upon completion of the program, but UWS (2023) prepares graduates for the CMPC exam by academically covering the eight required AASP knowledge competency areas: professional ethics and standards; sport psychology; sport science; psychopathology; helping relationships; research methods and statistics; psychological foundations of behavior; diversity and culture (AASP, n.d.). Clinically, the MS-SPP program with an applied practice concentration

helps graduates accumulate up to 10 hours of group mentorship and up to 30 hours of individual mentorship through its mentorship courses (UWS, 2023).

In New York State (NYS), the Department of Education (NYSDOE) is the agency responsible for licensing counselors (NYSDOE, n.d.). On the other hand, the term "consultant" covers a broader category of businesses and requires professionals to obtain certification from the NYS Department of State (NYSDOS) as either a Certificate of Incorporation (Inc.) or a Limited Liability Company (LLC) (NYSDOS, n.d.). The NYSDOE (n.d.) licenses counselors in different fields, and for the purposes of this specific professional development plan towards obtaining a CMPC credential, we will focus on Article 163 which covers Mental Health Practitioners. Although the CMPC certification is specifically a mental performance consulting role, NYSDOE does not recognize something such as this, and identifies mental health counseling as a profession that can only be practiced by a licensed mental health counselor (AASP, n.d.; NYSDOE, n.d.).

To qualify to become a licensed mental health counselor in NYS, an applicant must have received a master's or higher degree in counseling from a program the department determines to meet the commissioner's regulations (NYSDOE, n.d.). According to the NYSDOE (n.d.), the program must cover these 11 categories: human growth and development; social and cultural foundations of counseling; counseling theory and practice and psychopathology; group dynamics; lifestyle and career development; assessment and appraisal of individuals, couples and families and groups; research and program evaluation; professional orientation and ethics; foundations of mental health counseling and consultation; clinical instruction; and completion of a minimum one year supervised internship or practicum in mental health counseling. Applicants

need to complete at least 3,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in mental health counseling, pass an exam, be at least 21 years old, be determined by the department as having good moral character, and pay a fee of $175 for the initial license (NYSDOE, n.d.). To apply as a consultant and obtain either an Inc. or LLC certification, the NYSDOS (n.d.) processes applications within seven business days. It is a one-time registration requirement, and each of the two certifications has its own lists of fees (NYSDOS, n.d.). To become a certified Inc., an applicant must pay a total of about $310, while an LLC brings an applicant's total costs to about $425 (NYSDOS, n.d.).

To qualify for the nationally recognized CMPC credential, applicants must have earned a master's or doctoral degree from a regionally accredited institution in a field related to sport science or psychology (AASP, n.d.). This official transcript must be provided directly from UWS's registrar office and be sealed or sent electronically. The coursework required by AASP are the eight knowledge competency areas already mentioned above which the UWS specifically covers in the MS-SPP program with an applied practice concentration (AASP, n.d.; UWS, 2023). Mentorship guidelines as stated in the Supervision Requirements section are applied. The application fee is $375. AASP (n.d.) also requires applicants to agree to adhere to the AASP Ethics Code and sign an attestation. Applicants must pass the CMPC Certification Exam (AASP, n.d.). Applicants who fail may retest after 90 days and costs $275.

Maintaining Credentialing and Association Memberships

According to the AASP (n.d.), maintaining certification requires a mandatory renewal process which allows members to demonstrate continued competence through the retention, reinforcement, and expansion of knowledge and skills. This must be done every five years

(AASP, n.d.). Within each five-year period, the Certification Council requires 75 total continuing education units (CEUs), six of which must be in each of the following education areas: professional ethics, diversity, and if a mentor, must include mentorship or supervision (AASP, n.d.). CEU activities can include conferences, workshops, presentations, webinars, academic courses, or self-directed study. The recertification period occurs annually from September 1 through November 30, and also requires another passing score on the CMPC exam (AASP, n.d.). Recertification with an exam costs $275 and the annual CMPC Certification Maintenance fee for AASP members is $25 (AASP, n.d.). The NYSDOE requires members to pay $170 for each triennial registration period to maintain their licenses (NYSDOE, n.d.). A benefit to being a member is that clients and employers can always refer to and access your organization's laws and regulations.

Current Labor Market

According to the NYS Department of Labor (NYSDOL), health care and social assistance in the NYC area showed a steady trend of over 10% each month for the year of 2023 (NYSDOL, n.d.). It would be reassuring to note that the American Psychological Association (APA; n.d.) estimates that the U.S. sports market generates $400 billion in revenue in a typical year, and that sport psychology is on a steady rise. The median gross annual income for CMPC's according to a 2020 report for mental performance work was $76,250 (AASP, n.d.).

Specialty Training

Continuing education will be a huge priority in this profession. The APA (n.d.) has created a list of Telehealth courses for counselors such as incorporating technology into clinical practice. Telehealth (2023) also offers Board Certified Telehealth Professional (BCTP) training

and certificates. These prices range from $499 to $1999. Some issues that professionals may anticipate include connectivity issues, time zones, scheduling, confidentiality, and competency. Although telehealth visits may be more accessible and flexible, it can be harder to prevent distractions or interruptions. Other specialty training I would hope to complete to better market myself as a professional would include learning about disabilities, concussion management and care, psychology of performing arts, high-risk occupations, and assistive technology.

Career Development

I think that continuing individual mental health counseling in my own personal life will be useful towards being self-aware which in turn leads to better overall handling of personal and professional self-evaluation practices. I would hope to devote at least one hour a week to career development. It would be impactful to set realistic goals, both small and long term, in my practice, that way I can create a way to track certain progress and effectiveness. Ways that I can document effectiveness is by asking open-ended questions with my clients and seeing if they notice any positive differences in their lives, using the skills we have developed in our sessions. By being intentional about my work and caring about the field of sport and performance psychology and developing a deep respect for clients and other professionals, I will be able to become a better practitioner and hold myself accountable for the good and bad work that I may do. It is okay to have areas of improvement and be willing to work on them. Consultation and documentation with different mentors and colleagues will be necessary.

Summary

To be a CMPC is to be committed to a lifelong journey in education, as sport and performance psychology are ever-changing and evolving. Seeking a higher degree such as a

doctorate may be helpful as I will be able to practice as a licensed counselor, and the lines between consulting and counseling work would be less blurred. New York State laws and regulations for practitioners to obtain licensure is much more in depth than the requirements presented by the national certification of CMPC offered by AASP; however, recertification seems to be more extensive and intentional, looking at mental performance consulting as more of a holistic experience which requires an extensive amount of continuing education every five years. I will need to network and build a trustworthy community of mentors, colleagues, and other professionals. Self-awareness and self-care strategies will be important in order for me to practice effectively within the beginning stages of my career while also still being a full-time firefighter. This assignment was incredibly helpful in laying out the groundwork for the bigger picture. It is important to include local, state, and federal jurisdictions and expectations when pursuing this line of work. Upholding the duties of avoiding harm and doing good will take a lot of time and work, but it is at the foundation of mental performance consulting. I need to be very specific about what it is that I want to do and who I want to help because, ultimately, slight changes can affect how I practice and how I am held accountable. I must revisit and revise this plan throughout the duration of my graduate career at UWS.

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