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# **CERTIFIED MENTAL PERFORMANCE CONSULTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT**

## *Position Statement*

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# CERTIFIED MENTAL PERFORMANCE CONSULTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

## POSITION STATEMENT

### What a Certified Mental Performance Consultant Is

*A Certified Mental Performance Consultant® (CMPC) is a professional service provider in applied sport and performance psychology. The field of performance psychology as it relates to high performance sport is defined as (Portenga et al., 2017, p.52):*

The application of psychological principles of human performance in helping athletes consistently perform in the upper range of their capabilities and more thoroughly enjoy the sport performance process. Sport psychology practitioners are uniquely trained and specialized to engage in a broad range of activities including the identification, development, and execution of the mental and emotional knowledge, skills, and abilities required for excellence in athletic domains; the understanding, assessment, and managing of the psychological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and psychophysiological inhibitors of consistent, excellent performance; and the improvement of athletic contexts to facilitate more efficient development, consistent execution, and positive experiences in athletes.

The CMPC credential demonstrates to clients, employers, colleagues, and the public at large that an individual has met the highest standards of professional practice, including completing a combination of educational, mentored experience and work requirements, successfully passing a certification exam, agreeing to adhere to [ethical principles and standards](#), and committing to ongoing professional development (see [CMPC Candidate Handbook](#)). The [Association for Applied Sport Psychology \(AASP\)](#) and the [Canadian Sport Psychology Association \(CSPA\)](#) provide [oversight](#) of CMPC practice.

**CMPC Training.** The CMPC program is accredited by the [National Commission for Certifying Agencies](#). The requirements for the CMPC credential have been determined by Job Task Analyses in the USA (2018) and [Canada \(2020\)](#). All CMPCs must have achieved a master's or doctoral level academic degree in sport science or psychology, or a closely related field, such as social work, or industrial-organizational psychology. Coursework requirements represent the interdisciplinary nature of the field and include: (1) Professional Ethics and Standards, (2) Sport Psychology, (3) Sport Science, (4) Psychopathology, (5) Helping Relationships, (6) Research Methods and Statistics, (7) Psychological Foundations of Behaviour, and (8) Diversity and Culture. Practitioners have a minimum of 400 hours of mentored experience with practitioners who are listed in the Registry of Approved [Mentors](#). This ensures that the practitioner experience hours are documented and that trainees have direct contact with clients as well as the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities via modalities deemed appropriate based on the judgement of the experienced mentors. The quality of knowledge and readiness to practice at the standard promoted by the

credential is tested through a CMPC Exam, and is supported through ongoing commitment to professional development and continuing education.

Canadian CMPCs working in high performance sport are also strongly encouraged to maintain a professional membership with the Canadian Sport Psychology Association, complying with a Canadian [Code of Ethics](#) and the requirement of professional liability insurance. ***It is strongly recommended that sport participants (e.g., athletes, coaches) who engage in mental performance services [verify that the mental performance practitioner with whom they are working is a CMPC.](#)***

***Dually-Trained CMPCs.*** CMPCs who are dually trained may also provide services as licensed/registered mental health practitioners (i.e., psychologists, counsellors, psychotherapists, social workers). Dual-trained CMPS must also abide by their regulatory body's code of ethics (i.e., national or provincial/territorial associations/colleges).

### **CMPC Scope of Practice in High Performance Sport**

With the following responsibilities and tasks, CMPCs play an integral role in enhancing the mental performance and well-being of athletes and teams, ensuring that their mental skills are optimized for success, while also supporting the overall safety and mental health of athletes, coaches and IST members in high-performance sport.

***Learning and Understanding Goals and Needs.*** CMPCs invest time in understanding the goals, needs, expectations, and preferences of athletes, coaches, and Integrated Support Team (IST) members. This is done within the context of the yearly training plan (YTP) and Major Games preparation to ensure that mental performance interventions align with the overall training and competition strategies.

***Maintaining Collaborative Relationships.*** CMPCs work to maintain and strengthen effective, collaborative working relationships with their clients (i.e. athletes, coaches, and IST members). The clients may request and consent to ensure that collaboration of mental performance interventions can be integrated with the broader support team and are aligned with the athlete's performance objectives.

***Conducting Mental Performance Needs Assessments.*** CMPCs conduct thorough individual and team mental performance needs assessments, which informs mental skill development and interventions tailored to the individual athlete or team. Information collated through mental performance needs assessment is integrated in the individual/team performance plan.

***Designing, Delivering, and Evaluating Mental Skill Training Programs for Performance Excellence.*** CMPCs design, deliver, track, and evaluate both individual and team mental performance programs and interventions. These are evidence-informed strategies intended to enhance mental performance competencies (as listed in the GMP – see below), and they are designed to meet the specific needs of athletes and teams at various stages of their preparation.

**Facilitating Team Dynamics, Leadership, and Culture.** CMPCs attend to and facilitate positive team dynamics, leadership, and culture, working with teams to improve communication, cohesion, and collaboration. This is crucial in fostering an environment that supports optimal performance and well-being for all team members.

**Supporting Healthy (or safe) Sport Environments.** CMPCs support the creation and maintenance of healthy, respectful, and inclusive sport environments. This includes ensuring that Safe Sport principles are integrated into all aspects of their practice, advocating for the safety, dignity, and well-being of all sport participants. CMPCs work to promote positive team cultures, where athletes, coaches and support staff feel supported, respected, and empowered to perform their best.

**Referral to Mental Health Support.** CMPCs effectively and efficiently refer athletes, coaches, and IST members who require mental health support to appropriate medical and mental health professionals. This collaborative service ensures that athletes receive comprehensive care that addresses both their mental performance and mental health needs.



Figure 1. The Mental Performance and Mental Health Service Delivery Continuum Model

The Mental Performance and Mental Health Service Delivery Continuum model (see Figure 1) positions the CMPC role and the focus of work alongside and interdependent of a performer's mental health in the context of their athletic performance pursuit. The model builds upon the Mental Health Continuum in which qualified Mental Health Practitioners prioritize their work and impact mostly in

the areas of mental health, and mental illness and injury (i.e. as represented by *Ill* and *Injured* phases on the left side of the model). **While CMPC also support clients' health within their scope of practice, the primary focus of CMPCs work is facilitating and optimizing mental skills for performance**, meeting the demands of performers' competitive level, and corresponding with performance needs and challenges in training and competition. As indicated on the right side in Figure 1, the focus of their work may include (a combination of):

- **Optimization** - adapting, fine-tuning, and/or tailoring mental performance competencies and well-being in specific environmental contexts, or meeting specific situational demands for the purpose of performance enhancement.
- **Maintenance** - creating consistency in the ability to utilize mental performance competencies and well-being across different training/competitive contexts or situational challenges for the purpose of performance enhancement.
- **Development** - learning and applying mental performance competencies for the purpose of performance enhancement and well-being.
- **Management** - addressing sub-optimal/dysfunctional behaviours (e.g. related to low confidence/motivation, competitive anxiety, inattention/distraction, conflict) for the purpose of performance enhancement.
- **Restoration** - supporting return-to-sport processes (i.e., during or after illness/injury), including the application of mental performance competencies and strategies in rehabilitation; assisting with processing a performer's experiences post-season or post major Games.
- **Protection** - creating appropriate sport-life balance to facilitate mental health recovery and wellbeing, ensuring appropriate self-care for personal well-being, or facilitating adequate professional/social supports and resources (Van Slingerland et al., 2022).

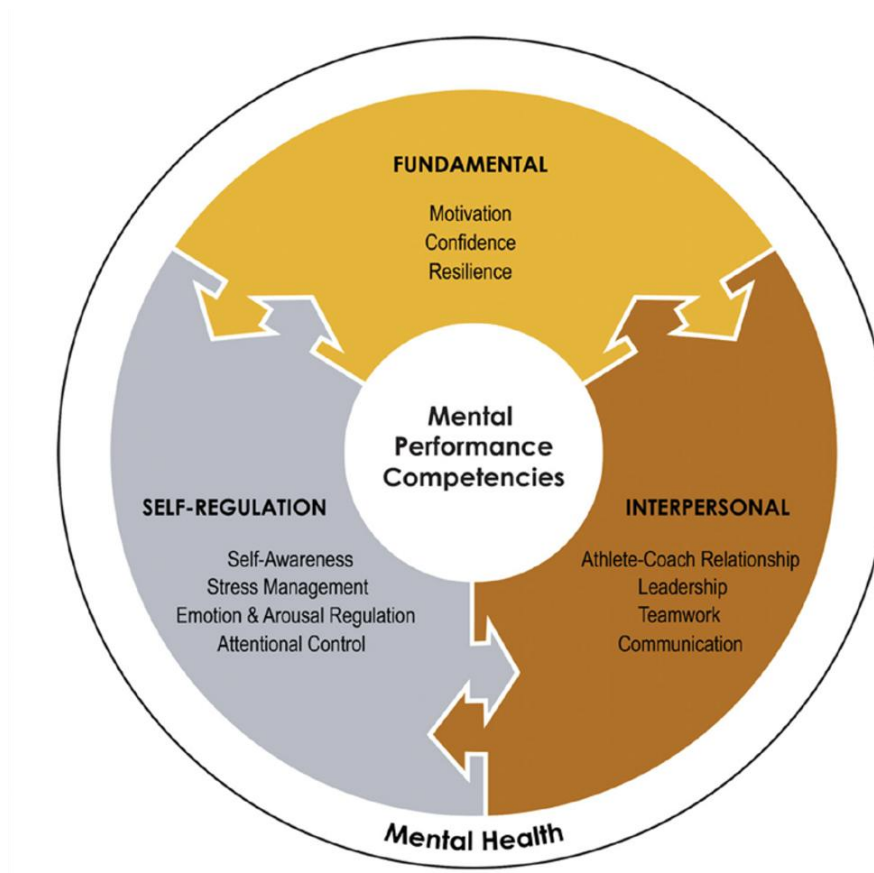
While prevention and protection both play an important role in promoting mental well-being, they serve distinct functions in fostering and supporting mental health. **CMPC's work primarily affects prevention**, which focuses on reducing the risk of mental health challenges before they arise. This includes encouraging athletes to develop proactive, adaptive coping mechanisms such as effective stress management, emotion regulation, and resilience. CMPCs also help foster supportive environments that promote healthy team dynamics which can mitigate the risk of mental health struggles.

In addition to prevention, CMPCs contribute to the protection of mental health by minimizing harm when mental health challenges do arise. This protective role involves assisting athletes in accessing appropriate treatments and confidential mental health support. By empowering athletes with the tools and resources they need, CMPCs play an essential role in ensuring that mental health challenges are addressed in a constructive, supportive, and effective manner.

### **Developing and Utilizing Mental Performance Competencies for Performance and Well-being**

Impactful mental skill training programming is assessment-informed. Assessment is most commonly determined by the CMPC and athlete/team and can include others such as coach, IST, and parent. Generally, the needs assessment includes, but is not limited to -

interview/consultation, psychometric assessment (i.e., questionnaires), observation, and third-party reports. Mental performance skill training work in Canadian high-performance sport is grounded within the Gold Medal Profile for Sport Psychology (GMP-SP) framework (see Figure 2; Durand-Bush et al., 2022). This framework outlines 11 evidence-based mental performance competencies and subsidiary mental skills underpinning podium performances. These competencies are grouped under three broad categories (i.e., fundamental, self-regulation, and interpersonal competencies).



*Figure 2. Gold Medal Profile for Sport Psychology (GMP-SP)*

The GMP-SP framework may not be inclusive and/or exhaustive of all possible mental performance skill competencies relevant for a given sport. When developing a sport-specific gold medal profile and individualized athlete performance plans, CMPCs may use a combination of suggested mental skill competencies as well as other competencies specific to and relevant to their own sport demands and/or culture (e.g., decision-making in team sports, pain management in endurance sports, fear management in speed sports).

National Sport Organizations are encouraged to enlist the support of CMPCs to assist with the identification, operationalization, and development of desired mental skill competencies in their sport through sound assessment and profiling, customization of athlete performance plans, and education of coaches and athletes along the Podium Pathway. [Podium pathway refers to the

sport-defined excellence stages of Long-Term Athlete Development and specifically applies to athletes on a trajectory toward podium results of the highest level of their sport (Government of Canada, 2019)].

**Competition and Games Related Mental Skills Training.** CMPCs play a crucial role in supporting athletes, coaches, and other team members during major competitions, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, World Championships, and other high-performance events. Their work focuses on ensuring mental readiness, optimizing performance, and supporting emotional well-being, all while ensuring the psychological safety of athletes.

Key responsibilities include:

1. **Pre-Competition Preparation**
  - CMPCs assist athletes and teams in mental preparation, including the development of mental skills such as focus, self-regulation, and resilience.
  - They collaborate with coaches and support staff to align athletes' mental performance needs in the lead-up to competition.
2. **During the Competition**
  - CMPC's offer a real time support to athletes by emphasizing mental performance strategies that help manage stress and emotions.
  - They work discreetly within the team environment, offering support in moments of need without interrupting the flow of the competition.
3. **Post-Competition Reflection and Support**
  - CMPCs help athletes debrief their performance to identify and strengthen mental skills and provide strategies for recovery.
  - CMPCs support athletes returning to regular training and competition after major events, including referrals for mental health care when needed.
4. **Collaboration with the Team**
  - Throughout the competition, CMPCs work closely with other members of IST, including health practitioners, to ensure an integrated approach to the athletes' performance.
  - They are often involved in team meetings, providing insights into mental performance strategies and offering support for the entire team.

### CMPC Service Delivery Formats

Most CMPC service delivery solutions are unique to client needs and resources available. Below is a table of common formats of service delivery and their associated features. CMPCs can work in-office, in the Daily Training Environment, and in the sports' competitive environments.

*Table 1. Mental performance service delivery categories and associated features*

| Category                       | Features                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Group-Education (Non-embedded) | Mental performance education is offered in flexible formats—both in-person and online, synchronously or asynchronously—to accommodate group learning needs. Attendance implies informed consent, and session length varies based on delivery style and the specific mental performance competencies addressed. |
| Individual Service             | This individualized, client-centered approach to mental performance consulting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Non-embedded)                                              | ensures athletes receive tailored support that aligns with their unique needs, training environments, and performance goals. Grounded in ethical practice and informed consent, this service includes collaborative planning, integration with coaches and sport service providers (with consent), and attention to athlete well-being.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Group/Team Service (Partially embedded)                     | This team-based mental performance service is strategically designed to enhance both individual athlete development and group cohesion through a collaborative, evidence-informed process. Grounded in ethical practice and informed consent, the program aligns with your team's vision and mission, integrates seamlessly into the daily training environment, and supports athlete and coach well-being — empowering team culture and performance.                                                                               |
| IST-enabled and/or Integrated (Partially to fully embedded) | CMPCs are embedded within an IST to optimize performance-based strategies and athlete-based competencies within the team environment to drive performance, cohesion, and well-being. Through collaborative needs assessments, aligned multi-year/quadrennial programming, and ongoing engagement with coaches and IST members, the CMPC supports both group dynamics and individual athlete development—while contributing to innovation, ethical care, and self-care practices to give the team a sustained competitive advantage. |

***Finding the Right Fit with a CMPC.*** With many CMPCs available to work with diverse clients (e.g. athletes, teams, coaches, support staff), it is imperative to find “the right fit”. The ***working alliance*** (i.e., the interpersonal bond between a consultant and client) has been regarded as a **significant component of successful and effective practice** (Van den Berg & Hoar, 2021). Working alliances are collaborative, indicate an affective bond between client and consultant, and include the alignment made between the two parties about consultation goals and tasks. Effective consulting relationships have been consistently associated with positive outcomes. When relationships are strong, caring, and mutually respectful, the likelihood of positive outcomes is increased.

The following attributes and characteristics have shown to be instrumental for effective CMPC service delivery (Van Den Berg & Hoar, 2021):

- Well-developed interpersonal skills, such as being likeable, trustworthy, and empathetic, which are essential for developing relationships with clients and fitting into team environments.
- Specific, practical, and concrete mental performance strategies to manage issues, situations, and demands.
- An athlete-centered approach that focuses on identifying strengths, gaps, and needs for both sport performance (e.g., motivation to train), related issues (e.g., communication with others), and well-being.
- Understanding of the sport environment and commitment to helping athletes achieve their goals.
- Examination of athletes' behaviours, thoughts, feelings, and sensations.
- Awareness of the CMPC's own strengths and limitations.

In addition, CMPCs are expected to show cultural awareness and competence in their practice (Carter & Oglesby, 2021; Ryba et al., 2013). In high performance sport this includes:

- Multi-cultural and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging considerations (i.e., individual, group/team, organization, and society), including various identities and their intersectionality.
- Contextual intelligence (e.g., culture, values, attitudes, history, and language of the performance domain).
- Organizational structure, including the CMPC role within the performance environment.
- CMPC's are self-reflective and understanding of their own personal cultural identity, intersectionality, biases, and assumptions.
- Athletic subculture and unique factors of sport/performance environments (e.g., transitions, injuries, athletic identity, team and organizational dynamics, managing pressure).

### **Mental Performance Service Effectiveness and Impact**

The effectiveness and impact of the service delivery is dependent on the fit between the CMPC (i.e., the practitioner organizing the service), the performance context, and the individual(s) participating in the mental performance interventions. It is important that mental performance service delivery, regardless of format, is subjected to evaluation and impact of elements, such as (1) client progress and outcomes related to mental performance competencies development, (2) effectiveness of interventions for behavioural changes, (3) client satisfaction and engagement, including suitability of the program for the team and/or individual athletes, and (4) CMPC performance, provide valuable insights into how the mental performance service was experienced. Structured evaluations provide valuable insights into how the mental performance service was experienced, fosters accountability and professional growth, reinforcing evidence-based practices that optimize performance and well-being.

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