Enhancing Supervision Skills

Emerging Best Practices

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When “they” think they know the answers,
People are difficult to guide.
When they know that they don’t know,
People can find their own way

Tao Principle
Icebreaker

- In small groups, introduce yourself and discuss a memorable supervisor or supervisory experience
  - A really good experience resulting in a positive outcome
  - What made that supervisor/experience special?
  - What practice do you especially appreciate?

Please do not share any identifying information throughout your discussions
Best Practices in Supervision

- Organization supports a culture of supervision
- Training and experience specific to providing supervision
- Strength-driven feedback, identifying ‘growing edges’
- Explicit sharing of clinical accountability
- Sound knowledge base - clinical expertise & theoretical framework
- Stays up to date with developments in theory, research & practice
- Upholds professional values - ethics, honesty, integrity
- Cultural agility

creates an atmosphere in which others are committed and engaged
A culturally appropriate definition

Supervision is the process of being with a skilled, experienced and wise person who respectfully, caringly and honestly supports a worker to reflect on their work in a meaningful way, learn and grow as worker in the context of working with community.

Adapted from: Our Healing Ways: A Culturally Appropriate Supervision Model for Aboriginal Workers Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative
Why is supportive supervision important?

- Supervisees are faced with increasing challenges that contribute to job stress, including:
  - The growing complexity of our work
  - Persistent systemic barriers
  - Limited resources - constant pressure to do more for less
  - Vicarious trauma/burnout
  - Work/life balance
  - Help balance the potentially conflicting demands of social work practice and management
Core Values

- Trust
- Confidentiality
- Respect
- Support
- Accountability
- Empathy
- Constructive feedback
Types of Supervision

Managerial Supervision
- Ensures adherence to agency policy & organizational demands, administrative

Educational Supervision
- Learning alliance - help develop therapeutic skills, self-awareness, knowledge, skills & attitudes

Supportive Supervision
- Decreases job stress & provide nurturing conditions that compliment supervisee success and self-efficacy.
Supervision Cycle

1. Develop supervisory alliance
2. Developing the Supervision Contract
3. Facilitating Learning & deepening practice
4. Evaluation
Goals of Supervision

- Developing knowledge and skills
- Increasing competency
- Ethical decision-making
- Reflexivity/Connecting theory to practice
- Monitor progress on goals
- Support self-care
Activity

- In pairs, discuss what you would like to get out of supervision, and draw up a supervision contract
  - Desired Frequency
  - Goals/competencies you would like to focus on
  - Theoretical models to be used
  - How would you evaluate success
  - Use the supervision contract in the package
Best Practices - Supervisory Alliance

- Provide regular constructive feedback
- Establish a method for resolving conflicts
- Maintain clear professional boundaries & ethics
- Reframing, challenging
- Respect for diversity and individual differences

Emotional Safety & Positive regard
Reflexive Developmental Collaborative
Reflexivity

Reflexivity is central to working ethically in uncertain contexts and unpredictable situations

- Critical self-awareness - both parties
- Questioning of personal practice, knowledge and assumptions and the ethical and practical consequences
- Supervision as a transformational learning forum to develop therapeutic, relational and reflective competencies
Professional VS. Personal Relationship

Understand the supervisee as a whole person

Be aware of the power complexities

Supervision is NOT Therapy

For personal problems, refer to supports as appropriate (EAP, counselling)

Compassionate Detachment

Avoid dual relationships
Power Differentials - A Balancing Act

Accountability
- Managerial requirements
- Protection of public
- Gatekeeping /Liability

Support
- Safety
- Trust
- Sharing Power

Being transparent about your positional power into a dynamic interrelationship that is positive & energizing.
Reflection: Power Differentials and Personal Biases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positional</th>
<th>Organizational hierarchy, employer-employee or supervisory relationship</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s who you know</td>
<td>Parents, friends, religion, professional affiliations &amp; social connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>Money, education, credentials, experience, employment status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context/Experience</td>
<td>Personality, age, marital status, student, mother, elder, mental health, trauma, emotional intelligence, confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Born this way</td>
<td>How close are you to “mainstream” - ethnicity, skin colour, sex, size, facial features, ability, sexual orientation</td>
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Cross-Cultural Supervision Competencies

**Awareness** - of one’s own cultural background, biases and privileges

**Attitude** towards differences - culturally sensitive and inclusive

**Knowledge** of different cultural practices and worldviews

**Skills in interacting with peoples from different cultures**

diversity is identified, addressed, valued, and respected

Martin and Vaughn, 2007
### Framework for Culturally Competent Supervision

1. The recognition of plurality and diversity of knowledge
2. An emphasis on collaboration
3. Co-constructive process
4. The engagement of various relational forms - individual, group, remote
5. An increased sensitivity to power dynamics
6. Explicit recognition of the social and cultural context
Ethical Decision Making in Supervision

“More evil gets done in the name of righteousness than any other way.”
Glen Cook, Dreams of Steel

The critical importance keeping ethics at the front and centre

- There are vast differences in people’s ideas around morality and ethics
- Privilege, power differentials & Western biases are not always obvious
- Multiple complexities and professional liabilities to navigate
- Ethical dilemmas facilitate the supervisory process and a golden opportunity for personal insight and professional growth
Ethical Decision-Making Model in Supervision

1. Who are the individuals/groups affected? For whom do you have the greatest responsibility?

2. Define the ethical question. What is the nature of the dilemma? Review code of ethics.

3. How might personal biases, stresses, or self-interest influence your decision?

4. What are the systemic barriers involved?

5. Discuss possible consequences, costs and benefits, of certain actions

6. Explore what actions best achieve fairness, justice, and respect for others

7. Make a decision about actions to be taken, and evaluate them

8. If there was an ethical mistake, discuss steps to remedy the damage and how to avoid the same mistake

9. Continually evaluate decisions and practice self-reflection
Difficult Conversations: Supporting emotionally charged situations

1. If the supervisee is very worked up, use calming strategies
   - Walk and talk, model relaxed breathing, offer water/tea, etc.

2. Identify and validate the emotion
   - Help supervisee describe what they are experiencing. What are you feeling in your body? In your gut? What persistent messages are repeating in your mind?
   - Validate the emotion/behavior - given past & present circumstances

3. Get supervisee to describe only the facts
   - Describe the facts that you observed through your senses.
   - Challenge judgments, absolutes, and black-and-white descriptions.

4. Help supervisee examine different angles
   - What are other possible interpretations?
   - Help examine all sides of a situation and different points of view.
   - Test supervisee interpretations and assumptions to see if they fit the facts.
Difficult Conversations (continued)

5. Identify goal in solving the problem
   ▶ Help supervisee identify what needs to happen. Record goal(s) on paper

6. If applicable, explore threats, consequences, liability issues
   ▶ What are possible consequences? What is the worst case scenario?
   ▶ Brainstorm possible outcomes

7. Help develop strategies
   ▶ Choose a solution/action plan that fits the goal(s) and is likely to work.
   ▶ If the supervisee is unsure, do pros and cons to compare the solutions.
   ▶ If the supervisee has no control over the situation, brainstorm grounding/cop ing strategies
   ▶ Walk through/role play what the supervisee will do if the worst case happens

8. Ensuring that their immediate needs are met
   ▶ Ensure that person has a safe way home - may need a ride at end of day
   ▶ Check in next day as to how thinks are settling
   ▶ Go over self-care strategies

9. Follow-up, evaluate effectiveness of strategies used, referral for additional support
Activity (20 minutes)

In a group of three, assign one person to be the supervisor, another to be the supervisee, and the last person to be the observer. Role play a supervisor and supervisee conversation using a scenario you prepared, or one of the following scenarios. Debrief afterwards and switch roles if time permits.

1. A client that you have known for some time is “graduating” from you service, and asks you to remain friends. Before you can give an answer, she proceeds to invite you to a family cultural celebration next weekend. Caught in the moment, you politely refuse using a prior engagement as an excuse, but the client seems to think that you are open to future invitations.

2. You witness a colleague of yours talking about a client to another worker in a very disrespectful way, making negative references to her lifestyle choices and cultural background. This upsets you tremendously, but you don’t have a direct working relationship with this colleague so you are not comfortable approaching her directly and confronting her.

3. Over the past several weeks, your supervisee Linda has had several stressful events in her personal life, and has not been handling her professional responsibilities very well. She often seems to be quite preoccupied, erratic and irritable. She was failing to answer phone calls and follow up in a timely manner, and you have received a couple of client complaints.
Best Practices - addressing liability concerns

- Review your organization & BCCSW’s standards of practice
- Best Practice Standards in Supervision (eg. NLASW, NASW)
- Maintain documentation of supervision
- Proactively address potential risks and steps to minimize risk
- Identify and address any condition that may impair a supervisee’s ability to work with reasonable skill, judgment, and safety
- Help supervisee identify signs of vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout etc. and address them early (ex/Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 www.proqol.org)
Keeping Up Supervisory Competencies

- Ongoing continuing education with focus on supervision skills
- Stay informed about latest developments in theory and practice
- Implement evidence-based practice into the supervisory process.
- Be aware of your limitations and operate within the scope of your competence.
- When specialty practice areas are unfamiliar, supervisors should obtain assistance or refer supervisees to an appropriate source for consultation in the desired area.