

**DEVELOPING SUPERVISION SKILLS TO ENHANCE RELATIONSHIP BASED  
PRACTICE**

**INTERACTIONAL & REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION**

## WHAT IS SUPERVISION?

- ❖ Supervision is the process of reflecting on the practice issues that arise in the course of everyday work. It can help practitioners do their job more effectively by developing their capacity to use their experiences to rethink their practice and take action.
- ❖ A good supervisor will enable the practitioner to reflect on their practice, to support and challenge it as appropriate, to discuss skills, needs and to help work through situations where there is resistance, uncertainty and/or anxiety.

### Purpose and principles of supervision

#### The Purposes of Supervision:

- To ensure the worker is clear about roles and responsibilities
- To ensure the worker meets the agencies objectives
- To ensure the quality of service to clients
- To develop a suitable climate for practice
- To assist professional development
- To reduce stress
- To ensure the worker is given the resources to do their job

#### Principles of supervision:

- *The best interests of the client must always come first.*
- *Supervision is mandated by agency policy.*
- *All staff require supervision. It is a necessity not a luxury.*
- *Supervision is based on a negotiated agreement.*
- *Supervision is regular and uninterrupted.*
- *Supervision involves management, development, mediation and support.*
- *Supervision promotes competent, accountable and empowered practice.*
- *Supervision promotes anti-discriminatory practice.*
- *Supervision is based in an understanding of how adults learn.*
- ❖ *Except where there are threats to the safety of staff*

#### Supervision is a partnership between:

- ❖ *Supervisor*
- ❖ *Supervisee*
- ❖ *and the Agency*
- ❖ *If one of these is not participating or worse is actively sabotaging supervision, the supervisory process cannot be fully effective.*

## **FOUR FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION<sup>1</sup>**

- ❖ MANAGEMENT
- ❖ SUPPORT
- ❖ MEDIATION
- ❖ EDUCATION

### **MANAGEMENT FUNCTION**

- ❖ Performance issues
- ❖ Roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Monitoring/discussing casework
- ❖ Workload management
- ❖ Case files
- ❖ Case recording
- ❖ Report writing
- ❖ This provides the control function in work with people
- ❖ Ensuring that the standards of the agency in which the work is being carried out is upheld
- ❖ Ethical and professional standards being kept to

### **SUPPORT FUNCTION**

- ❖ Professional and personal validation
- ❖ Impact of the work – workers have to allow themselves to be affected by the distress, pain and fragmentation of the work
- ❖ They need to become aware of how this affects them and deal with any reactions
- ❖ Otherwise they become over-full of emotions
- ❖ If not attended to they become less effective, stressed and potentially burnout
- ❖ Managing work/life boundary

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<sup>1</sup> Richards, M., Payne, C and Shepard, A. (1990) *Staff Supervision in Child Protection Work*. London: National Institute for Social Work.

- ❖ Debriefing after critical incidents
- ❖ Monitoring stress
- ❖ Exploring 'blocks'

### **MEDIATION FUNCTION**

- ❖ Briefing about new developments
- ❖ Represent staff needs to management
- ❖ Negotiate for the team or individual
- ❖ Deal with complaints
- ❖ Often being 'piggy in the middle' position, between management accountability, and professional responsibilities,
- ❖ between broad policy formulations and its application to individual situations
- ❖ Between the organisation and clients
- ❖ Between prescribed procedures and the emotional impact of high risk work

### **EDUCATIVE FUNCTION**

- ❖ Develop professional competence
- ❖ Reflective practice
- ❖ Constructive feedback on practice
- ❖ Identifying training and development needs
- ❖ Access to 'expert' consultation
- ❖ Learning styles

This is about developing the skills, understanding and abilities of the supervisee. This is done through re-reflections on and exploration of the supervisee's work with their clients.

In this exploration they may be helped by the supervisor to:

- ❖ Understand the client better
- ❖ Become more aware of their own reactions and responses to the clients
- ❖ Look at how they intervened and the consequences of their interventions
- ❖ Explore ways of working with this and other similar client situations

### **PUTTING THE FUNCTIONS TOGETHER**

Having mapped out Kadushin's model<sup>2</sup> it is now possible to look at some of the different foci that can be attributed to supervision. For example, Hawkins and Shoheit

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<sup>2</sup> Kadushin, A, 1976, Supervision in Social Work, New York, Columbia Press

(1989) list 10 different foci and then categorize them in relation to Kadushin's elements.

***The primary foci of supervision (after Hawkins and Shohet<sup>3</sup> 1989)***

1. To provide a regular space for the supervisees to reflect upon the *content* and *process* of their work **Educational**
2. To develop understanding and skills within the work **Educational**
3. To receive information and another perspective concerning one's work **Educational/Supportive**
4. To receive both content and process feedback **Educational/Supportive**
5. To be validated and supported both as a person and as a worker **Supportive**
6. To ensure that as a person and as a worker one is not left to carry unnecessarily difficulties, problems and projections alone **Supportive**
7. To have space to explore and express personal distress, re-stimulation, transference or counter-transference that may be brought up by the work **Managerial/supportive**
8. To plan and utilize their *personal* and *professional* resources better **Managerial/supportive**
9. To be pro-active rather than re-active **Managerial/supportive**
10. To ensure quality of work **Managerial**

**Three types of supervisory competencies:**

1. Managing supervisory relationships, which involve supervisory contracting and the creation of an agenda for each session;
2. Managing job performance, which includes conveying clear expectations to the supervisee, conducting effective evaluations of supervisee performance, and assisting the supervisee to achieve compliance with agency requirements and adherence to agency standards;
3. Promoting professional development, which emphasizes establishing staff development plans in conjunction with the supervisee.

**Four phases of supervision<sup>4</sup>**

1. Preliminary (or “tuning in”)—before the initial supervisory meeting the supervisor empathises with the position of the supervisee;
2. Beginning—development of a verbal or written contract that defines the purpose, roles, and responsibilities for supervision;
3. Middle—use of the contract to guide supervision sessions;

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<sup>3</sup> Hawkins, P,& Shohet, R, 1989, *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, OU Press

<sup>4</sup> Shulman, L., (2010) *Interactional Supervision* NASW Press; 3 edition

4. Ending/transitions—if either the supervisee or supervisor leaves an agency or has work reassigned, effective termination with clients and staff, and completion of administrative requirements.

**Four core supervisory functions work across each phase**

1. Practice (how the supervisee actually works with clients);
2. Job management (how the supervisor helps the supervisee complete their daily work);
3. Staff development (fostering supervisee competencies and providing evaluation and feedback);
4. Professional impact (helping a supervisee develop skills to make a professional contribution towards change within their own agency or others).

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