Supervising for Excellence

Part One/Module One

19-Jun-06
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# About This Manual

## To the Trainer

This manual is written for trainers with experience in Florida’s Child Welfare System. It is recommended that the trainers carefully read this manual in its entirety before attempting to teach this material.

1. Review the objectives and Notes to Trainer for the training.
2. Review the “Week at a Glance” found later in this preface.
3. Obtain the required equipment and materials:
   - Participant Guides
   - PowerPoint Slides
   - Computer
   - LCD projector
   - Flipchart and paper
   - Notecards
   - Markers
   - Myers-Briggs Type Indicator facilitator
4. Prepare attendance forms.
5. Arrive early for the training session.
6. Check equipment and materials.
7. Adapt the presentation to the seating arrangement in the room.
8. Put up slide #1 for the arrival of the participants.
9. Greet participants as they arrive.

## Purpose

The purpose of child protection work is to keep children safe. Supervision is the critical element of best practice and accountability in child welfare case practice. The primary goal of clinical supervision and consultation is to support caseworkers’ decisions and planning for child safety, permanency and well-being. The purpose of this curriculum is to prepare supervisors for their role and responsibilities related to supporting caseworkers in their efforts to make sound decisions and plan for child safety, permanence and well-being.

## About this Course

This supervisor training will be offered to all new supervisors in Florida’s child welfare system. It offers participants an opportunity to learn the skills and information necessary to transition into effective leaders in their new supervisory roles. Participants will learn how to identify their leadership styles, build an effective work team, give constructive feedback, and steer their team’s work toward the goals and outcomes necessary in order to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in Florida.
Key Learning Objectives

v Identify leadership/management style and develop a management approach consistent with that style.

v Develop and organize a time management plan to keep team working toward goals/outcomes necessary for effective case management.

v Utilize supervisory tools for case review and communicate expectations to staff in terms of projected outcome.

v Apply experience and historical knowledge of cases to assist staff in applying appropriate interventions and guiding the case toward permanency as quickly as possible.

v Identify team strengths and weaknesses and utilize strengths-based coaching techniques to create a highly functioning team.

v Discuss Florida’s child welfare system including the agencies involved and the laws governing them.

v Evaluate available resources and discuss utilizing and collaborating with various resources.

v Present the results of a self-directed project illustrating a supervisory core value.
## Part One at a Glance

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<td>• Masking Tape (Advance Preparation)</td>
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## Part One at a Glance

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Part One: Notes to Trainer

Part One of Supervising for Excellence is designed to focus on the supervisor 'Self as Supervisor.' The content in this section is designed to assist the supervisor in identifying the necessary behavioral and attitudinal changes that need to occur in order to make a successful shift from peer to supervisor.

This section begins with the assessment of the supervisor’s current skill level, identifying gaps and skill weaknesses, as well as gaining confidence from the identification of the strengths brought to the challenge of supervision.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is presented as a means for further understanding self and improving communication within teams and organizations. In this section we focus on the identification of various personality types and present ways to work across personality types. This section is presented by a certified MBTI facilitator.

Part One also focuses on the supervisor developing the skills of clinical supervision. Clinical supervision is an expanded focus that incorporates the understanding of the clients and the challenges they face with the worker’s perspective and experiences, and how this influences interactions and interventions within the system.

Additionally this section of curriculum addresses the development of listening skills. Listening and communication are extremely important skills for a successful supervisor. This part of the curriculum provides opportunities to define listening skills and practice strengthening those skills.

It is recognized that child welfare work can be highly stressful and emotionally draining. Over time, exposure to trauma in the lives of clients can weaken individual resilience and lead to emotional burn-out. Module three will discuss signs for recognizing severe stress and offer strategies for reducing compassion fatigue and strengthening individual resilience.

To conclude Part One, we focus on a review of the federal and state outcomes for which a supervisor is accountable. Child welfare goals, outcomes and measures are defined and tied to the supervisor’s day to day activities and responsibilities. Additionally, basic time management strategies for managing the supervisor’s day are presented.

As a final discussion and activity, the supervisors explore their own personal values related to their child welfare careers. The overall goal of Part One is to help the new supervisor begin to define, develop, and strengthen the skills needed to be a successful supervisor.

In this section of the training the supervisors will also decide on a topic and execution strategy for their supervisory projects to be presented at the end of the Supervising for Excellence curriculum.
Introduction

Activity

1. Introduce yourself and welcome the participants to the Supervising for Excellence Training. Cover the following:
   - Your name
   - Work responsibilities/length of time at your organization.
   - Why you're excited to be training this curriculum!
   - Any other information you would like to share to begin allowing the participants to get to know you.
   - Review housekeeping items (cell phones, beepers, evaluations, places to eat)

2. Ask the participants to introduce themselves by sharing the following (prepare a flipchart with this information listed):
   - Name
   - Length of time in child welfare and as a supervisor
   - What does being a supervisor mean to you? (Link the responses to the goals of the curriculum)

3. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 participants.

4. Instruct the participants to brainstorm as a group what they believe the goals and expectations are of a supervisor in child welfare. Allow 15 minutes. (List “Goals and Expectations” on a flipchart. If the group looks confused, begin throwing out ideas to help them begin).

5. Give each group a flipchart page and markers. Tell the participants to write the principles, goals and expectations that their group comes up with on their piece of flipchart paper.

7. Review handout and discuss parallels between the document and the ideas generated by the groups.

8. Inform the participants that these principles, goals and expectations are what will be focused on during the Supervising for Excellence Training.

9. Distribute Participant Guides and review the components:
   - Place to take notes
   - Activities
   - PowerPoint slides

Transition

- Congratulate everyone for being here. Tell them everyone in the room is here because they were chosen and recognized as having the skills to be a supervisor. They’re each here because they should be! Let’s begin by talking about your transition to supervisor.
From Peer to Supervisor

Making the Transition

Objectives

Trainer: You do not need to review the objectives again here, as you have just presented the objectives for this entire section.

- Perform a supervisor self assessment.
- Identify the challenges related to transitioning from peer to supervisor.
- Develop strategies and skills for transitioning from peer to supervisor, including peer support from other supervisors.

(Suggested reading: Changing Hats, Felice Davidson Perlmutter and Wendy P. Cook; The First 90 Days, Michael Watkins)

Presentation

- The transition from peer to supervisor is a critical time. It’s crucial to lay a firm foundation for future success.
- To do this you need to know your strengths and weaknesses as a supervisor. The key is to utilize your strengths and strengthen your weaknesses.

Activity ~ Skills Assessment

1. Refer participants to PG 5-6, Supervising for Excellence Skills Assessment.
2. Allow the participants 10-15 minutes to complete the assessment. Encourage the participants to be completely honest. No one else is going to see this assessment. An honest assessment of their strengths and weaknesses will help them know what areas to focus on during this training.
Debrief Activity

- Divide the class into three groups.
- Assign each group 4 skill statements from the assessment (do one together as a group).
- Have each group discuss why each skill is important.
- Instruct each group to assign a transcriber to record the following on a flipchart page:
  - Why is this an important skill?
  - What will likely be the consequences of performing this skill poorly?
- As a group review each statement and review group responses to the questions above.
- These skills define success as a supervisor. No one is going to perform every skill perfectly, but the more skills a supervisor can develop, the better supervisor he/she will be.

Activity ~ Brag a Little Why Don’t You?

1. Distribute 2-3 note cards to each participant.
2. Instruct them to take a few moments to think about themselves and why they were hired as or promoted to a supervisory position.
3. Tell them to put their names on the cards and to list at least 3 and as many as 5 skills or personality traits which they embody as an individual that make them a good choice as a supervisor.
4. On separate note cards (with their name on each card), list the characteristic and then write a brief illustration of that characteristic (and how it helps them).
5. Collect the cards, shuffle them, and distribute them amongst the participants (randomly but equally).
6. Go round-robin around the room and have each person read aloud the note-cards he/she is holding. (“David has good organizational
skills and Sue has good communication skills.”)

7. Return cards to owners.

8. Congratulate everyone for already having strong supervisory skills!

Presentation  
Display PPT 10-12

- Managing a caseload versus managing people:

Ask:

? How are the skills used as a caseworker the same as the ones used as a supervisor? How are they different?

- In addition to the skills each participant recognizes in himself/herself, each individual also has other skills that they’re not identifying as “management skills.”

⇒ Scheduling several home visits in a week - *Time management*

⇒ Identifying new ways to meet client needs - *Resource planning/problem solving*

⇒ Contact and work with colleagues in other agencies - *Networking*

⇒ Pull together a case conference - *Organizing*
Doing all of the above in a day - *Multi-Tasking*

- Every person in this room has these skills and performs them regularly.
- Recognizing that you have the tools necessary to be a successful supervisor is the first step in *becoming* a successful supervisor.

**Discussion ~ Changing Relationships**

*Ask:*

? When you got the news that you were going to be a supervisor, what kinds of feelings did this evoke?

*Suggested responses:*

- What will happen to my peer relationships?
- Will I be effective?
- Can I manage people?
- Will I be comfortable in a role of authority?

Explain that these feelings are all normal and to be expected.

- Each of these feelings has a positive and negative component.
- For example: With respect to peer relationships, some peers will be excited and supportive, others may be jealous or resentful.
- Regardless of how your peers respond, your relationship with them will change and there will be feelings of loss that accompany this change.

*Ask:*

? Let's look back at the list of feelings you had upon becoming a supervisor. What are the positive components of each of these feelings?
Suggested responses:

- Concerns about your effectiveness as a supervisor will motivate you to become a better supervisor.
- Concerns about using authority will keep you from abusing your authority.
- Our insecurities can either paralyze us or inspire us to be better. Acknowledge your insecurities and fears and use them to motivate you.
- Get to know other supervisors and begin to form a new network of support.
- Ask for help and advice from supervisors you admire. They will appreciate the compliment and remember how it felt to be a new supervisor.

Activity ~ Mini Case Study

1. Refer participants to PG 8, *Mini Case Studies*
2. Instruct them to read the case studies and in groups of three discuss how they would handle these situations, or have handled these situations.
3. Discuss as a class.

Activity ~ Expectations vs. Reality

1. Refer participants to PG 9, *What I Expected Vs. What I’m Experiencing*.
2. Instruct them to take a few moments to finish the statements.
3. In groups of three, allow the participants to share their responses with one another.
4. Discuss as a large group and have each small group share some of their insights with the large group.
Present slides and discuss setting expectations for staff.

Performance Expectations
- Clear
- Concise
- Measurable
- Related to larger organizational goals

Consider History of Performance
- Have deficiencies been documented?
- Employee should have written notice of ongoing concerns.
- Include positive notes as well as problems.
- What are the circumstances around the performance issues?

Review the top ten reasons new supervisors fail.

Top Ten Reasons New Supervisors Fail
1. Ineffective communication skills/practices
2. Poor work relationships and interpersonal skills
3. Person/job mismatch
4. Fail to clarify direction/performance expectations
5. Delegation and empowerment breakdowns

Top Ten Reasons New Supervisors Fail
6. Failing to adapt and break old habits
7. Unable to develop teamwork/cooperation
8. Lack of personal integrity and trust
9. Unable to lead motivate others
10. Poor planning practices/reactive behavior

- Poor communication leaves employees in a cloud of uncertainty and stress that makes it difficult to make informed business decisions for managers and employees alike.
- The inability to foster effective working relationships isolates managers from the informal network of knowledge and resources that are necessary to cope with change.
- Changing roles and job descriptions put supervisors in challenging positions they are ill-equipped to fulfill. This results in poor performance for the supervisors and those who depend on their performance to get results.
- Failing to provide a clear sense of direction and to clarify performance expectations hurts planning, motivation, resource allocation, and ultimately, the ability to navigate through uncertainty.
- Ineffective delegation and empowerment practices contribute to confusion and immobilize staff and resources.
- Failing to adapt and/or break old habits perpetuates behaviors and actions that are no longer value-added to the organization.
- Without teamwork and cooperation, conflict and agendas of self-preservation will destroy collective performance.
- A lack of integrity and trust negatively affects the managerial credibility that is essential for employees to buy-in to the change and move forward in the face of uncertainty.
- Failing to gain the commitment of employees leads to an attitude of minimal performance at a time when change requires extra effort.
- Poor planning practices and reactionary behavior create disruptive crises that damage confidence, performance, and morale.
- In this course, you will learn how to avoid these unproductive behaviors and use skills that will help you be successful.

**Summarize**

- Each of you has the necessary prerequisite skills to be an effective supervisor. What we’ll do over the next three weeks is help you develop skills in your weaker areas and give you some resources to continue to develop professionally as a supervisor.

**Transition**

- Being a supervisor means managing people. Inherent in the job is the need to be able to get along with different types of people. This is not easy! We’re going to determine your predominant personality type, discuss various personality types and strategize ways to get along with each one.
Trainer Resources
Goals and Expectations for Child Welfare Supervision

Supervision is the critical element of best practice and accountability in child welfare case practice. The primary goal of clinical supervision and consultation (as well as peer mentoring) is to support caseworkers’ decisions and planning for child safety, permanency and well-being.

A Framework for Supervision of Casework

1. The provision of skilled supervision is a significant factor in the consistent delivery of quality child protective services and assurance that there is continuous review and assessment of safety and permanency throughout the life of each case. At a minimum, all child welfare workers should have benefit of monthly, face-to-face supervisory consultation and review. Supervision should always be available to support key decisions at critical case junctures.

2. Caseworkers are not independent agents of their agency and all crucial decisions must be shared with supervisors. No matter how articulate or experienced a worker is, the ideas and opinions of someone who is not directly involved with a particular case are valuable and necessary. A caseworker should know how to access his or her supervisor at all times, or there should be a clearly articulated chain of command for access to supervision.

Supervisors should determine which of the following levels of supervision and consultation each caseworker will receive, dependent upon where he or she is individually with respect to years of experience, demonstrated skills and completed training and/or education.

a. As a rule, all new workers should have direct clinical supervision through no less than a weekly conference, with peer consultation from senior co-workers as needed.

b. When appropriate, an experienced caseworker can be supervised by a casework supervisor through monthly conferencing, with peer consultation support from co-workers.
c In the event a newer caseworker is assigned to a more complex case (or the case becomes complex as time passes), the worker should increase direct clinical supervision, with additional peer consultation support from the casework team.

Ideally, new caseworkers should also be matched with a peer caseworker in a mentoring relationship.

3. Casework supervisors should, in turn, be supervised in a management structure that promotes child welfare practice expertise and the need for consistent practice principles between supervisors in a single office and statewide.

Goals for Supervision

The following supervision and consultation goals need to be pursued in child welfare, regardless of the daily level of supervision employed with a particular caseworker:

a. addressing caseworker feelings/confusion/uncertainty/dependency needs
b. providing tools and technical assistance
c. clarification of client behavior and worker interventions
d. broadening worker understanding of certain situations
e. constructive identification of mistakes
f. assisting with organization and prioritization of work
g. appropriate court room decorum and presentation
h. appropriate use of agency support staff
i. analysis and validation of worker intuition
j. addressing worker resistance to client personality/behavior
k. providing perspective
l. use of resources such as family members, community partners, foster parents to help in decision-making
m. listening and feedback
n. consultation
promoting respect for children and families at all times
modeling supervision
providing a working environment that is supportive and conducive to professional performance
identifying and improving systems problems with other supervisory staff to promulgate effective casework practices

Supervisory Expectations

1. It can take up to several years for a caseworker to reach a level of self-dependent practice. Prior to this point in practice, caseworkers need a gradual transition from intensive supervision to consultation and where a worker falls in this continuum should be considered when assigning cases to workers and determining how best to supervise individual case practice. At the same time, even the most experienced caseworkers need mandatory, regularly scheduled time with a clinical supervisor. “Open door” supervision is not a substitute for regularly scheduled time with a caseworker.

Until a supervisor is familiar with a caseworker’s abilities, he/she should be familiar with all of the individual’s work. Subsequently, all new cases assigned to a worker should be followed by the supervisor up to the point of transfer or closure, or until a supervisor determines that a different model of consultation is appropriate for a caseworker.

2. There are general considerations for casework supervision that are applicable to assignment of cases:

   a. Following case assignment, the caseworker should read the case record at the earliest opportunity.

   b. Case transfer and reassignment of a case should not occur without benefit of a case transfer process that assures the receiving supervisor can adequately assign the case to a new caseworker.

   c. Graduate student interns should not be assigned complex/high risk cases.
d. Caseworkers must have applicable mandatory training before they are assigned cases.

e. Job-sharing in casework positions should be avoided. It is confusing to families, it can be difficult for clients who have trouble enduring change, it increases the difficulty parents have building other than an adversarial relationship with their caseworker, and it can provide the opportunity for manipulation by a parent. Most importantly, this arrangement intensifies the possibility of communication gaps that can result in a child being placed at risk.

f. Case transfers should not be postponed because of incomplete documentation. If there are ongoing documentation problems, this should be addressed as a performance improvement issue.

g. Casework supervisors should have benefit of cross-program, peer management consultation for complex case assessment and service planning activities that take safety and permanency into consideration throughout the life of the case.

h. Supervisors should have benefit of regular management supervision that keeps them apprized of developments related to service and resource availability, policy and program developments, workload issues, and procedural changes that may impact client service delivery.