Supervising for Excellence

Trainer Guide
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Objectives - *Display PPT 49*

- Identify the benefit to providing effective feedback in facilitating effective casework.
- Describe how feedback improves performance.
- Identify effective feedback qualities and conditions.
- Plan for effective feedback.
- Provide effective feedback using professional interpersonal feedback skills checklist.

**Activity ~ No More “My Way or the Highway”**

1. Refer participants to PG 3, *No More “My Way or the Highway”*, role play script. Tell the participants this is an opportunity to see the benefits of effective feedback in action.

2. Ask for two volunteers. Assign one the supervisor role and the other the role of the caseworker.

3. Give each a copy of the script.

4. Have the volunteers read through their scripts and present the scene in front of the class.

   ? Ask the participant who played the worker to describe and interpret the messages the supervisor sent?

*Possible Responses: I did not meet the supervisor’s personal expectations; the supervisor makes up the rules as he/she goes along; the supervisor only enforces the rules when convenient; the supervisor communicated an unsupported attitude of, “I’m the boss, it’s my way or the highway. Individual initiative is not acceptable,” and “This is wrong. You figure out how to fix it.”*
? Ask the participant who played the supervisor what message was intended for the worker?

*The intent was to communicate that the home study was not done correctly and to show how it should have been done.*

? Ask the entire class to consider how each of them might have felt in the role of the caseworker? Of the supervisor?

*Possible Responses: caseworker - confused, angry, threatened; supervisor - frustrated, angry, disappointed*

? Could this type of dialogue really happen in a unit?

Yes

? Has anyone experienced this type of feedback? Can you share an example of what happened? What could the supervisor have done differently?

*Possible responses: communicated more objectively and behaviorally*

? What were the consequences of the supervisor’s inability to provide feedback in the role play?

*Possible response: misunderstandings; bad feelings and low job satisfaction; poor performance in the future because the supervisor still did not adequately clarify the job or task expectation(s) through feedback.*

**Summarize**

- The caseworker understood what the home study should contain, but did not understand how to present the information.
- On the other hand, the supervisor assumed that the caseworker would understand the expectation simply because everyone else in the unit complied.
- The supervisor probably believed that he (she) gave good feedback.
- Effective feedback helps to avoid misunderstandings and contributes to a high level of job performance and job satisfaction.
Transition

Generally within the child protection system, the concept of “feedback” has been more widely accepted intellectually than practically. That is, everyone thinks it is a great idea, but most supervisors do not practice it.

Therefore, studies have shown that child protection supervisors provide less feedback than managers do in other types of organizations.

Professionals in child protection need to alter this pattern to achieve the same benefits as other fields and organizations.

Discussion

? In the previous role play, do you think the caseworker’s mistake could have been avoided in the first place? If so, how?

Possible responses: Yes. The caseworker’s mistake might have been avoided if the supervisor had clearly communicated expectations and monitored the worker’s performance before providing feedback.

? From what you’ve learned in previous sessions, what specifically should be communicated to a caseworker prior to giving feedback?

Possible Responses:

⇒ Clear performance expectations
⇒ Any information needed to fulfill the job/task expectations

? From what you’ve learned in previous sessions, what specific methods of control should you use with a caseworker before giving feedback?

Possible Responses:

⇒ Monitor an individual’s progress toward expectations.
⇒ Gather information and document trends so that you can later provide specific feedback.
In a study involving 106 social service counselors and supervisors, a strong relationship was found between the amount of feedback provided and job satisfaction.

The study also found that it was the quality of the feedback that contributed most to job satisfaction. The quality of the feedback influenced how individuals experienced their job. (Management Research Group, cited in SET: Trainer’s Guide, CWI, 1991)

? Is there a link between job satisfaction and job performance? If so, what is it?

Yes. The more satisfied you are on the job, the better your effort and performance.

? What can we conclude about the quality of feedback and counselors’ job performance?

As feedback quality improves, so does job performance.
Feedback is only effective when it is related to an expectation already discussed or communicated. Supervisors cannot hold workers accountable for what has not been communicated.

Feedback is behavioral when the sender isolates the practice or behaviors to be maintained or changed. A behavior is both observable and measurable.

To give effective feedback, a supervisor must identify what will happen when the desired behavior is achieved. This quality of feedback focuses on the end product or result. Tangible examples can help workers better understand the expected results.

Effective feedback must recur often enough to reinforce positive performance and change negative performance for each individual.

> Supervisors must be comfortable providing positive and negative feedback. They must look for opportunities to praise staff and regularly monitor staff performance to provide timely feedback before negative performance becomes a pattern with the worker.

> The standard rule of thumb is to provide five positives to every negative bit of feedback. The reason for this is that positive is more effective than negative feedback in maintaining or changing performance. Also, positive feedback helps to establish trust and rapport if it is genuine.

Well-timed feedback refers to timing the delivery of the feedback to the emotional readiness of both the person receiving the feedback and the sender.
The immediacy of the feedback must be balanced with the emotional readiness of the receiver and sender.

Giving feedback when you or the worker is angry, upset, or unusually stressed may distort the feedback significantly.

- Direct feedback means that the information is not clouded by false praise. The supervisor giving it does not try to get the worker to identify the problem him- or herself, in order to avoid taking responsibility for giving the feedback.

- Helpful feedback occurs when the receiver perceives the motive of the giver to be genuinely supportive. When the worker believes that the supervisor wants to help him or her modify job performance, he or she is much more receptive to feedback.

- Clear feedback is feedback that is understood.

- To ensure clear communication
  - restate what you have said in other words.
  - check the worker's understanding and interpretation of the message

Activity ~ Recognizing Effective Feedback
1. Refer participants to PG 5, Recognizing Effective Feedback
2. Instruct the participants to review the examples and evaluate their effectiveness as strong or weak examples of feedback.
3. Participants may work individually, or in small groups.
4. Discuss as a class.

Discussion ~ Conditions for Feedback
1. Ask the class to brainstorm the best atmosphere or conditions for effective feedback to be given and received.
2. List responses on a flipchart.
3. Lead the class to the following conditions:
   - An atmosphere of: openness, trustworthiness, and credibility
Openness

⇒ In an open climate, everyone feels free to exchange information and knows that the supervisor, will always strive to resolve issues that are voiced, not punish workers for open communication.

⇒ To create an open climate, a supervisor must encourage the sharing of information between him- or herself and workers and among workers. The standard culture should be for win-win solutions to problems.

⇒ Feedback is more likely to be accepted by workers in an open atmosphere where sharing ideas, problems, and concerns is viewed as normal. Workers will feel safe receiving and giving feedback in an open climate.

⇒ The more closed the climate, the more feedback will be perceived as unusual and, therefore, manipulative.

Trustworthiness

⇒ In good working conditions, a supervisor will create trust in his or her workers. The workers will be confident that the supervisors’ motives are to

  Ṣ assist and empower workers

  Ṣ enhance or support workers’ performance

⇒ If a supervisor is trustworthy, his workers will view him as a person who acts consistently (i.e., “what you see is what you get”; he will do what he says he is going to do). The workers will trust the supervisor’s motives when he takes action or makes decisions.
and will not feel there are hidden agendas.

⇒ When feedback is given within a trusting relationship, workers are more likely to accept criticism because they will not question the supervisor’s motives.

⇒ When trust is low, workers will resist the supervisor’s feedback.

**Credibility**

⇒ Credibility is a condition created by a supervisor that demonstrates ability, knowledge, and skill by making good decisions.

⇒ A credible supervisor’s workers will believe what he says. They will believe that he knows what he is talking about because they have seen him act competently, resolve issues successfully, and make good decisions.

⇒ When workers value and respect the supervisor’s decisions and actions, they are more likely to believe that feedback is valid—whether it is praise or constructive criticism.

⇒ However, if they do not see you as credible, your feedback is likely to be discounted.

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**Activity ~ Creating an Atmosphere for Feedback**

1. Refer participants to PG 7, *Creating an Atmosphere for Feedback*

2. Instruct the participants to answer the questions.

3. Discuss as a class.

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**Transition**

* Planning for feedback helps to bring the right qualities and conditions together for effective feedback. It also helps the supervisor identify the right opportunities to guide and reinforce counselors’ casework behaviors.
Planning for Effective Feedback

1. Create the best conditions
2. Review expectations
3. Identify the behaviors to maintain or change
4. Identify reasons for performance
5. Know what to say, when to say it, and where to say it
6. Have supporting documentation
7. Keep a contact log

- **Conditions** - Plan and implement on an ongoing basis to create the best conditions for feedback. Create the best environment possible within the work unit by selecting an office or location that is private.

- **Expectations** - Review what has been communicated to the worker and how well he or she has performed, the performance history, and noted trends.

- **Behaviors to be maintained or changed** - Identify by asking:
  - ? What behaviors demonstrate the worker’s strengths?
  - ? What behaviors need to be changed?

- **Reasons for poor performance** - Identify by asking:
  - ? Are the original expectations realistic? If not, what needs to be modified to help the counselor achieve them?
  - ? Does the caseworker need one of the following?
    - more training
    - more coaching
    - change in working conditions
    - additional tools or performance support
    - different incentives
    - more frequent feedback

- **The 3 W’s** - What to say, when to say it, and where to say it.
  Write out feedback points, if necessary, and schedule the meeting.
with the counselor.

- Obtain or prepare any supporting documentation necessary to support your feedback.

- Contact log - Record the date and content of the feedback, the counselor’s response and any additional issues discussed, actions taken and responsible personnel (i.e., caseworker, and supervisor); add to the log later as necessary.

Activity ~ Planning for Feedback

1. Refer participants to PG 9-12, Planning For Feedback

2. Ask each participant to mentally select two counselors in his or her unit who require or will soon require feedback. One should be receiving primarily positive feedback and one primarily negative feedback.

3. If the supervisor is new and does not know his or her assigned counselors, assign him or her to work with a supervisor who does. Have them complete the activity together.

4. Ask participants to use the seven-step process to plan the feedback session for each of their selected counselors.

5. Ask participants to use fictitious names for the counselors and not to disclose any distinguishing characteristics to protect the actual individuals.

6. Ask a few participants to volunteer to share their plans.

7. Ask the other participants to comment or ask questions regarding the plans.

Activity ~ Putting it all Together

1. Refer participants to PG 13, PIFS Checklist. Discuss the behaviors listed on the checklist.

2. Ask participants to break into groups of three.
3. Assign each person a role: supervisor, counselor, and observer.

4. Ask each participant to review his or her plan for giving feedback completed in the previous activity, “Planning For Feedback.” Allow 5 minutes for this.

5. Those assigned the supervisor role should be instructed to deliver the feedback they planned to those playing the counselor.

6. The observer should observe the feedback session while using the PIFS checklist. The observer can take notes about the interaction on the checklist.

7. After the role play, the observer should point out which interpersonal skills the supervisor demonstrated and did not demonstrate. The observer should also comment on the parts of the plan the supervisor actually implemented.

8. Allow 10 minutes per role play and discussion.

Debrief Activity

**Supervisors:**

? What was the most difficult thing you experienced during the role play?

? What was the easiest for you?

? What do you think is the most important thing to consider when planning for feedback sessions?

**Counselors:**

? How did you feel during the feedback session?

? What do you think could have made the experience better for you as a worker?

**Observers:**

? Which interpersonal feedback skills did you observe during the interchange?

? Which ones were missing?
Summarize

- Being able to give effective feedback is a critical skill for a supervisor to have.
- Create the right conditions, plan for feedback, and practice. Your staff will appreciate knowing what they do well and what needs to be improved upon.