

Balancing All Areas of Supervision: How Well Are You Doing?

The list below provides you with tips and ideas on how to increase or balance your role as a supervisor in the three areas of supervision- administrative, supportive, and educational. Use the list as a self-assessment and as a resource to build your skills.

In ADMINISTRATIVE supervision, a supervisor:

- Communicates with staff about the agency mission and goals
- Models behaviors that are consistent with the agency mission, goals, values
- Establishes unit objectives and priorities that reflect agency goals
- Communicates connection between policies and procedures and the agency's mission and goals
- Assigns work in a way that facilitates the goals and objectives of the unit
- Holds workers accountable for assigned work
- Implements administrative authority and power in a non-authoritarian manner
- Balances support and clear expectations of work in conformity with clearly defined performance procedures and standards
- Provides direction, confronts when appropriate, and provides constructive, honest, critical feedback
- Evaluates supervisees practice with objectivity, sensitivity, but also firmness
- Selects key indicators to determine if unit goals are being met
- Develops and implements methods of assessing and tracking unit performance
- Sets and clearly communicates expectations for staff performance related to client outcomes and program compliance
- Evaluates and monitors quality, quantity, and timeliness of staff performance
- Provides frequent, timely, and specific positive feedback and constructive criticism to keep workers apprised of performance
- Supervises in an unobtrusive manner
- Makes him/herself physically available, psychologically accessible, and approachable
- Communicates information in a respectful manner that acknowledges cultural and other differences
- Summarizes and evaluates data to identify problems and trends for unit planning
- Provides a written performance plan and evaluation of staff a minimum of once per year
- Takes appropriate positive or corrective personnel actions
- Documents workers performance related to program compliance
- Demonstrates state of the art occupational knowledge; provides staff with information necessary to carry out the job
- Keeps staff informed of changes, trends, plans, and proposals in a timely manner

- Solicits problems, concerns, issues, and recommendations regarding programmatic needs and systemic issues
- Communicates recommendations to upper level management
- Presents information to staff and administration in a manner that promotes understanding, implementation and/or resolution
- Participates in the development of a system for communication across units and agencies
- Helps staff understand roles and parameters of other units within agency
- Models cultural responsiveness in collaborative relationships
- Convenes meetings of the unit at a minimum of once a month
- Takes appropriate positive or corrective personnel actions
- Models and expects an atmosphere that promotes open communication conducted with genuineness, empathy and respect

In EDUCATIONAL supervision, a supervisor:

- Displays a sincere interest in promoting supervisee learning and professional development
- Balances control and direction with respect for supervisee's autonomy
- Has expert, updated knowledge of social work theory and practice and is ready to share such expertise in providing the supervisee with information and suggestions relevant to practice problems
- Has a mutual problem-solving orientation with supervisees toward their work
- Identifies workers' strengths and helps them develop those strengths
- Provides a clear flexible structure for the supervisor-supervisee relationship
- Actively prepares for conferences and group supervisory meetings; preparation involves review of knowledge of supervisees as well as knowledge of content
- Is culturally sensitive in helping supervisees understand clients in their situation; is nonsexist and nonracist in orientation
- Shares expertise, effectively teaching practice in a way which facilitates learning
- Displays technical professional competence in helping supervisees with their work as well as competence in interpersonal human relations with supervisees
- Accepts mistakes and failures as a natural part of the learning experience
- Provides welcoming environment and provide necessary support to orient new staff to the office
- Assesses critical core knowledge of Child Abuse and Neglect, skills, and learning styles of new staff
- Accommodates the learning style of the new staff
- Provides core knowledge of the community; legal mandates; job responsibilities; various programs provided by the agency; policies and practices, the client population and cultural sensitivity
- Conducts initial and on-going assessments with staff to identify their strengths and needs relative to their critical core competencies and their use of self in practice (i.e. values, beliefs, biases)

- Examines alternatives with each staff to meet their developmental and training needs
- Develops an individual performance plan with staff to meet their needs
- Provides/assures ongoing and advanced training regarding agency, policy and procedures, and casework practice
- Encourages development of specialized expertise and innovation on new projects they may embrace (as related to the job and the needs of the work unit)
- Encourages staff creativity and innovation in new projects and roles
- Models/coaches continued growth and development for staff as lifelong learners
- Promotes independence and autonomy in job activities within defined parameters
- Discusses the worker's entire workload with her or him at least monthly
- Increases staff awareness of how their own attitudes and approaches, life experiences and cultural background potentially impact the relationship with others
- Assesses the knowledge, skills, and learning style of new staff
- Assures that orientation for new staff occurs within 90 days of employment, and includes: agency structure, culture and values; knowledge of the community; legal mandates; job responsibilities; various programs provided by the agency; policies and procedures; and client population and cultural sensitivity
- Conducts initial and on-going assessments with staff to identify their strengths and needs
- Examines alternatives with staff to meet their developmental and training needs
- Encourages staff creativity and innovation in new projects and roles
- Supports staff in making critical case decisions regarding placement, reunification of children, termination of parental rights, and case closure
- Encourages staff to identify the cultural diversity of all families and helps staff develop plans to address individual differences

In SUPPORTIVE supervision, a supervisor:

- Supports staff in their efforts to carry out the agency mission and goals
- Establishes benign relationships with supervisees characterized by a sense of psychological safety—accepting, warm, empathic, respectful, interested, supportive, flexible, genuine
- Develops and maintains good interpersonal relationships among supervisees
- Projects an attitude of confidence and trust toward the supervisee, resulting in optimization of supervisee autonomy and discretion
- Supports/encourages staff to achieve their professional goals
- Offers praise and approval for good performance; challenges and confronts inadequate work
- Adjusts work demands accordingly to level of workers' stress
- Establishes full and free reciprocal communication with the supervisee in an atmosphere that not only permits but encourages the expression of authentic feeling

- Considers negative feedback non-defensively
- Avoids being emotionally intrusive on workers private concerns
- Communicates effectively up and down the hierarchical communication ladder
- Represents workers messages for administration's consideration
- Represents administration's concerns fairly and understandingly to supervisees
- Balances the agency's need for stability with need to change; advocates for validated change
- Acknowledges effective performance, caseworker efforts, client progress, accomplishment, and individual contributions
- Treats staff with importance, dignity, and respect
- Creates/models high standards of practice
- Responds to the needs and feelings of staff
- Supports staff in taking care of themselves physically and emotionally
- Treats staff as professionals
- Supports a climate of trust and openness
- Encourages staff to express their feelings and concerns
- Creates a sense of safety and stability to support risk-taking
- Creates an environment in which cultural differences are appreciated
- Uses mistakes as an opportunity to teach and learn
- Involves staff in unit decision making
- Encourages peer consultation, collaboration, and shared decision-making
- Fosters cooperative relationships in the unit
- Promotes a unique identity for the unit
- Assesses team strengths and needs
- Capitalizes on individual expertise for the purposes of enhancing the functioning of the team
- Defines team roles and creates norms for how members will work together
- Supports staff in their quests to obtain positions of greater responsibility and to make other needed transitions
- Creates a safe and accepting environment which encourages staff to raise issues and concerns
- Demonstrates respect for differences of opinion
- Provides welcoming environment and necessary support to orient new staff to the office
- Facilitates discussions that create a solution which meets the needs of those involved in the conflict
- Assists staff in depersonalizing conflict
- Increases awareness of how one's personality and work style affect their staff

- Increases awareness of how one's life experiences and cultural background can impact on the supervisor/worker relationship
- Uses self-awareness as a diagnostic tool/intervention in supervising staff
- Seeks supervision and consultation to enhance one's own effectiveness
- Develops a system for receiving feedback from staff
- Exhibits flexibility and accepts change in a positive manner
- Recognizes and learn from one's own mistakes
- Creates a safe and open environment, where staff can raise issues and concerns
- Develops a system for receiving feedback from staff on supervisory practice
- Takes care of one's self
- Exhibits flexibility and accepts change in a positive manner
- Performs with calmness and stability even when under pressure and during emergency situations
- Recognizes and learns from one's own mistakes
- Supports staff in self-care
- Treats staff with genuineness, empathy and respect
- Earns the respect of staff. Supports a climate of trust and openness, which promotes personal and professional growth
- Encourages staff to reflect on their feelings and concerns about the work as well as the agency and help them resolve these feelings
- Promotes a "can do" attitude with staff
- Involves staff in unit decision-making
- Treats staff like responsible adults, not like children or criminals
- Avoids micromanaging
- Gives positive feedback
- Gives credit to staff for their accomplishments

References

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