

BEST PRACTICES IN CLINICAL SUPERVISION

CLINICAL SUPERVISION is critical for professional development, yet it can be difficult to discern best practices in supervision. Across guidelines from the American Psychological Association’s (APA, 2014) *Guidelines for Clinical Supervision in Health Service Psychology*, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision’s (ACES, 2011, Borders et al., 2014) *Best Practices in Clinical Supervision*, and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2013) *Best Practice Standards in Social Work Supervision*, the following were identified as the **17 COMMONLY RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES IN CLINICAL SUPERVISION**.

#1. BENEFICENCE | SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CLIENT

- Supervisor assigns supervisee developmentally appropriate cases
- Supervisor increases supervision time for challenging cases
- Supervisor sees supervisee’s clients as their responsibility

#2. COORDINATION AMONG RELEVANT PROFESSIONALS

- If appropriate, supervision group includes other relevant professionals (e.g., primary care providers, psychiatrists)

#3. MODELING PROFESSIONALISM

- Stated adherence to licensure or accreditation standards (e.g., referencing APA or NASW standards for licensure or accreditation in description of supervision format or processes)

#4. SUPERVISOR ASSESSES SUPERVISION | SUPERVISEE (FORMAL/INFORMAL)

- Formal evaluation of supervisee performance (separate from feedback provided in supervision meetings)
- Completion of quantitative measures (e.g., competence, adherence, etc.) that are used to guide supervision feedback
- Use of live observation and video/audio review techniques in formal observation

#5. SUPERVISORS SET EXPECTATIONS | CONTRACT

- Supervisors identify expected program competencies and performance standards, and assist the supervisee to formulate individual learning goals
- Supervisor and supervisee make a written contract (in the case of social work, this would be a legal contract)
- Supervisor engages in informed consent with supervisee at onset of supervision
- Includes collaborative agenda setting
- Supervisor communicates expectations of supervision format (i.e., setting, medium)

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#6. TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS | SUPERVISOR USES TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE SUPERVISION

- Supervisor uses technology to enhance the supervision feedback process (e.g., watching session videos, reviewing audio recordings)
- Supervisors engage in learning (e.g., reading guidelines) to learn about the use of technology for supervision
- Supervisor uses technology to enhance the supervision format (e.g., using bug-in-the-ear/eye technology, providing supervision via videoconferencing software)
- Supervisors discuss the use of technology with clients with their supervisees (e.g., use of internet searches, social media)
- Supervision format uses technology to provide supervision remotely (e.g., teleconferencing, conference calls across supervision sites)

#7. SUPERVISOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

- Supervisor pursues continuing education
- Supervisors only provide supervision within the limits of their own competence
- Supervisor self-evaluation of competence
- Emphasis on supervisor continuing education
- Supervisor receives supervision of supervision or consultation on supervision (including peer supervision)

#8. ADHERENCE TO ESTABLISHED GUIDELINES

- Reference to existing guidelines in description of supervision format (e.g., APA, NASW, ACES guidelines)
- Does **NOT** include reference to psychotherapy models or theoretical orientations

#9. MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS

- Supervisor does not engage in inappropriate relationships with supervisee (e.g., a romantic relationship)

#10. MODELING ETHICAL PRACTICES

- Supervision format references managing conflicts with professionalism

#11. PROVIDING MULTICULTURAL SUPERVISION

- Supervisor infuses multicultural considerations regarding the supervisee into supervision
- Supervisor builds their own multicultural awareness through various means (e.g., trainings)

#12. DOCUMENTATION OF SUPERVISION

- Supervisory progress notes

#13. COLLABORATIVE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

- Supervisor and supervisee creating contract together
- Supervisee provides feedback regarding supervisor or supervision format

#14. SUPPORTING CLIENT ADVOCACY

- Supervisor models advocacy for human rights and intervention with institutions and systems

#15. GOAL SETTING

- Creating a supervision contract with identified developmentally appropriate goals
- Referencing identified goals during supervision meetings

#16. SUPERVISOR ENCOURAGES SUPERVISEE SELF-EVALUATION

- Supervisor solicits ongoing feedback from supervisee on their own competence
- Supervisor incorporates that feedback into supervisee evaluation
- Supervisor solicits feedback from supervisee

#17. SUPERVISOR PROVIDES FEEDBACK TO SUPERVISEE (GENERAL)

- Any review of taped/audio-recorded sessions during supervision
- Any discussion of supervisee performance

EVIDENCE BASE FOR THESE PRACTICES

From sample of 1500+ articles, we reviewed 26 studies to determine associations between included supervision elements and meaningful supervision outcomes (e.g., therapist competence, supervisory alliance, client progress).

The common elements with the most consistently positive associations with these outcomes were: documentation of supervision, adherence to established guidelines, modeling ethical practices, coordinating among relevant professionals encouraging supervisee self-evaluation, fostering a collaborative supervisor–supervisee relationship, and supervisor technology use to enhance supervision.

While more research is needed in this area to determine causal relationships between included supervision element and these outcomes, we hope these findings provide concrete strategies for supervisors to include in their ongoing supervision meetings.

FURTHER READING...

American Psychological Association (APA). (2015). *Standards of accreditation for health service psychology and accreditation operating procedures*. Retrieved October 23, 2019, from <http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/about/policies/standards-of-accreditation.pdf>

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National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2013). *Best practice standards in social work supervision*. Retrieved October 23, 2019, from <http://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Practice-Standards-Guidelines>

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