

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Supervision Practice Guide

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Overview

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is committed to the provision of effective supervision of its employees. Supervision at all levels of the organization is critical to ensuring and continually improving the quality of services delivered by DCF.

This Practice Guide outlines those standards and expectations, as well as the agency's commitment to supporting best practices in supervision within the Regional Offices.

Engaging Supervisees

To promote effective supervision and build strong supervisory relationships, supervisors shall review this Practice Guide and the related Human Resource Policy on Supervision with each of their supervisees at the beginning of the supervisory relationship (and with existing supervisees, when updates to this Practice Guide are introduced).

This discussion will be documented in the supervision file.

Definitions

Supervision is a formal, professional relationship in which the supervisor has authority and oversight responsibility for the work and work life of the supervisee. Although supervisors are held accountable for services delivered by their supervisees, supervision is a collaborative relationship in which supervisees hold responsibility, as well, for effectively fulfilling their job duties.

Supervisor in this Practice Guide refers generically to all individuals who supervise other employees in the organization.

Functions of Supervision

There are four functions of supervision. These are:

- ensuring the quality of service provided;
- ensuring that administrative tasks are completed accurately and in a timely way;
- providing support to employees in their jobs as they face work-related challenges; and
- helping employees to grow and develop their skills.

Supervisory Levels

These standards are designed to apply to employees within DCF Regional Offices. The standards are applicable to and address four specific supervisory levels, as described below. The use of the term "supervisor" in this context refers to the formal job category of supervisor within DCF:

- Social Work Supervisor to Social Worker;
 - Program Supervisor to Social Work Supervisor;
 - Office Director to Direct Report; and
 - Regional Administrator to Direct Report.
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Documentation of Supervision Sessions

All staff in supervisory positions will use the DCF-4101, Supervision Session Agenda, as a written structured agenda template to help organize the supervision sessions they provide. This agenda can be tailored in format to meet the needs of the office, unit or program in which the supervision is occurring. The form will simultaneously be used to document the supervision provided. A form for each supervision session conducted will be maintained by the supervisor in the supervision file for that supervisee. It must contain the date, duration and format of supervision (individual or group) and a general notation of the content of the sessions.

Managers will regularly review the Session Agenda for their supervisees to provide ongoing feedback and support regarding supervisory duties.

Maintenance of Supervision Files

In addition to housing completed supervision agendas, the supervision file will contain performance-related information. The supervision files are not intended for storage of detailed and confidential case-related information about children and families.

Amount and Type of Supervision

Social Work Supervisor to Worker Level:

- a minimum of four hours monthly, of which at least half must be individual supervision; and
- if any of the four hours of supervision is provided in a group format, it must be actual group supervision (not unit, team meeting or staff meetings)

Frequency and Format

Program Supervisor to Social Work Supervisor Level:

- two hours individual monthly

Office Director to Direct Report Level:

- 1 hour individual monthly

Regional Administrator to Direct Report Level:

- 1 hour individual monthly

The intention is for supervision sessions to be scheduled, face-to-face, and one hour in length (not a cumulative total of brief or unscheduled discussions).

Supervisory sessions canceled by the supervisor or supervisee are to be rescheduled in order to meet the expectations for amount of supervision as outlined above.

Specific case consultations for ongoing cases will be documented in the case information system a minimum of once every 30 days. While this policy represents a minimum standard relative to documentation for supervision, it is expected that supervision and the documentation associated with supervision will occur as frequently as is necessary and appropriate according to the safety and risk levels of the case. In situations involving a directive or imminent safety concern, documentation is required in real time.

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Unit, Team and Staff Meetings

It is recognized that supervisors will organize and routinely conduct unit, team, and staff meetings to manage and oversee the work. These complement but do not substitute for supervision.

Distinct from Case Reviews

Supervision sessions can and should include discussions of cases, but must broadly address the four functions of supervision identified in this Practice Guide. The administrative requirement that supervisors complete "case reviews" is distinct from the broad obligation to provide supervision to workers.

Group Supervision

Group supervision enables supervisors to efficiently foster professional development by providing staff with a collaborative consultation and learning experience.

Sessions may be focused on practice issues, specific cases, professional development and the provision of support.

Group supervision is not administrative in nature and is distinct from team and unit meetings.

When engaging in a case review, a structured presentation that focuses this discussion can include five key steps:

- brief overview of the identified issue or request for help;
 - clarifying questions from the group;
 - group feedback;
 - Social Worker response; and
 - discussion/comments/next steps.
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Content of Supervision Sessions

Each person in a supervisory role approaches the supervision process somewhat differently. It is expected that both the supervisor and supervisee are active participants in the process. Relative to case consultation, there are multiple variables involved. It is important to discuss and document those cases that present with: a) major changes to the case plan; b) significant risk or legal issues; c) major changes in youth or family status; and d) other potential challenges with which to work.

Supervisees should alert the supervisor about children and families who have voiced concerns about their work, including formal and informal concerns. It is essential to inform supervisors of critical information given their oversight responsibilities.

Supervisors will outline expectations regarding issues such as caseload size, documentation and scheduling of work as well as engage in periodic discussions regarding supervisees' performance, learning needs and opportunities for continuing education.

Supervision is a collaborative process and the supervisee is encouraged to raise with supervisors any concerns regarding his or her job, relationships with other employees, other parts of his or her work life, the supervision he or she is receiving and specific supervisory decisions.

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Content of Supervision Sessions (Continued)

In all cases supervisees are responsible for following a supervisor's instructions and direction about their work.

Professional Development and Performance Evaluation

A specific role for supervisors is to help identify work-related strengths and learning needs and to help supervisees improve skills.

Supervisors provide supervisees with constructive feedback throughout the year and complete a written performance evaluation in accordance with DCF policy. Supervisees are to receive a copy of the performance form and evaluation criteria in advance, and have the opportunity to discuss the completed performance evaluation with their supervisor.

If a supervisee is dissatisfied with the review, this should be discussed with the supervisor. If this discussion does not resolve the concerns, the supervisor can direct the supervisee to his or her manager or to Human Resource Management.

Confidentiality and its Limits

Much of what is discussed in supervision will not be shared with others and supervisors have an obligation to handle sensitive information carefully.

It cannot be assumed, however, that the information discussed in supervision is confidential because it may be shared or used for a number of reasons such as coordinating services, crisis intervention, mandated reporting of client risk to self or others, and performance reviews or personnel-related actions.

Keeping important client-related information from supervisors, especially when risk to the client or others is involved, is never an acceptable way to protect confidentiality or provide services to clients

Social Work Supervisor/Management Training

Supervisors and managers shall participate in training as outline in DCF Policy 2-5, "Academy for Workforce Development," and the associated Academy Practice Guide.
