

# **“Committed to Excellence through Supervision” Iowa DHS Child Welfare Supervisor Curriculum**

*A collaborative product of the University of Iowa School of Social Work and  
The Iowa Department of Human Services*

## **Curriculum Overview**

A multi-phased supervisory curriculum designed to engage supervisors at all career stages in honing skills as reflective practitioners in organizational leadership and supervision. Curriculum modules will provide theoretical foundation, concrete application, and emphasis on the improvement of client outcomes through enhanced organizational effectiveness. Each module will include accessible suggested readings that will support participant learning and provide resources to share with staff. A key component of the curriculum is the use of a *Development Planning and Support Tool*, worker competencies, and task analyses (see samples provided) to conduct worker and unit assessments. The curriculum:

- Emphasizes practical application of useful concepts and best practices;
- Uses principles of adult education and applied learning;
- Supports the strengthening of peer support and learning through cohorts;
- Integrates measurable outcomes and learning objectives;
- Supports Iowa DHS Model of Practice;
- Is comprised of curriculum modules arranged in a progression that can be repeated as needed to accommodate new staff;
- Offers supplemental reference materials and web-based resources for use in direct on-the-job application.

## **Module Overview**

- **Module I:** Contemporary Child Welfare Supervisory Practice
- **Module II:** Developing Human Resources through Supervision
- **Module III:** Case Practice Supervision
- **Module IV:** Clinical Practice Supervision
- **Module V:** Promoting Safety and Resilience
- **Module VI:** Leadership Skills for Child Welfare Supervision

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# Module I: Contemporary Child Welfare Supervisory Practice

## Major Content:

- Establish context and motivation for personal and organizational learning
- Current best practices in the field of organizational development and supervision, and
- DHS historic and contemporary development to meet the changing needs (e.g., Redesign, Family Team Decision Making)

## Learning Objectives:

- Identify external forces that affect contemporary social work supervision (e.g., political [regulatory environment, litigation], economic [macro influence on family and worker's lives], social [demographics, speed up, social capital, urbanization], technology [e.g., in daily work, media])
- Effectively adapt to continually changing nature of child welfare practice.
- Identify the numerous functions of the supervisor in Iowa DHS child welfare: administration, education, counseling, consultation, evaluation
- Recognize the “parallel practice” elements of staff supervision.
- Apply elements of high performing teams to the work unit (e.g., “a learning organization,” focus on process, people, structure, integration of cultural competence, managing workforce diversity)
- Understand personal strengths and challenges as a child welfare supervisor.
- Use the Development Planning and Support Tool to conduct worker and unit assessment to create a Supervisory Program Portfolio that will be used throughout the supervisory series
- Model behaviors which are consistent with the agency mission, goals, and values.

## **Relevant Supervisor Competencies:**

- Understands and articulates the Department's organizational mission and values
- Understands organizational culture and strategies for managing change in challenging times
- Understands the Department's multiple initiatives (Redesign, Family Team Decision Making, Community Partnerships)
- Serves effectively as a conduit between administrative staff (Central Office, SAMS) and front line workers
- Understands the multiple roles of social work supervisor within the Department
- Uses techniques for efficient multi-tasking and time management.
- Makes effective use of technology as a communication & management tool
- Plans, organizes, and leads effective meetings
- Manages projects, programs and budgets
- Maintains quality relationships with peers – within area and across the state
- Understands commonalities and bridges differences between rural and urban communities
- Uses data effectively to improve practice and demonstrate results
- Critically evaluates current system functioning and effectively identifies barriers and develops solutions

## **Module II: Developing Human Resources through Supervision**

### **Major Content:**

- Effective staff recruitment
- Strategies for staff retention and development
- Developmental leadership model
- Managing staff performance issues

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Identify elements of effective staff recruitment, selection, orientation, training, development
- Use Developmental Leadership Model to explore and address career development needs of staff
- Creatively reward staff to enhance retention and performance
- Communicate performance expectations of staff in behavioral and measurable terms to improve client outcomes
- Apply elements of effective performance evaluation (e.g., Appreciative Inquiry, staff self-assessment, outcome-based evaluation, documentation)
- Manage employees with performance problems effectively and efficiently through use of Performance Intervention flowchart
- Proactively address need for transfer of knowledge and succession planning to address staffing needs in consideration of retirements
- Enhance organizational performance through use of effective exit interviews
- Use strategies to reduce organizational obstacles to staff performance (e.g., accessing resources, advocating for realistic job expectations, policy change)

### **Relevant Supervisor Competencies:**

- Identifies and sets expectations for optimal job performance and addresses the developmental/professional needs of staff at different states of employment
- Knows how to deal with challenging employees: effective, efficient performance assessment and improvement
- Supervises effectively from a distance
- Utilizes techniques for creative staff recognition, rewards, incentives
- Monitors and manages staff workloads in accordance with worker strengths
- Manages peer conflict through recognition, assessment and intervention
- Uses strategies to reduce organizational obstacles to staff performance
- Effectively staffs the agency by conducting intentional assessment, interviewing for competencies, reference checking, staff selection
- Provide quality employee orientation and ongoing development
- Assesses employees' readiness, autonomy and ability to perform effectively as a peer mentor
- Assesses for supervisory readiness among current staff
- Effectively supports new workers as they integrate into the Department and a waiting caseload
- Takes the leadership role in setting tone and understanding majority/minority dynamics
- Effectively addresses diversity issues in the workplace (e.g., generational, gender, ethnic, language)
- Develops and sustains collaborative team building as well as individual autonomy in the workplace
- Understands the supervisor's role in implementing personnel laws and policies (e.g., FMLA, discrimination)

## **Module III: Case Practice Supervision**

### **Major Content:**

- Definition and purpose of case practice supervision
- Goals, functions, process, structure, roles, tasks and skills
- The supervisory relationship
- Ethics and legal risk management
- Culturally competent clinical supervision
- Consulting with, teaching, mentoring, and evaluating staff
- Managing crises and clinical performance problems
- Designing a supervision program
- Safe case closure

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Define IDHS case practice supervision.
- Identify the goals, functions, developmental process, structure, tasks and skills of case practice supervision.
- Use supervision and the supervisory relationship to promote the values, principles and standards of child welfare practice.
- Use strength-based, reflective supervision to implement the IDHS practice model.
- Articulate the ethics of case practice supervision and implement strategies to address dilemmas that arise.
- Implement or update a supervision program.
- Train and coach staff to integrate new information and skills into their practice.
- Adapt supervisory interventions to supervisee developmental stage, skill level, learning style, and culture.
- Manage underperforming and/or impaired staff.
- Engage in self, employee and unit strength/needs assessment in areas of case practice
- Topic-specific workshops: Professional Writing, Safe Case Closure, Culturally Competent Practice, Developing In-Service Programs, Supervising an Impaired Worker

### **Relevant Supervisor Competencies:**

- Supervises and coaches for: engaging family members and service team; assessing for safety of child; understanding current situation; planning services to achieve safety; permanency and well-being; securing and assembling resources; implementing plan; monitoring progress and adapting services with on-going safety assessment and planning
- Understands and promotes the values, principles, standards in child welfare
- Develops staff in the Department's practice model
- Coaches staff in efficient case management (e.g., writing effective safety plans, succinct case plans, working with provider agency staff)
- Provides effective on-going clinical consultation and crisis intervention as needed
- Demonstrates culturally competent work and develops cultural competence in staff
- Promotes a practice culture that is family-centered, strength based, solution focused child welfare intervention, including family team meetings
- Coaches and mentors family team meetings

## **Module IV: Clinical Practice Supervision**

The Clinical Practice Supervision module focuses on the supervision of case planning in practice areas which require application of specialized knowledge. Subject matter presentations will be offered to enhance supervisors' knowledge base in the areas of child and adolescent development, including childhood brain development, child and adult mental health, and trauma and its effects. Supervisors will be given the opportunity to assess their staff's competence in a number of specialized areas, including mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental retardation and developmental disabilities, child development, and trauma, and to develop individual and unit development plans around the clinical competencies.

This Module also provides an opportunity for reflection and critical thinking about how supervisors can assist workers to make better use of assessment data to design effective interventions and to monitor case progress.

### **Major Content:**

- Child and Adolescent Development
- Supervision of clinical issues involving mental health of parents
- Mental illnesses and behavioral disorders affecting children
- Supervising workers in planning interventions and assessing change
- Assessing worker competencies in clinical practice

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Describe causes and effects of disruptions to child and adolescent development and how foster care can contribute to or ameliorate these risks
- For major categories of adult mental illness, recognize DSM-IV definitions, symptoms and behavioral indicators, the potential relationship of the illness to child abuse and neglect and parenting capacity, protective factors, common fallacies, questions for the professional evaluator, and common treatment options
- Describe major behavioral and mental disorders of children, symptoms and behavioral indicators, when to seek professional consultation, and common treatment options
- Identify opportunities and strategies for integrating understanding of child and adolescent development into case plan supervision
- Identify opportunities and strategies for integrating understanding of adult and childhood mental illnesses into case plan supervision
- Identify strategies for effectively using assessment data
- Identify strategies for supervising effective intervention planning and measurement of change
- Engage in self, employee and unit strength/needs assessment in areas of clinical practice

## **Relevant Supervisor Competencies:**

- Stays current in issues facing child welfare such as: substance abuse and current drugs, mental health and psychiatric conditions, abuse and violence, risk assessment methods, safety and risk assessment, neurobiology and trauma, treatment modalities.
- Supervises and coaches for: engaging family members and service team; assessing for safety of child; understanding current situation; planning services to achieve safety; permanency and well-being; securing and assembling resources; implementing plan; monitoring progress and adapting services with on-going safety assessment and planning
- Provides effective on-going clinical consultation
- Demonstrates culturally competent work and develops cultural competence in staff
- Promotes a practice culture that is family-centered, strength based, solution focused child welfare intervention, including family team meetings
- Evaluates clinical performance of staff

## **Module V: Promoting Safety and Resilience**

### **Major Content:**

- Individual and organizational factors of resilience
- Current literature on vicarious traumatization and compassion fatigue
- Responding to critical incidents
- Strategies for promoting self care
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### **Learning Objectives:**

- Review findings on supervisors' role in retention of child welfare staff
- Acknowledge origins and consequences of work-related stress
- Understand organizational factors that contribute to resilience, including role of supervisor
- Apply workplace techniques to monitor promote factors of resilience
- Define supervisor's role within Iowa DHS Crisis Response Protocol
- Handle crises externally effectively, efficiently, and sensitively
- Handle crises internally effectively, efficiently, and compassionately
- Support staff in assessing danger when working with clients, including use of a risk assessment model and mentoring use of effective strategies when working with clients
- Identify and intervene with staff who are experiencing prolonged compassion fatigue
- Develop creative strategies for resilience (e.g., peer support and team building)

## **Module VI: Leadership Skills for Child Welfare Supervision**

### **Leading Positive Change; Managing Public and Community Relations**

#### **Major Content:**

- Positive leadership during organizational transformation
- Managing public and community relations

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Promote organizational mission effectively within community; manage community relationships in a way that promotes collaborative relationships and community support of child protection
- Lead positive organizational change through planning, communication, vision, and participatory management
- Support workers during transitions brought on by organizational change

### **Relevant Supervisor Competencies for Modules V and VI:**

- Understands the origins and consequences of work-related stress and models coping skills to manage such stresses
- Recognizes indicators of potential danger and employs strategies to enhance staff safety on the job
- Coaches and models how to maintain professional boundaries when working with clients
- Promotes peer support and team building with peers
- Understands the importance of professional collaboration, as needed; and requests assistance appropriately
- Promotes staff resilience and healing in managing the difficult work
- Deals effectively with emotional needs around the many issues of crisis and utilizes the Crisis Response Protocol
- Effectively deals with stakeholder complaints
- Promotes organizational mission effectively with a variety of community entities
- Works effectively with media to build positive relations and maintain open communications
- Understands how to advocate effectively and appropriately for agency and community resources