

“Committed to Excellence Through Supervision”
~ Conceptual Model of Supervision ~

Theoretical Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Systems · Developmental · Adult Education · Social Justice
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Competency-based · Strength-based · Outcomes-driven · Culturally Competent · Reflective · Stewardship of Resources · Organizational Development · Individual Development
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Legal · Economic · Social · Technological · Political · Ethical · Organizational
Purpose of Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Support mission of organization · Ensure quality of services · Foster staff professional development · Contribute to the on-going vitality of the organization
Domains of Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Case/Clinical Supervision · Human Resources · Public and Community Relations · Safety and Well Being
Supervisory Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Administration · Education · Consultation · Counseling · Evaluation

<p>Competencies (domain-specific)</p>	<p>Competency: The capacity to fulfill responsibilities of the job.</p>
<p>Content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <u>Knowledge</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Agency Practice Model; Domain Theory; Case Management · <u>Values</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Safety, permanency, and well being for children and families; Cultural Competence; Family-centered; Strengths-based · <u>Skills</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Documentation; Design Supervision Program; Staff Recruitment and Interviewing; Conflict Negotiation , Teaching
<p>Process</p>	<p><u>Supervision Program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supervisory Relationship · Developmental Process of Supervisor and of Supervisee · Teaching/Learning Strategies · Formats · Tasks/Activities

A Selection of Talents

Striving Talents

- Achiever:** A drive that is internal, constant, and self-imposed
Kinesthetic: A need to expend physical energy
Stamina: Capacity for physical endurance
Competition: A need to gauge your success comparatively
Desire: A need to claim significance through independence, excellence, risk, and recognition
Competence: A need for expertise or mastery
Belief: A need to orient your life around certain prevailing values
Mission: A drive to put your beliefs into action
Service: A drive to be of service to others
Ethics: A clear understanding of right and wrong which guides your actions
Vision: A drive to paint value-based word pictures about the future

Thinking Talents

- Focus:** An ability to set goals and to use them every day to guide actions
Discipline: A need to impose structure onto life and work
Arranger: An ability to orchestrate
Work Orientation: A need to mentally rehearse and review
Gestalt: A need to see order and accuracy
Responsibility: A need to assume personal accountability for your work
Concept: An ability to develop a framework by which to make sense of things
Performance Orientation: A need to be objective and to measure performance
Strategic Thinking: An ability to play out alternative scenarios in the future
Business Thinking: The financial application of the strategic thinking talent
Problem Solving: An ability to think things through with incomplete data
Formulation: An ability to find coherent patterns within incoherent data sets
Numerical: An affinity for numbers
Creativity: An ability to break existing configurations in favor of more effective/ appealing ones

Relating Talents

- Woo:** A need to gain the approval of others
Empathy: An ability to identify the feelings and perspectives of others
Relator: A need to build bonds that last
Multirelator: An ability to build an extensive network of acquaintances
Interpersonal: An ability to purposely capitalize upon relationships
Individualized Perception: An awareness of and attentiveness to individual differences
Developer: A need to invest in others and to derive satisfaction in so doing
Stimulator: An ability to create enthusiasm and drama
Team: A need to build feelings of mutual support
Positivity: A need to look on the bright side
Persuasion: An ability to persuade others logically
Command: An ability to take charge
Activator: An impatience to move others to action
Courage: An ability to use emotion to overcome resistance

Identifying Worker Strengths

1. Relabeling: ask “what is the opposite of this weakness?”
2. Reflect back on earlier times or experiences when this worker’s strengths were more apparent, looking for *exceptions* to the problems.
3. Brainstorm new tasks, structures, or job changes that would make use of the characteristic that is currently a liability.
4. Ask the worker what tasks s/he likes to do or what role/skills s/he believes is most valuable to the team/agency.
5. Use the Strengths Interview; observe with a conscious ‘searching for strengths.’
6. Get coworker feedback by implementing “coworker recognition” times in staff meetings. (Of course it is never appropriate to ask coworkers directly for feedback on their colleagues’ performance unless it is a structured and anonymous evaluation format.)
7. Consider “testing out” the person’s use of the positive aspects of their liabilities in a pilot project or temporary assignment.
8. Routinely make time to recognize and reward achievements and accomplishments. (The strongest worker motivator is recognition, even more than salary increases.)

The Strengths Interview

At the beginning of each year, or a week or two after the person has been hired, spend about an hour with him asking the following ten questions:

1. What did you enjoy most about your previous work experience?
What brought you here?

(If an existing employee) What keeps you here?
2. What do you think your strengths are? (skills, knowledge, talent)
3. What about your weaknesses?
4. What are you goals for your current role?
5. How often do you like to meet with me to discuss your progress?
Are you the kind of person who will tell me how you are feeling, or will I have to ask?
6. Do you have any personal goals or commitment you would like to tell me about?
7. What is the best praise you have ever received?
What made it so good?
8. Have you had any really productive partnerships or mentors?
Why do you think these relationships worked so well for you?
9. What are your future growth goals, your career goals?
Are there any particular skills you want to learn?
Are there some specific challenges you want to experience?
How can I help?
10. Is there anything else you want to talk about that might help us work well together?

Strength-based Supervision Activity

A) Family Team Meetings

You supervise a staff member who has worked in your unit for sixteen years. He doesn't like the idea of family team meetings and shares his ideas about openly with co-workers. The quality of his work with families is good and the two newly hired case managers really like him.

B) Passive Aggressive

You supervise a staff member who seems to refuse to learn anything you teach her. Yesterday you sat with her at the computer screen for the fifth time and talked her through the new data program. You asked her if she understood the process and she responded "Yes, I think I got it this time." But this morning you saw her talking with two co-workers asking for help with the program. You wish she would stop being so passive-aggressive and just SAY if she doesn't understand something. You also want her to stop bothering her co-workers because one of them is going to complain to you sooner or later.

C) Promotion Emotion

You are a recently promoted supervisor. You supervise two staff members who were previously your peers. You have knowledge that one of the two applied for your position, but was not chosen. She was told by the interview committee that she was a very strong candidate and that it had been a "difficult decision," but that you were chosen because you were slightly more qualified. Since you have been in the supervisory position, you have noticed a distinct change in the tone of her interactions with you – she is hesitant to make eye contact and doesn't confide in or consult with you anymore.

D) Probationary Employee

You supervise someone you hired three months ago. He submitted a strong written work sample and interviewed really well. You particularly appreciated his commitment to the field of child welfare. As an added bonus, he is also fluent in Spanish! In the beginning, you were very excited about his joining your staff, but you have since developed several concerns about the consistency of his work. He seems to have high energy, manic days and then very low energy, depressive days. You have significant doubts whether he will be able to pass the probationary process. You also aren't sure if you have the time or energy to coach and mentor one more person with mental health issues on your staff!

E) Generational Diversity

You supervise a social worker who is fifteen years your junior. She was hired after doing a successful internship in your unit. The staff member comes in a few days late every day, but keeps a close eye on the clock to make sure they leave exactly on time as much as possible. You have heard her explain this to a co-worker, saying, “I work to live – I don’t live to work!” You don’t really care what her value system is, you just want her to grow up and get to work on time like everyone else has to!!

Activity Guidelines

1. Identify at least six strengths in your scenario. **Strengths** can be skills, attributes, and resources that a person possesses. A strength-based approach to supervision asserts that *all* people possess strengths and that many of those strengths have been and can be useful for coping with life’s challenges.
2. Given that “what you focus on grows” (e.g., if you scold a child for not picking up, he sees himself as someone who is just lazy and doesn’t pick up”), describe the supervisor’s current approach to the situation.
3. How would you complete the story?

Supervisory Paradigm Shift

Personnel Approach

- Deficit-based
- “What is **wrong** with this worker? How can I make her/him fix it?”
- Management by exception
- People are instruments to accomplish output: “Why is it that every time I want a pair of hands, I get a human, too?” (Henry Ford)

Human Resources

- Strength-based
- “What is **strong** with this worker (and how can I help her/him build on it)?” (Forest & Palmer-House, 2002)
- Developmental throughout life of employee
- People are an organization’s greatest resource; address issues related to motivation, engagement, and commitment to mission serve

Guidelines for Effective Supervision

Supervision is a specific and essential practice designed to 1) support the mission of the organization, 2) ensure quality of services, 3) foster staff professional development, and 4) contribute to the on-going vitality of the organization. To be effective, supervision must address all domains of practice to address short-term case needs, as well as longer term organizational needs. A supervisor's ultimate goal is to create a high performing workforce that can work both autonomously and interdependently with stakeholders, colleagues, and within the larger organization. The following principles are important to remember in developing an effective supervision practice:

1. **Acknowledge strengths** – All supervisors, workers, and colleagues have strengths that contribute to the organization's functioning.
2. **Respond to individual developmental needs** – All people also have individual developmental needs and deserve to work in an environment that honors their competencies and their continued growth. The developmental process should begin with a transparent assessment of expected competencies; an affirmation of worker strengths; an intentional assessment and diagnosis of workers' challenges and a mutually agreed upon individual development plan. Interventions on lower competencies occur within the context of an on-going supervisory relationship, not as a stand-alone deficit-only intervention.
3. **Integrate the impact of diversity** – Supervisors must also understand how a worker's diversity may impact their workplace experience and integrate this understanding into their supervision practices. They must also understand the demographics of the communities served and develop staff's cultural competence.
4. **Balance task and relationship responsibilities** – Supervision is inherently a leadership process that requires integrating a balance of task and relationship behaviors. The supervisory relationship is essential to the development of an effective and engaged workforce. The relationship should encourage worker autonomy and interdependence by facilitating critical thinking.
5. **Make management transparent and collaborative** – Staff should know the basic expectations and participate in setting their own goals and methods of achieving them. Supervisors assist in providing information, advocating for needed resources, articulating consistent feedback and accountability measures, and offering worker support to meet those goals.

6. **Provide regular feedback** – Feedback should be provided on an on-going basis, not just during annual performance evaluations. Supervisory evaluation should be both formative and summative; directed toward improving worker professional and career development, and should focus on strengths concurrently with challenges and goals.
7. **Use multiple forms of supervision** – At a minimum, each worker should have one-to-one supervision. The *content* and *frequency* of which will vary based on worker stage of development and complexity of the work. Multiple forms of supervision such as group supervision, peer supervision, on-the-job observations (intake meetings, case discussions among peers, case audits), mentoring, and training. (Austin, 2004)
8. **Arrange for professional development** – Attention to the professional development of staff contributes to job satisfaction, the quality of client services, and the vitality of the organization. Supervisors should provide regular in-service and facilitate other forms of professional development.
9. **Document supervision** – Effective supervision requires documentation to establish a historical record of staff growth, supervisory actions, and areas needing improvement. The file for each worker should include: record of meeting dates, negotiated goals, activities, expected outcomes and accomplished outcomes. The documentation should serve as transparent communication between supervisor and supervisee, as well as a record of legally required supervision for the supervisor’s file.
10. **Advocate for system change** – The supervisor should identify and advocate for larger system change as organizational barriers become apparent. Given the “middle” position of supervisors, up-the-chain advocacy skills are essential for supervisors as well as tools to attend to down-the-chain boundaries with which the supervisor can take care of her/his needs and frustrations so as not to pass on cynicism and disengagement to staff.

Life of Employee Supervision

