

Providing professional supervision outside the clinical/social services sector: some challenges and considerations

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Supervision within Clinical/Social Service Settings

- Counsellors and social workers are familiar with and regularly engage in supervision practices on an internal or external basis
- Practitioners have professional memberships requiring supervision practices
- Practitioners employed in services that endorse and require supervision practices



Challenges and Considerations within this context

- Not all supervisees in this context understand the benefits of supervision
- Internal administrative supervisors are often caught between pressures from upper management and the wellness and difficult work conditions for supervisees
- Management often looking to supervision to serve too many purposes



Supervision provision outside the clinical/ social work sector

- Professionals are unfamiliar with supervision practices as part of academic or professional experience
- No obligation to a professional membership to take up supervision
- Professionals employed in services that are unfamiliar with the benefits of supervision – often only a subgroup of interest for supervision to be made available



Challenges and Considerations within this context

Discussion Outline:

- An Organisational Perspective
- A Supervisee Perspective
- Opportunistic Supervision

An Organisational Perspective

Challenges and Considerations:

- optional vs mandatory supervision
 - how often
 - based on level of experience of supervisee
 - job performance
 - exemptions
- line-management resistance:
 - threat to own job performance
 - lack of understanding



Management Resistance



Management Barriers

- ❑ power and authority issues – under a lot of pressure
- ❑ productivity – time away from work
- ❑ lack of knowledge about supervision - refer to as coaching
- ❑ lack of own positive experience with supervision



Opportunistic Supervision

- Increase knowledge about supervision within the organisation
 - HR training
 - know EAP service
 - upper management training
 - unit training
- Make supervision available to unit management
 - theory of organisation - reflection
 - emotion of organisation - literacy
 - movement of organisation – time out

(Michael Carroll, 2001)



Opportunistic Supervision (continued)

- Building incentive for supervision
 - Health and Safety support
 - quality assurance support
- Onsite supervision – offers transparency
- Reports of general trends/themes
- Communication with other supervisors of organisation



A Supervisee Perspective

Challenges and Considerations:

- optional vs mandatory - only using supervision when in crisis
 - responsible for keeping appointments
 - coming to sessions prepared
- Supervisee Barriers - “supervision” = more power/authority
 - time away from meeting work targets
 - suggests not working at optimum
 - suggests need for counselling
 - disguised therapy (Keith Ung, 2004)
 - time off from work



Opportunistic Supervision

- Supervisor to learn the language of the organisation and the work of the supervisees – acronyms
- Prioritising rapport-building and trust
 - acknowledging supervisee work competencies
- Educating supervisees about supervision ie support, education, relationship development with management
- Teaching how to use EAP
 - emotional literacy
- Group supervision
- Incorporating clinical tools
 - Motivational Interviewing
 - DSM terminology



Supervisor Challenges and Considerations

- Remaining neutral - good modelling
- Supervising with the individual and the organisation in mind
- Maintaining confidentiality between individual and organisation/line management
- Need to understand and work with the organisation as much as with the individual



Summary

- Clinical and non clinical settings have similar challenges in regards to providing external supervision
- Clinical expertise can be beneficial in a non clinical setting
- Advantageous to learn from pitfalls within clinical settings for new environments
- Refer to authors of organisational and external supervision for inspiration
- The versatility and value of supervision, no matter the context, has successful potential

