Professional Supervision

Over the last few years, professional supervision has become an option of choice for many executive officers/senior managers in the community sector.

What is professional supervision?

In many respects the words professional supervision is misleading. It is more a relationship of equals. Some would say it is similar to professional mentoring, although this also does not fully explain the relationship. The truth is somewhere between common understanding of supervision and mentoring.

> *'Two core factors have generally been identified with positive supervision, these being a good supervisory relationship and attention to the task of developing clinical skills for the supervisee. Other salient features of good supervision are seen to be based on role induction, the establishment of clear goals and tasks outlining roles and responsibilities for the supervisor and supervisee (McMahon & Patton, 2002), clear contract setting and developmentally appropriate feedback to facilitate learning (Gard & Lewis 2008). Also valued in supervision is the quality of the supervision relationship, supervision environment (Worthen & McNeil, 1996), supervisor motivation, enthusiasm and interest in supervising and regular and clear feedback and monitoring (Haynes, Corey & Moulton, 2003).... the fundamental and most important aspect of the supervision process is the establishment of a working alliance ...'* (Senediak, C. 2013)

Guidelines for the establishment of an effective professional relationship

- The relationship should have a flexible but formal structure for a limited time, along with written guidelines on what the role of the supervisor should be
- The relationship should be financially and professionally supported by the organisation
- The supervision should be voluntary with neither party being forced into the relationship
- All information should be shared in confidence
- The supervisor should not be legally responsible for the action of the supervisee
- The supervisor and the supervisee should not take advantage of the situation in regards to professional ethics
- To ensure that important and relevant issues are discussed, there needs to be professional limits in place, noting that personal and emotional issues may come up from time to time
- There needs to be clear guidelines and expectations focussing on openness and support for the supervisee and the relationship as a whole
- There needs to be appropriate mechanisms for reporting back to the Board
- There needs to be clear procedures in place in case of a relationship breakdown

What makes a Good Supervisor and Supervisee?

A good supervisor:
- Is committed to developing the skills of the supervisee and is interested in their work
- Has a desire to share their experiences and expertise
- Shows integrity and honesty
- Has good communication and listening skills and is not intimidating
- Will be able to assist the supervisee with developing options and developing a process for decision making
- Can provide appropriate advice when necessary
- Is open to other perspectives
- Encourages the examination of ideas
- Is interested in the supervisee's work
- Has a disposition that is positive and accessible

A good supervisee:
- Has faith in the ability of the supervisor
- Is committed to developing their own skills
- Has a desire to achieve professional goals
- Has a desire for personal growth
- Has a good sense of self and personal capabilities
- Willingly accepts constructive and honest feedback
- Is open to different perspectives and options

Things that can go wrong:
- Professional supervision is adopted because it is in vogue rather than a genuine strategy for professional development
- Unsuccessful match of supervisor and supervisee
- The structural agreement is either too rigid or not rigid enough
- Lack of commitment by either party
- Unrealistic expectations or unspoken expectations by either party or the organisation
- Failure to respect confidentiality
- Failure of the supervisor to provide appropriate feedback

NB: There are other options for supervision. Some of these are:

- Reciprocal mentoring supervision where you are partners in learning
- Group supervision

Both types are explained in *Supervision in the Helping Professionals.* (McMahon, M & Patton, W (Eds.) (2002) pp.27-28)

Recommended reading

Hunter, Mary Ann (2002) Getting Connected Making Your Mentorship Work, Australian Council for the Arts, Surry Hills.

Psychiatry Disability Services of Victoria (VICSEV) with The Bouverie Centre and Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) *Clinical Supervision in the Alcohol and Other Drugs and Community Managed Mental Health Sectors* Online Clinical Supervision Guidelines

References and Resources

Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Supervision Register

Department of Community Child Safety and Disability Services (nd) Chapter 10.12 Professional supervision, Government of Queensland.

Gard, D. E., & Lewis, J. M. (2008) Building the Supervisory Alliance with Beginning Therapists. The Clinical Supervisor, 27, 39-60, Abstract.

Gopee, Neil (2015) *Mentoring and supervision in Healthcare*, 3rd ed, Sage Publications, London.

Haynes, R., Corey, G., & Moulton, P. (2003) *Clinical Supervision in the Helping Professions: A Practical Guide*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brookes/Cole—Thomson Learning.

Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) (2012) The Superguide- a handbook for supervising allied health professionals, NSW Government.

McIlveen, P., Brooks, S. et al (2011) Career Development Learning Frameworks for Work Integrated Learning.

McMahon M & Patton, W (Eds) (2002) *Supervision in the Helping Professions – a Practical Approach*, Pearson Education Australia Pty Ltd. Some chapters are available online.

McMahon, M., and Tatham, P (2008) Career More than just a job, 2nd ed, Education.au Ltd. and Australian Government

Mental Health Coordinating Council (nd) Workforce Development Pathway 8 – Supervision, Mentoring & Coaching

Noble, C. And Irwin, J. (2009) 'Social Work Supervision An Exploration of the Current Challenges in a Rapidly Changing Social, Economic and Political Environment', *Journal of Social Work*, 9 (3). pp. 345-358.

Senediak C. (2013) 'A reflective practice model of clinical supervision', Conference paper presentation: Advances in Clinical Supervision, *Advances in Clinical Supervision Monograph*, NSW Institute of Psychiatry, 2013, p 56.

NB: The above websites were accessible in 3 Nov 2015. If the links do not work search on the title of the document or go directly to the website of the organisation.