 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>201</h1>
Chapter:	Supervision and Training	
Subject:	Supervision of Social Work Staff & Social Work Supervisors	Page 1 of 4
Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 1/31/2014
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy No. 201	Dated: 10/16/98

Purpose

To emphasize the importance of meeting the supervisory needs of social work staff and social work supervisors, and to set minimum standards for all aspects of supervision.

Introduction

The field of child welfare is increasingly focusing on supervision as a strategy for improving practice and outcomes. Staff in supervisory roles is the most stable element of the child welfare system, are the keepers of the agency culture, and introduce and achieve systemic change. The value of child welfare supervision is supported by research. Supervision has been empirically linked to organizational, social worker, and client outcomes – particularly staff recruitment and retention.


Policy

Supervisory staff at all levels plays a critical role in the delivery of quality services by social work staff. Individuals in supervisory roles are expected to provide a mix of administrative, educational, and supportive supervision.

A basic supervisory form offered by the Division, which may help document key aspects of a case, is the Supervisory Conference Summary [FS-261] – used to record supervisory sessions and major case activities (such as reviews, placements, specific directives to the worker, waiving of contact standards etc.) Staff should be mindful that supervisory notes might be subpoenaed in court.

Model of Supervision

While the nature of the work is influenced by emergency situations and family crises, supervisors shall ensure supervision is not entirely driven by crisis management. All supervision shall be focused on outcomes and should be:

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>201</h1>
Chapter:	Supervision and Training	
Subject:	Supervision of Social Work Staff & Social Work Supervisors	Page 2 of 4

- Proactive
- Planful
- Structured
- Predictable
- Routine

The focus of individual supervision is the development of the individual’s capacities to promote achievement of safety, permanency, well-being, and law abidance, guided by the values and principles of the Practice Model and operating within the Division’s policies and procedures.

The focus of group supervision may include, but is not limited to: reviewing policy and practice guidance, arranging for coverage, development and review of operating agreements, case transfers, case staffing, family safety planning, and discussion aimed at consistency and transparency of social work practice. Group supervision shall be held ***at a minimum of 90 minutes every two weeks.***

Individual and group supervision shall be focused on the following areas of practice:


1. Administrative Supervision

Administrative supervision shall be directed toward implementing the mission, policy, and procedures of the Division. Through administrative supervision, the supervisor shall address and strive to ensure that the quality and quantity of work meets standards articulated in performance evaluations.

2. Educational Supervision

Educational supervision shall be directed towards helping staff to learn what they need to be effective in their jobs; enhance the learning culture; and develop basic competencies, and advance practice. Additionally, educational supervision shall address professional development plans outlined in performance evaluations.

3. Supportive Supervision

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>201</h1>
Chapter:	Supervision and Training	
Subject:	Supervision of Social Work Staff & Social Work Supervisors	Page 3 of 4

Supportive supervision shall be directed towards creating a physical and psychological climate in which staff can safely process and reflect on their jobs. It includes modeling empathy, being reflective, and showing concern towards staff, children, youth, and families.

For more specific information and guidance on administrative, educational, and supportive supervision, refer to “Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision” (published through the National Resource Center for Family- Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement).

Guidance of the Supervision of Social Work Staff

Social workers should expect to receive a combination of individual and group supervision **for a minimum of seven hours per month**. Supervisors and/or social workers shall use their discretion to determine when more frequent supervision is necessary.

Guidance on the Supervision of Supervisors


Supervisors should expect to receive a combination of individual and group supervision (which might include Leadership/Administrative Team) **for a minimum of seven hours per month**. District directors and/or supervisors shall use their discretion to determine when more frequent supervision is necessary.

In the same way that the supervisory relationship between a supervisor and social worker is intended to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families, the supervisory relationship between a district director and supervisor shall model the same approach. This approach exemplifies the need for the relationships to parallel one another in order to maximize the impact experienced throughout the organization.

The relationship between district director and supervisor helps to accomplish the purpose of achieving improved outcomes of safety, permanency, well-being and law abidance through:

- **Modeling, coaching, and reflecting**

This includes helping supervisors learn effective ways to work with social workers by

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>201</h1>
Chapter:	Supervision and Training	
Subject:	Supervision of Social Work Staff & Social Work Supervisors	Page 4 of 4

modeling engagement and team work during individual and group supervision. Additionally, this includes reflection during supervision centered on the district director and supervisor’s roles as liaisons to the community and the importance of promoting collaboration within the district.

- **Clarifying the role of the supervisor and the boundaries of social work, while helping the supervisor function within the Division’s guiding philosophy and legal mandates.**

This encompasses conversations intended to ensure timely data entry, problem solving, troubleshooting, crisis management, time management, and helping supervisors prioritize their own work and the work of the unit/team.

- **Helping supervisors see the “big picture” – why specific practices are important and how these practices help achieve positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.**

This includes using and examining data at the state, district, and unit/team level within supervision to improve outcomes.

In addition, district directors and supervisors work together to bridge information between central office to the district, advocating for the needs of the office while representing the vision and goals of Division in order to set and maintain the work and team climate in their office.

- **Providing a safe place for supervisors to reflect on new learning, explore concerns, and support professional growth and development.**

This includes ongoing discussion of feedback and goal development as part of the evaluation process of supervisors within supervision.