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Author(s):	<i>Jenny L. Jones, M. Denise Alexander, and Nancy Patterson</i>
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Jenny L. Jones, PhD; M. Denise Alexander, MSSW; Nancy Patterson, MSSW

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Over the past two decades child welfare agencies around the country have been challenged with delivering services to children and families. Research from the Casey Foundation Report 2003 indicates that deficiencies in systems of hiring, compensation, training, supervision, and retaining frontline workers are issues that have impacted service delivery.

In addition to the issues identified above, frontline supervision has been highlighted in the literature as a major contributor to worker satisfaction and retention of caseworkers in private and public child welfare agencies, particularly among child protective services caseworkers (Ellett and Millar, 2001; Schoen et. al., 2001; Cicero-Reese and Black, 1998; Harrison, 1995; Rycraft, 1994; Whelly and Miracle, 1994). The purpose of this article is to present an effective training model that addresses supervision issues with frontline Child Protective Services (CPS) supervisors; furthermore this model will seek to strengthen and expand a coordinated approach to casework supervision of frontline child protective services supervisors. The development of this model encompasses a process of collaboration, which brings together representation from the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, the Tennessee Department of Children Services, and the Tennessee Citizen Review Panelist.

Literature Review

Direct services supervisors, inclusive of casework supervisors, tend to come to their positions with a rich background of direct service experience, but little formal training in management, supervision of staff, and organizational behavior (Moore, 1998). Therefore, a model for direct services supervision should build upon the knowledge base, which is derived from practice the-

ory and experience. Practice theory has been used as a framework for developing models of intervention for the social work profession for many years. Schwartz (as cited in Schulman 1993) defined a practice theory as:

... a system of integrating concepts with three conceptual components: 1) organizes the appropriate aspects of reality, which is drawn from the field of science, 2) defines and conceptualizes specific values and goals, sometimes referred to as problematic policies of an organization, 3) deals with the formulation the interrelated principles of action (p.270).

Given this viewpoint, a practice theory of supervision should be relevant to the organization's mission and values; it should be realistic about underlying assumptions about the organization and the human behavior of the those who are employed by the organization; and a clear and specific set of practice goals should be laid out by the organization based on these assumptions. Finally, these assumptions should describe the supervisory behavior that is needed to achieve the goals.

A review of the social work literature defines supervision as "an educational process in which a person with certain equipment of knowledge and skills of knowledge takes responsibility for training a person with less equipment" (p.53), Robinson (as cited in Schulman, 1998). Emphasis on the educational function of supervision has been expanded to include an administrative focus, which seeks to coordinate the activity of workers in order to get the job done. Kaudushin (1992) described another aspect of supervision as a process that includes three primary functions; administrative, supportive, and educational. Each function describes a set of roles and responsibilities that are pertinent to the supervisory process. At times there is an overlap between these three functions, however, each function is different from the other in terms of problems and goals. Other authors (Greene, 1991 &

Jenny L. Jones, PhD is an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, Nashville campus.

M. Denise Alexander, MSSW, is a program coordinator for the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, Office of Research and Public Service.

Nancy M. Patterson, MSSW, is director of training at the Department of Children Services Training and Development Unit.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

Jenny Jones, E-mail: jenny-jones@tennessee.edu

Hodges, 1989) take a more conceptual approach to describing roles or functions, and promote techniques for improving practice, such as case reviews, joint home visits, and clinical case conferencing (Craig, 1987). In line with these findings, the role of the frontline supervisor is crucial to the success of the worker and, ultimately, the well-being of children and families.

At best, the supervisory process can be described as a comprehensive approach that encompasses all of the elements stated above. And, because frontline supervision has been identified as a critical component of worker satisfaction and retention of caseworkers in child protective services, a comprehensive intervention (training model) has been developed, which includes an interactive approach to supervision.

Theoretical Framework

Supervision is a process, and the context in which this process is implemented is key to the success of casework supervision. Schulman (1993) identifies "interactional supervision" as an approach that is best described as a process which includes communication and relationship skills. Because this process involves at least two people, their interaction is a significant dimension of supervision. Here, the supervisor and supervisee(s) work together to establish an interlocking social system, one that is, at best, respectful, cooperative, democratic, and mutual. Moreover, the process of supervision seeks to integrate empathy, parallel process and regularly scheduled individual and group supervision based on the teaching role. Techniques used in this process include tuning into the worker, contracting, structure and content supervision, and the use of empathizing and sharing data during the working phase of supervision.

Process of Collaboration

This training model was developed through a collaborative process between the university, the public child welfare agency and the citizen review panelist, which represent the community's interest. Specifically, the Department of Children Services (CPS) Program, the University of Tennessee College of Social Work, and the Tennessee Citizens Review Panelist engaged in this effort to create an environment conducive to learning

and mentoring frontline supervisors. The overall effect of bringing the social work profession back to child welfare is difficult to measure; however, as presented through this partnership, it is hoped that supervisors will increase their effectiveness in the supervision of caseworkers. Below is a description of agencies involved in this process.

The College of Social Work at the University of Tennessee has a proud tradition of more than 60 years of social work education. The College's primary mission is to educate and train persons for professional practice and for leadership roles in the social services and the social work profession. The College of Social Work provides a professional social work education program that prepares undergraduate and graduate students for social work practice, and doctoral level graduate students for social work research and academia. The College of Social Work has three locations across the state of Tennessee, Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis.

Tennessee's Department of Children Services (DCS) was created in 1996 by consolidating children's services programs from six separate departments into one. The CPS program was reorganized to provide assessment, investigations, and referral services to children and families reported for abuse and neglect. A unique aspect of Tennessee's CPS program has to do with the process of service delivery to children and families. When a referral is received, an investigation takes place and is completed within 60 days. If the results of the investigation are substantiated, the child is removed and placed in state custody, and the case is referred to the foster care division. If the case is unfounded and services are needed for the family to remain intact, the case is referred to an outside contracting agency for monitoring and follow-up services. Therefore, CPS workers only assess and investigate child abuse reports.

The restructuring of the department also gave a slight shift in focus, in that a multi-disciplined and diverse staff of caseworkers was created. Each caseworker came with his or her own unique organizational culture from their previous departments. This shift in focus has increased the need for specialized, structured, and supervisory training.

In addition to this multi-disciplined staff, many of the rural regions of Tennessee's CPS program did not

make the change in restructuring their CPS program. To date, many of the rural regions have remained with multiple program responsibilities to include foster care, juvenile justice and CPS, which, again, reinforce the need for specialized supervisory training.

Community Involvement Through Citizen Review Panels

The Tennessee Citizens Review Panel (CRP) was established in 1996 by Congress to examine the local and state child protective system. The panelists are comprised of a volunteer member and a multi-disciplinary task force with representation from various state agencies. The members of each CRP are very diverse, both personally and professionally. The panels are representative (both demographically and geographically) of their communities. The members were selected based on the specific guidelines included in the *Citizen Review Panels for the Child Protective Services System Guidelines and Protocols*. Each CRP has a liaison from the department that serves as an advisor to the panel on various policies and procedures. All panel members commit to a two-year term on their local CRP. The panelists are responsible for the review of state statute, policies and procedures related to child abuse and neglect, and maltreatment fatalities. Currently, the panel meets every three months and, at the end of each year, submits an annual report to the Department of Children Services.

Three areas of the state have developed CRP's. The three selected areas include Montgomery County, Memphis, and the Northwest Region of Tennessee (including nine rural counties). The locations for the three CRP's were determined by specific characteristics or concerns in the particular areas. One panel is located in a city that has a large military base within the city limits and borders another state. The unique population of military personnel, both active and retired, the ethnic mixture in the population, and transient patterns highlight certain challenges that arise when interacting within this community. Other challenges that face the staff in this area include conducting an investigation that is assisted by military personnel or on the military base.

Tennessee's largest urban area (Memphis) was chosen to reflect issues specific to urban areas. This area suffered from frequent staff turnover and higher than

average caseload volumes. After conducting an in-depth review to improve services, changes were implemented that could benefit from citizen feedback and monitoring.

The third locale serves a rural population in a relatively large geographical area. There are very limited resources to offer families or to assist the department in their efforts to reduce risk and provide safety to children and families. The departmental staff in this region is stable and turnover is minimal.

Design and Scope of the Project

The primary goal of the demonstration project is to strengthen and expand a coordinated approach to casework supervision of frontline child protection services caseworkers by developing and implementing a series of comprehensive, culturally sensitive learning laboratories that will increase the effectiveness of frontline supervision and improve client outcomes.

The design of the project involves an interactive approach to learning with feedback. This approach integrates the theoretical framework by 1) creating an interlocking social system between the supervisor and the trainer, and 2) encouraging and supporting a mutual relationship of trust and rapport between the trainer and the supervisor. This process models the behavior that the frontline supervisor is encouraged to adapt and model for their caseworkers.

The techniques used in the learning labs include didactic approaches with the use of videos, on-site mentoring, and on-line mentoring assistance. Experienced trainers who, with an extensive background in child welfare and clinical social work practice, conduct the learning labs. The trainers and a curriculum specialist develop the curriculum used for each module. The curriculum is reflective of components needed for clinical supervision, which is the overall focus of the project and will ultimately improve frontline casework supervision.

A series of six modules will be presented over a three-year period. At the completion of the learning labs, the frontline supervisor will begin the process of mentoring other new supervisors as well as the Case Manager IIIs who, in some regions, are involved in frontline supervision. A Case Manager III is an experi-

enced worker with years of on-the-job training. In some regions they have dual roles that involve supervision of less-experienced workers and also carry a caseload.

The learning labs are held on a quarterly basis (January, April, July, October) in Jackson and Nashville TN, which are geographically located to the 12 regions of the department within the state. These locations provide easy access for all of the project participants. Below is a brief description of each module:

Module I: Educative Supervision

Objective: To build on the educative supervision framework that looks at adult learning theory, learning styles, and assess worker/supervisor needs for learning. Assist supervisor in developing skills to support training philosophy. Introduction and application of critical thinking skills and self-reflective practice will be used in the education and skill-development role with supervisors.

Module II: Ethics

Objective: To introduce ethical decision-making in clinical practice, which focuses on how values and ethics shape practice approaches and supervisory techniques that enhance problem solving around ethical conflict. Ethical conflict is defined as a clash between opposing obligations (Galambos, 1997).

Module III: Cultural Competency

Objective: To introduce a framework for working with different cultural groups. While supervision may have universal "requisites," cultural values define and elaborate different ways to accomplish casework activity (MacEachon, 1994). A learning module based on cultural competency techniques will be used to identify cultural norms of minority groups and facilitate an understanding of those differences among children and families served by the department. This module is extremely important in that it will enhance the communication and delivery of services to families.

Module IV: Evidenced Based-Clinical Practice

Objective: To use evidenced-based practice techniques (theory and research) demonstrated through individual and group supervision, case conferences, etc., ultimately increase worker's clinical skills and con-

tributes to their practice knowledge, and increase analytical skills. The further use of evidenced based practice techniques, to include on-going scheduled case conferences, will assist worker in managing boundary issues and identify next steps.

Module V: Organizational Culture

Objective: To create an environment that is supportive, which will ultimately increase accountability, foster mentoring and promote development of worker's clinical skills. A focus on organizational culture will potentially decrease worker turnover and increase job satisfaction.

Module VI: Using Data and Reports to Enhance Management

Objective: The purpose of this learning lab will be to increase the effectiveness of supervision and increase better outcomes to children and families served by the department through the use of data management. The use of the department's existing data system, State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) will be used in the learning labs with supervisors to evaluate program service delivery and client outcomes. This learning lab module will allow for the comparison of outcomes for children and families within the CPS program where the learning labs will not be used. As a part of the on-site mentoring, mentors will work with supervisors on effective data management to include review of protocols for administrative duty and the inclusion of these reports in case conferences with case workers and families. While emphasis will remain on the initial learning modules of year one, modifications will be made based on the feedback of the participants.

Mentorship: The process of on-site mentoring is a critical piece of the learning labs in that it will be used to reinforce the knowledge gained during each session and will allow for hands-on learning, including modeling, direct observation, and feedback through the use of actual case activity. Mentorship is defined as an interpersonal-helping relationship between two individuals who are at different stages in their professional development (Collins, 1994). This type of the learning is designed to strengthen organizational culture, reduce stress among supervisors and caseworkers, reduce worker turnover, and increase overall effectiveness of

job satisfaction, which will ultimately increase service delivery and outcomes to clients.

Conclusion

The Tennessee Child Protective Services Supervisors Development Project is an experimental research-based project designed to enhance frontline supervision among supervisors and caseworkers. This project is grounded in an interational approach to

supervision, which engages the supervisor in a process of teaching, supporting, and performing administrative duties. This method of supervision also supports critical feedback from the worker to the supervisor. The information gleaned from this project will fill gaps in social work education, as well as aid in the development of empirically based training programs that will enhance frontline supervision in Child Protective Services in Tennessee and around the country.

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