

Preparing for Supervision: Understanding What's Expected and Why

Why is Supervision Important in Social Work?

- Being active in supervision contributes to professional growth, and to the development of self-awareness. • Supervision is an opportunity for students to clarify expectations.
- Social Work is stressful & difficult. One focus of supervision is support.

- Student work directly affects client's lives. Guidance, direction, support and feedback from the Agency Field Instructor is important.

Students should strive to use supervision in purposeful & responsible manner.

- Meet at a regularly scheduled time with supervisor each week.
- Be prepared. Bring questions, observations, & requests for input & feedback.
- Use the time to examine your performance & explore new ideas.

Expectations for students include:

- Dependability & follow through on assigned work
- Attention to detail & proper procedures
- Initiative in work-related assignments
- A cooperative attitude toward the field educator & other staff
- A willingness to learn from whatever tasks are assigned
- Openness to supervision, including asking for, and learning from constructive criticism
- Willingness to seek help when needed

Stages of Supervision:

- Orientation: Students may feel uncertain; anxious
- Exploration and Skill Building: Students begin developing confidence as they build skills and competencies
- Beginning Competency: Students have acquired knowledge about the placement agency, and the attainment of skills increases student confidence. Students have a greater degree of self-awareness related to their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as particular areas of interest.

Supervision is an interactional process. However it is not therapy.

Many students are drawn to the profession thinking it is a way for them to address their own issues. Supervision is not the place to do that. It is possible that, in working with clients, you may bump into your own issues. Having insight about that can be helpful. However, if your issues are getting in the way of being effective with your clients, you should seek outside resources and counseling to address them. Do not be offended by this recommendation - it is in support of you being a more effective social worker.

Conflicts may arise in the supervisory relationship.

For example, you may feel that your field instructor does not devote enough time to you and your learning needs. Or you may feel that your field instructor is either too controlling or not structured enough. The two of you may have very different personalities. Perhaps you & your field instructor differ in terms of gender, race, ethnic background, or age and this somehow affects your relationship. Whatever the conflict, **talk about it. Do not avoid the problem.** You will be expected to find ways to deal with these issues. Remember, your field liaison is available to assist in problem solving.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR SUPERVISION

- Thorough orientation to the agency, employees, standard operations, dress code, etc.
- Professional boundaries with co-workers and clients
- Communication, styles of communication, active listening
- Discussion of current or past courses taken and how that connects with practicum tasks and experiences
- How does theory taught in classroom translate to the “real world of social work”
- The overwhelming feeling that hits the student at the beginning of practicum and how to manage the integration of an abundance of new information
- Assessment and Treatment Planning
- The NASW Code of Ethics, broken down in sections and applied to current practicum situations, hypothetical situations, or past client/agency situations
- Confidentiality issues, HIPPA
- Journal articles or readings that relate to the practicum placement or populations served at the practicum agency
- Use of journaling to process feelings in practicum
- Transference and Counter-Transference issues that may develop when working with clients
- Self-Disclosure with clients, (when to and when not to)
- Cultural and diversity issues within the agency and when working with clients
- Burnout and compassion fatigue, what it looks like, how do I know if I have it, and what can I do to overcome it
- Colleague relationships in the practicum setting
- Resources and referrals
- Intervention techniques
- Bureaucracies and agency organization
- Positive feedback, constructive criticism and **clear expectations**