Supervising the practicum student.

This document is offered as a guide for those providing individual supervision to practicum students, broken down into 12 meetings explicitly, and some general topics that can be visited when material for one reason or another is scarce. This can be easily adapted to several fewer or more sessions (depending upon the academic calendar of the institution). The framework is largely developmental and draws from personal experience and a small sample of relevant literature (See references at the end of this document for recommended resources) Each section will contain a brief narrative and list of possible topics/questions to consider. Reviewing tapes is always an option, and encouraged as often as time/logistics of recording allow.

For specific theories of supervision, see what many consider the definitive text: Bernard and Goodyear (2004), as that is beyond the scope of this document. Also bear in mind that this document is not written to be prescriptive, but more to provide ideas from which to work from when deciding how to structure the practicum supervisory experience with the individual student. If possible it is recommended to make attempts to coordinate topics with the group supervision or practicum class. These topics can also be extended into the internship experience as well, as they are representative of many of the developmental tasks of those in training. It is recommended that all of the topics be reviewed by the supervisor early in the experience to be able to be intentional with the interventions/strategies that are utilized. A good practice is to have one to two topics ready, and integrate them into the session.

It is imperative that whatever approach to supervision is used, it be adapted to meet both the goals/expectations of the program and the needs of the individual student.

Meeting 1

The main goals of this session will be rapport building, making expectations clear (i.e. appointment time, tapes, reflections/documentation), and informed consent. Any necessary paperwork (i.e. supervision contract, professional disclosure statements, etc.) should be taken care of as well. Time should be allotted for any questions the supervisee may have.

Topics/questions

- Goals and expectations of supervisor/supervisee
- What brings you to the field of counseling? Can be appropriate for both supervisor and supervisee to share)
- Perceived barriers to effective practice
- Field placement site
- (Intended) area of specialty/theoretical framework (if any)
- Excitement? Fear?
Meeting 2

Open with any general questions from the supervisee, many at this stage will have a great deal of them. At this point most supervisees will have had their first client contact; this should be processed, and if possible reviewed via some form of recording.

Topics:

- Concepts surrounding relationships (counseling versus companion).
- Session structuring
- How to understand others (modeling and discussing base listening/questioning skills with the supervisee)
- How to convey understanding (modeling and discussing reflection/summary/interpretation).
- Diversity and how to broach and build rapport.

Meeting 3

If possible a recording of an initial interview is ideal for this session, as the concepts reviewed in the previous can be analyzed in practice.

Topics:

- Collaborative relationship building, general concepts, if possible/appropriate then specific populations as well
- Assessment and information gathering.
- Continue diversity discussions
- Check in with yours and the supervisee’s perception of supervisee development. Persistent anxiety/problems in this area may begin to surface

Meeting 4

Following this grouping, general topics will be listed as this is the point where the more adaptive aspect of supervision becomes appropriate. Of course address any serious issues as they arise, but take some of the following as a developmental path of possible topics.

- Transference/countertransference.
- Basic skill review, appraisal (through roleplay or recorded sessions)
- Explore the supervisee’s understanding of the setting in which they are placed.
- Explore relationship with site supervisor/experience in group supervision.
- Ability to integrate theory and practice.
Meeting 5

- Prepare for evaluation, review tape (if necessary/possible) and supervisee’s self-appraisal.
- Address any special circumstances that may arise. Ask about surprises, reinforced ideas, etc.
- Begin to explore professional identity, many at this point may still be experiencing an “impostor” feeling, validate and process.
- Process repeated interactions with a similar client (ideas of progress, changes between sessions, etc.)

Meeting 6

At the midway point through the experience an evaluation tool should be used. This should be reviewed with the supervisee before it is submitted if possible.

- Engage in reflection upon the joint experience thus far.
- Ideas of development, processing the relationship, feedback on content of supervision sessions.
- Develop plan of remediation for any weak areas or areas in which the supervisee wants to improve (if this is the case; this should be followed up on as necessary until expectations are met).
- Theories of change. This can entail assisting the supervisee to articulate their own, and understand the need to gain insight into those of the client.

Meeting 7

- Theoretical orientation issues can begin to be explored if they have not been already.
- Working with client emotions, how to focus upon them.
- Hypothesis building/case presentation
- Explore supervisee’s perceived strengths and process evidence

Meeting 8

- Revisit issues of transference/diversity.
- Client resistance (again, when appropriate)
- Check in with supervisee for feedback on what they need from the remainder of the experience and plan to meet these needs.
- Parallel processes.
Meeting 9

- Case planning, interventions
- Collaborative relationships (explore those that have arisen in the context of the placement).
- Special population issues.
- Advanced skills (interpretation, confrontation, etc.).

Meeting 10

- Preparation for termination (including supervisory relationship, placement, and client relationships) should begin at least two sessions prior to the final session; adapt to academic calendar.
- Engage supervisee around verbalization of areas of perceived progress.
- Explore ongoing areas of concern.
- Client issues? Plan for termination, final interventions, transferring of care (all as applicable).

Meeting 11

- Addressing of issues that have been recurring or notable at any point in the experience.
- Reinforcement of progress towards professional identity/skill.
- Validate any concerns, explore impact of these upon practice.
- Prepare for final evaluation(review final tapes).

Meeting 12

These points assume this is the final session.

- Process the experience as a whole.
- Review and process end of experience evaluation forms/feedback.
- Allow the supervisee time for final questions, comments, etc.
- Offer supervisee an interpretation of the experience from the supervisor’s point of view.
- Leave time for closure/final remarks upon any ongoing issues.

Other topics:

- Throughout the experience, if further developmental structure is desired, Bloom’s Taxonomy can be integrated with the act of supervision, to provide a framework to gauge the nature of difficulties and mastery.
- For special circumstances, and some supervisory styles, a site visit may be appropriate during the experience; this should be discussed before and processed after should it occur.
Feedback the supervisee is receiving from other sources (clients, peers, faculty, placement site staff)
Specific populations (i.e. particular diagnoses, various developmental stages, homeless, LGBTQA, etc.)
Dual Diagnosis clients/treatment
Specific setting information (i.e. schools, detention facilities, college/university centers, community agencies, hospitals, to name a few)
Deeper exploration of theories of practice (once mastery of basic skills is evident)
Opportunities for training outside of the curriculum.
Stress/anxiety Management
Mindfulness
Group interventions/techniques, Policy advocacy and implementation, use of instruments
Others:

References:

