

SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

WHAT IS SUPERVISION

Supervision is an ongoing process of support for practitioners to monitor, develop and refine their skills (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Supervision in community services is a structured and collaborative process delivered by supervisors (or Subject Matter Experts) that is designed to support and enhance the practice of individuals working in the field. It serves as a crucial component for professional development, ensuring that practitioners receive guidance, reflection, and feedback on their work. The primary goal of professional supervision is to promote ethical and effective service delivery while balancing the competing needs of people accessing services, external service providers and organisations/agencies. Within this context, supervisors offer a safe space for workers to discuss many things that impact on their role, such as challenging situations, explore personal and professional development needs and goals, and address any concerns or uncertainties they may encounter in their roles. Through the supervisory relationship, supervision contributes to maintaining high standards of practice, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and ultimately improving the quality of services provided within the community. It is a dynamic process that encourages self-awareness, accountability, and the development of a reflective and resilient practitioner in the ever-evolving landscape of community services.

TYPES OF SUPERVISION

In community services, various models of supervision exist to cater to the diverse needs of practitioners and address the multifaceted nature of their work across various fields. When considering supervision options, the following supervision options are the most common, which include (but are not limited to):

Peer Supervision	Direct Line Supervision	External Supervision	Group Supervision
Colleagues/peers with similar roles come together to provide support and supervision for each other. This model emphasizes shared experiences and learning from one	This one-on-one model involves a supervisor working closely with an individual practitioner, offering person centred guidance and support. This	This is when professionals seek supervision from specialist supervisors external to their organisation, who ideally are a Subject Matter Expert for their role. This	In this approach, a supervisor facilitates discussions and reflections within a group of practitioners that work together. It fosters a

another. This is not a process for inciting dysfunction or for workplace gossip/bullying. This can be formal or informal.	tailored support focuses on workplace needs, skills/knowledge development, professional development planning etc.	external perspective can provide a broader outlook, a constructive view, provide ideas/strategies to guide practice and reduce potential conflicts of interest.	collaborative learning environment where professionals can share experiences, insights, and strategies.
<p># Note: there is a difference between Case Reviews and Supervision. Case Reviews should be allocated time to review a workers caseload, client needs, admin tasks, general workload etc. Supervision is more focused on the development of practice for the supervisee.</p>			

SUPERVISION DOMAINS



WELLBEING CHECK IN

It is important to incorporate through supervision and support mechanisms, open dialogue about wellbeing and impacts on wellbeing in the workplace. Using an ongoing wellness check in mechanism can aid in determining a person's baseline of wellbeing and then identifying when things are changing and where they may be needing additional support or strategies to boost wellness in the workplace.

Wellness Self Rating: [Mental Health Check-in - Beyond Blue](#)

ADDITIONAL SUPERVISION OPTIONS

Reflective Practice Sessions: This support option encourages practitioners to reflect on their experiences, emotions, and reactions, fostering a deeper understanding of their work. It prioritizes self-awareness and personal growth. These sessions can be done through online learning as an individual practitioner, one on one with a supervisor, or in a group. This mode is specific to reflective practice and requires a specific skillset of the supervisor to engage reflective practice processes in order to enhance a practitioners skills.

Case Reviews/Case Consults: A case review process for community services practitioners is a systemic examination and analysis of a specific client case or situation. It can be done one on one with a supervisor or it can involve a more in depth review by a multidisciplinary team. The supervisors role in this process is to review the intervention strategies, decision-making processes, and outcomes related to the person being discussed and consider alternative or new ideas to work with this person/group. The purpose is to enhance the quality of service delivery, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that ethical and effective practices are maintained. Through the review, practitioners gain valuable insights, learn new approaches to practice, and refine their approach to better address the diverse needs of individuals and communities they work with.

Debriefing Support: Debriefing support in community services is a supportive narrative style process that occurs following a critical incident or impactful work scenario where a person can be emotionally effected. A supervisor (internal or external) will provide structured support to a practitioner to engage in reflective discussions after a challenging incident or interactions, whereby the outcome is to allow them time and space to discuss any concerns and seek support to process what has occurred. It provides a safe space for individuals to share their thoughts, emotions, and experiences related to their work. Facilitated by a supervisor or experienced professional, debriefing aims to mitigate stress, prevent burnout, and promote well-being. It plays a vital role in maintaining mental health and sustaining effective service provision.

ROLES OF SUPERVISOR AND SUPERVISEE

Supervisor: The role of a supervisor in a community services supervision role is multifaceted, encompassing support, guidance, and professional development. Key aspects of a supervisor's role include:

1. **Support and Encouragement:** Supervisors provide a supportive environment where practitioners can discuss their challenges, successes, areas of development and practical needs in the work environment. Establishing a supportive working relationship is crucial, where encouragement and empathy helps to foster a sense of safety and trust, which is important for people to feel valued.
2. **Reflection and Insight:** Supervisors facilitate reflective discussions, encouraging practitioners to analyse their experiences, decisions, and needs in the workplace. Supervisors provide reflective prompts and processes that promotes self-awareness, critical thinking, and continuous learning. Supervisors will also demonstrate these skills by role modelling reflective and insightful practice.
3. **Professional Development:** Supervisors play a crucial role in the ongoing professional development of practitioners. They work with practitioners to jointly identify areas of development that can be learnt through on the job training, self-directed learning or structured professional development opportunities. This may occur via setting goals in supervision, performance reviews and wellbeing planning.
4. **Feedback and Evaluation:** Constructive feedback is provided to help practitioners improve their performance. Supervisors assess their work, address areas for development, and acknowledge strengths, contributing to overall professional growth.
5. **Case Management:** Supervisors guide practitioners in managing their workloads and the range of support they provide to the people they work with, ensuring that interventions align with organisational policies, ethical standards and best practices. Supervisors contribute to maintaining high standards of practice by monitoring practitioners' adherence to policies and procedures, relevant professional codes of conduct and relevant legislation.
6. **Crisis Support/Debriefing:** In times of crisis or difficult situations in the workplace, supervisors provide emotional and practical support, helping practitioners navigate challenges and mitigating the impact on their well-being. This may also require risk assessments, risk management planning, referral to EAP or external supervision and safety planning.
7. **Professional Boundaries:** Supervisors assist practitioners in navigating how to effectively maintain professional boundaries, ensuring ethical conduct in the workplace and maintaining a healthy balance between empathy and objectivity. Supervisors may do this by providing staff with coaching and supervision, via training and other professional development opportunities.

In essence, a supervisor in community services plays a pivotal role in creating a supportive, learning-focused environment that enhances a practitioners' skills, resilience, and overall effectiveness in delivering services to individuals and communities.

Supervisee: The role of the supervisee is one of an open minded, reflective practitioner who aims to have a strengthened practice through supervision. Each person's role is varied and some people may have varied positions, but for supervision to be the most effective process, generally a supervisee should engage in the following:

1. **Participation and active engagement:** Supervision is more than turning up and answering questions, it requires practitioners to actively engage by speaking openly about their scope of role, what are their challenges and highlights, what areas can be developed and what might be positively or negatively impacting on work. Open and honest communication is crucial for the effectiveness of the supervision process.
2. **Self-Awareness:** Supervisee's benefit from self-awareness, gaining insight into adapting to diverse work situations. During supervision, open communication about values, beliefs, and utilising self-awareness in the workplace is crucial. This adaptability to change, discussed with a supervisor, contributes to professional development and improves quality of service delivery.
3. **Goal Setting:** It is important in any role to set goals for professional growth and development. In supervision, the supervisee and supervisor should work together to identify and set clear and achievable professional development goals. These goals should align with organisational objectives and contribute to the continuous improvement of practice, but be in line with the supervisee's aspirations for their professional growth and development.
4. **Critical Reflection:** Be open to constructive feedback and being critically reflective is evidence based to be a successful skill for practitioners to learn and develop their practice and has direct benefits to people accessing support. Being able to be open to feedback as an opportunity for growth and improvement and placing value on the learning experience of supervision is an important part of practice development. . Supervision is also an opportunity for people to discuss any ethical dilemmas or concerns and seek guidance and support.
5. **Administrative Alignment:** All roles require people to align their practice with internal and external policies/procedures, legislation, practice frameworks, codes of ethics etc. In supervision it is important for people to discuss these requirements, regularly review practices and reflect on administrative alignment to ensure work is being done ethically and in line with organisational requirements e.g. review of case notes, case plans, reports.
6. **Open Communication:** Keep the supervisor informed about changes in caseloads, emerging issues, or any factors that may impact service delivery. Open and proactive communication ensures that supervision remains relevant and responsive to evolving needs.
7. **Commitment to Supervision:** The supervisee should see value in the supervision process and make a conscious effort to commit to scheduled sessions and actively contributing to the agenda. It is expected that both the supervisee and supervisor have a positive and professional working relationship. This can be achieved by demonstrating respect for confidentiality, actively listening, openness to feedback, and contributing to a collaborative and engaged session.

GOALS/AIMS FOR SUPERVISION

The key goals or aims for supervision in the sector are:

1. **Professional Development:** Enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of community services practitioners through targeted learning experiences and ongoing training, ensuring they are aligned with current trends and of industry best practices.
2. **Quality Service Delivery:** Monitor and improve the quality of services provided by practitioners to individuals and communities, aligning practice and interventions to industry standards, ethical standards and codes of conduct, organisational vision and goals, and the evolving needs of the community.
3. **Reflective Practice:** Fostering a culture of reflective practice, insight and self-awareness among practitioners, encouraging them to critically examine their experiences, decisions, and emotions to enhance personal and professional growth.
4. **Case Management and Problem-Solving:** Collaboratively address complex cases, challenges, and dilemmas faced by practitioners, providing guidance and support to develop effective strategies and solutions in service delivery.
5. **Maintaining Ethical Standards:** Ensure practitioners adhere to ethical codes of conduct, organizational policies, and legal requirements, promoting a commitment to ethical practices and maintaining the trust and integrity of the community services profession.

METHOD, FREQUENCY, FORMAT AND REVIEWS

The method of supervision can be offered in a variety of ways, through face to face, telephone, and online. Each session should be a minimum 1hr session and should be offered at least 10 times across a 12 month period. The format of sessions can vary depending on the organisation and role requirements, but below are some links to models of support and templates that may be useful for supervisors. Each supervision session should have a multi-dimensional practice approach that covers more than one area of a supervisee's practice and ultimately enhances their skills and knowledge in order to conduct the full scope of their role. It is recommended that each supervision session has any identified actions/follow up tasks and reviews of these tasks should be reviewed at the next available supervision session. It is also recommended to consider an initial supervision agreement (see below) that details the roles and expectations of each party and goals for the process, and a review of this agreement should be done annually.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Recognising the additional needs outside of supervision and what options are available, it is important to note the limitations of supervision or extent of the role of supervision. Supervisors are crucial in knowing and understanding the needs their staff, but their role is to support and guide staff, rather than provide counselling or Human Resources support. If a supervisee needs additional support due to declining wellbeing, it is

recommended that EAP and/or external supervision is provided. It is recommended for Supervisors to openly discuss with supervisee's when they feel they need to share some contents of supervision in order to engage the Human Resources team for further support for a staff member. The intention would be to gain further guidance as to what additional or adjusted support mechanisms can be utilised for a supervisee. In the event that a supervisor does not wish to access Human Resources support or is unable, please consider the following options:

[Supervisor support | WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](#)

Please reference the Wellbeing Guidelines for support ideas and links to services. [HYPERLINK](#)

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Professional Boundaries are crucial to work in the sector when working with people.

In supervision we should review our ethical decision-making processes and ensure that the following professional boundaries are being maintained in order to deliver quality services:

- Upholding privacy in interactions with individuals is a paramount commitment, ensuring confidentiality and respect are maintained always.
- Professionals have an obligation to treat clients with dignity and to safeguard, promote, and acknowledge a person's capacity for self-determination and to plan for their own needs.
- Maintaining a friendly and supportive approach with someone whilst maintaining a professional relationship that does not cross over into a personal relationship or friendship (real or perceived).
- Recognising where there is a conflict of interest or dual relationship when working with someone, where there could be ethical dilemmas that arise in practice. Using Supervision to openly discuss such instances and implement strategies to reduce or eliminate any risks or concerns.
- Recognising and being self-aware of the automatic power imbalance in the professional-person relationship and ensuring that the person/s feel safe, comfortable and able to make self-determined decisions.
- Critical reflection to occur on personal beliefs and values that influence practice, and identify those that might impact on the rights of others or inform practice approaches that contradict the human rights and beliefs systems of the person they are working with.
- Professionals are expected to always behave ethically and professionally, and any behaviour that is deemed unprofessional or unethical to be addressed with a supervisor.
- The professional will acknowledge, uphold, and protect the rights and legal protections of others in all instances of work practice.
- Knowing the limits to service delivery and ensuring that a person's needs are met elsewhere if required via active referrals and collaborative practices.
- Prioritising the delivery of support services, ensuring that the service and its staff possess the necessary knowledge and skills for proficient support delivery, whilst not providing services or information beyond the scope of one's role.
- Adhering to a duty of care is crucial, where services implement safe practices to safeguard the psychological and physical well-being of both individuals receiving support and the workers providing it. Supervisee's are to report any concerns with work practices that they feel pose a risk to safety and seek guidance and support immediately via supervision or escalation processes.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Professional Development in Community Services Supervision: Professional development in community services supervision involves a deliberate and ongoing process to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of practitioners within the field. Supervisors play a key role in guiding and supporting the professional growth of their supervisees. This may include training sessions, workshops, continuing education opportunities, and reflective discussions aimed at improving the practitioner's effectiveness, staying updated on industry trends, and fostering a commitment to ethical practices.

Succession Planning in Community Services Supervision: Succession planning in community services supervision focuses on preparing and developing practitioners for leadership roles within the organization. It involves identifying individuals with leadership potential, providing them with opportunities for growth and skill development, and creating a pathway for their progression into supervisory or managerial positions. Succession planning ensures a smooth transition of leadership, promotes organizational continuity, and contributes to the long-term sustainability of quality service delivery within the community services sector. Supervisors may play a crucial role in identifying and nurturing future leaders, aligning their skills with organizational needs, and facilitating a seamless transition when leadership positions become available.

Resources TBC