10.12 Professional supervision

Purpose

This procedure outlines the process for the provision of supervision to departmental staff that have responsibility for decision-making and the provision of services to departmental clients.

Key steps

1. Implement supervision requirements
2. Fulfill roles and responsibilities
3. Develop a supervision agreement
4. Implement the supervision agreement
5. Record supervision

What ifs - responding to specific professional supervision matters

Standards

1. A supervision agreement is developed, and regularly revised, for each supervisee.
2. Each supervisee participates in regular scheduled supervision.

Authority

- Communities Policy: Achievement and capability planning
- Policy No. 404: Professional supervision
Key steps - Professional supervision

1. Implement supervision requirements

2. Fulfil roles and responsibilities
   2.1 Responsibilities of the supervisor
   2.2 Responsibilities of the supervisee

3. Develop a supervision agreement
   3.1 Methods for supervision
   3.2 Frequency of supervision
   3.3 Structuring supervision times

4. Implement the supervision agreement
   4.1 Allocation of work
   4.2 Monitor case work
   4.3 Review the achievement and capability plan

5. Record supervision

What ifs - responding to specific professional supervision matters

1. What if conflict arises in the supervisory relationship?
1. Implement supervision requirements

The purpose of supervision is to ensure accountable decision-making and safe outcomes for children. It also ensures that legislative, policy, procedural and practice standards are met and staff are developed, supported and monitored in their child protection service delivery role. Supervision provides a forum for staff to reflect on the content, process and progress of their work.

This procedure focuses specifically on staff engaged in case work with clients, however, it is acknowledged that all staff within the department require and are entitled to, supervision and professional development. The professional supervision policy and procedure sits within the broader context of the departmental performance management framework.

For the purpose of this procedure, departmental officers include:

- CSOs (CSSC and RIS)
- CSO-AHS (CSAHSC)
- CSSOs
- court coordinators
- family group meeting convenors
- SCAN team coordinators
- out-of-home care workers
- team leaders (CSSC, RIS and CSAHSC)
- senior practitioners.

Supervision requirements

All permanent, temporary, part-time and casual departmental officers will have scheduled, planned and regular supervision with their supervisor.

Team leaders will provide supervision to CSOs, CSOs-AHS, and child safety support officers. Either team leaders or managers will provide supervision to SCAN team coordinators, court coordinators, family group meeting convenors and out-of-home care workers. Managers will provide supervision to team leaders and senior practitioners.

It is the line manager's responsibility to support supervisors to become competent supervisors who provide purposeful and effective supervision. Both supervisors and supervisees are responsible for the professional development of the supervisee and for providing a high quality child protection service.

2. Fulfil roles and responsibilities

2.1 Responsibilities of the supervisor

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:

- schedule regular supervision time with each supervisee and reschedule another time if a session is cancelled
- create a safe relationship in which supervisees can reflect on and learn from the successes and challenges encountered in their work
• consider alternative methods of supervision if regular supervision is not possible - in rural and remote areas, extra resources may be required to provide supervision to officers
• develop an Achievement and capability plan (ACP) with each supervisee that addresses their professional development needs. Refer to the Communities Achievement and capability planning policy.
• monitor and review the progress of the ACP
• ensure the ongoing planning and development of workplace competency-based assessment tasks and review other learning tasks previously agreed to in supervision
• take account of the supervisee's skills, experience and capacity when allocating work
• review progress on case work tasks and responsibilities
• be available, if required, to debrief the supervisee following stressful situations.

2.2 Responsibilities of the supervisee

It is the responsibility of the supervisee to:
• attend regular supervision sessions
• undertake case work and learning tasks as agreed to in supervision
• meet designated time-frames
• inform the supervisor when tasks cannot be completed within designated timeframes
• ensure the completion of workplace competency-based assessment tasks
• make time to debrief following stressful situations and self-care
• prepare and actively participate in supervision and in the development of an ACP.

3. Develop a supervision agreement

A supervision agreement will be negotiated between the supervisor and supervisee, using the Supervision agreement form. The agreement will state the frequency, length, location, content and process of supervision and a time when the agreement will be reviewed. It is recommended that six monthly reviews occur to update the agreement. Ensuring that supervision is beneficial is the shared responsibility of the supervisor and supervisee.

3.1 Types of supervision

Supervision can be provided in a number of ways:
• formal scheduled supervision is planned and occurs on a one-to-one basis with a supervisor and a supervisee
• unscheduled supervision is unplanned and occurs when the supervisee consults with the supervisor as questions arise, plans change or urgent decisions need to be made
• direct supervision is where the supervisor observes and/or participates in direct service activities with the supervisee and gives feedback about the activity
• group supervision is a group work process which provides opportunities for learning and the development of quality practice - group supervision is most productive when it is planned, structured and child-focussed
• external supervision is provided by a person external to the department who is a competent supervisor with child protection and/or human services practice experience.
3.2 Frequency of supervision

The frequency of supervision will be based on the level of experience, skills and knowledge of the supervisee, and take into account the role and nature of the work the supervisee is undertaking.

The minimum requirement is one scheduled hour of supervision per fortnight. More frequent supervision is recommended for staff who are new to the department, or in circumstances where a manager or team leader considers it is required.

3.3 Structuring supervision times

Supervisors and supervisees work in a busy and stressful work environment. Supervision allows time to reflect on practice and to assess how well the supervisee is managing the work demands. Supervision sessions will be uninterrupted time and the supervisor will begin by focussing on how the supervisee is managing the work and assess whether the level of support being provided is adequate.

4. Implement the supervision agreement

4.1 Allocation of work

During supervision, the supervisor will monitor the ability of the supervisee to prioritise and manage the workload effectively. When allocating work, the supervisor will consider the level of experience, skills, knowledge and circumstances of the supervisee. A CSO with limited experience should not be allocated complex or contentious cases, nor should a high number of these cases be allocated to one worker.

4.2 Monitor casework

During supervision, the supervisee and the supervisor will discuss and critically analyse current case work and document key information to guide future discussions about the progress of each case. The supervisor will also monitor the supervisee's timely recording of information in ICMS.

Supervision should be evidence-based, reflective and child-focussed, and contribute to the development of the supervisee's professional competency. Supervision is most effective when supervisors keep up-to-date with theoretical, legislative, policy and practice changes and assist the supervisee to integrate this knowledge into their practice.

4.3 Review the Achievement and capability plan

Review the supervisee's ACP in supervision, in accordance with the Communities Achievement and capability planning policy to ensure the performance, professional development and learning needs of staff are met.

5. Record supervision

Supervision records will be kept about cases discussed, key decisions, allocated tasks and professional development and learning needs, using the Supervision record sheet. The
supervisee will refer to this record to manage their workload and to review their progress at the next supervision session.

The supervisor and supervisee retain a copy of the supervision record. The supervisor is responsible for maintaining a confidential filing system for supervision records that is accessible to the supervisee.

Key case work decisions made by the supervisor and supervisee will be transparent and clearly recorded in ICMS.

What ifs - responding to specific professional supervision matters

1. What if conflict arises in the supervisory relationship?

When conflict occurs, the supervisor and the supervisee have a shared responsibility to acknowledge the conflict and to take actions to resolve or manage the conflict. In situations where the issue is not resolved between the supervisor and the supervisee, other approaches to resolve conflict in the supervisory relationship are to:
   - engage a skilled senior departmental officer to assist in the resolution of the problem
   - involve the manager to facilitate an agreed plan and outcome
   - engage a skilled independent mediator
   - offer external counselling when needed.

When conflict interferes with the supervisory relationship, the supervisor's line manager will be informed by the supervisor or the supervisee and must ensure that supervision is maintained during the resolution period. The aggrieved person can take action by putting their dispute in writing to the line manager. If the conflict is not resolved, a formal grievance may be lodged.

Conflictual relationships in the workplace are always stressful and in the interest of healthy functioning teams the supervisor, supervisee, and line managers should aim to resolve the conflict as soon as possible.

Resources

Forms and templates

- Achievement and capability plan
- Supervision agreement
- Supervision record sheet