



Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Based Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health

Guidelines for Reflective Supervision and Consultation

It is important to remember that relationship is the foundation for reflective supervision and consultation. All growth and discovery about the work and oneself will take place within the context of a trusting relationship. To the extent that the supervisor or consultant and supervisee(s) or consultee(s) are able to establish a secure relationship, the capacity to be reflective will flourish.

"When it's going well, supervision is a holding environment, a place to feel secure enough to expose insecurities, mistakes, questions and differences." R. Shahmoon Shanok (1992)

Supervision is "the place to understand the meaning of your work with a family and the meaning and impact of your relationship with the family." J. Pawl, public address

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto others." J. Pawl (1998)

The guidelines that follow have been prepared to help clarify what reflective supervision and consultation look like.

Reflective Supervision or Consultation Guidelines for the Supervisor and Consultant

- Agree on a regular time and place to meet
- Arrive on time and remain open, curious and emotionally available
- Protect against interruptions, e.g. turn off phone, close door
- Set the agenda together with the supervisee(s) before you begin
- Respect each supervisee's pace/readiness to learn
- Invite the sharing of details about a particular situation, infant, toddler, parent, their competencies, behaviors, interactions, strengths, concerns
- Observe and listen carefully
- Strengthen supervisee's observation and listening skills
- Ally with supervisee's strengths, offering reassurance and praise, as appropriate
- Listen for the emotional experience that the supervisee(s) is describing when discussing the case or response to the work, e.g. anger, impatience, sorrow, confusion, etc.
- Respond with appropriate empathy
- Invite supervisee(s) to have and talk about feelings awakened in the presence of an infant or very young child and parent(s)
- Wonder about, name and respond to those feelings with appropriate empathy
- Encourage exploration of thoughts and feelings that the supervisee(s) has about the work with very young children and families as well as about one's response(s) to the work, as the supervisee(s) appears ready or able
- Remain available throughout the week if there is a crisis or concern that needs immediate attention
- Suspend harsh or critical judgment

Reflective Supervision and Consultation Guidelines for the Supervisee and Consultee

- Agree with the supervisor or consultant on a regular time and place to meet
- Arrive on time and remain open and emotionally available
- Come prepared to share the details of a particular situation, home visit, assessment, experience or dilemma
- Ask questions that allow you to think more deeply about your work with very young children and families and also yourself
- Be aware of the feelings that you have in response to your work and in the presence of an infant or very young child and parent(s)
- When you are able, share those feelings with your supervisor/consultant
- Explore the relationship of your feelings to the work you are doing
- Allow your supervisor/consultant to support you
- Remain curious
- Suspend critical or harsh judgment of yourself and of others

Note to supervisors: Many supervisors of infant and family programs are required to provide administrative supervision, while reflective supervision is optional. As described in greater detail above, reflective supervision relates to professional and personal development within one's discipline when working with infants, very young children, their families and other professionals. Administrative supervision relates to the oversight of federal, state and agency regulations, program policies, rules and procedures. Although challenging, it is important to acknowledge these differences and encourage all supervisors to integrate the two sets of tasks, leading to best practice in the infant and family field. The overarching tenet is the understanding that both administrative and reflective supervision take place within the context of a relationship.

Examples of each kind of supervision appear below to clarify the differences:

ADMINISTRATIVE

To hire
To train/educate
To coordinate
To oversee paperwork
To explain rules & policies
To evaluate
To write reports...

REFLECTIVE

To agree to meet together regularly
To teach, guide, nurture, support
To ask questions that encourage details about the infant, parent and relationship
To listen
To remain emotionally present
To allow time for personal reflection...

In both instances, the supervisor is expected:

To set limits that are clear, firm & fair
To work collaboratively
To interact and respond respectfully

Reflective Supervision and Consultation: Resource List

Bertacci, J. & Coplon, J. (1992). The professional use of self in prevention. In Fenichel, E. (Ed.), Learning Through Supervision and Mentorship to Support the Development of Infants, Toddlers and their Families: A Source Book. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.

Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Services, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (2000). Early childhood mental health consultation (monograph). Washington, DC: National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Child Development Center.

Fenichel, E. (Ed.). (1992). Learning Through Supervision and Mentorship to Support the Development of Infants, Toddlers and their Families: A Source Book. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.

Foulds, B. & Curtiss, K. (2002). No Longer Risking Myself: Assisting the Supervisor Through Supportive Consultation. In Shirilla, J. & Weatherston, D. (Eds.), Case Studies in Infant Mental Health: Risk, Resiliency, and Relationships. (pp. 177-186). Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.

Heffron, M.C. (2005). Reflective Supervision in Infant, Toddler, and Preschool Work. In K. Finello (Ed.), The Handbook of Training and Practice in Infant and Preschool Mental Health. (pp. 114-136). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Parlakian, R. (2002). Look, Listen, and Learn: Reflective Supervision and Relationship-Based Work. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.

Pawl, J. & St. John, M. (1998). How you are is as important as what you do. In Making a Positive Difference for Infants, Toddlers and their Families. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.

Shahmoon Shanok, R. (1992). The supervisory relationship: Integrator, resource and guide. In Learning through Supervision and Mentorship. Zero to Three,

Shahmoon Shanok, R., Gilkerson, L., Eggbeer, L. & Fenichel, E. (1995). Reflective Supervision: A Relationship for Learning. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three, p. 37-41.

Schafer, W. (1992). The professionalization of early motherhood. In E. Fenichel (Ed.), Learning Through Supervision and Mentorship. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three, 67-75.