

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

Adapted from Dettlaff, A. (2003). *From Mission to Evaluation: A field instructor training program.*

The elements of effective field supervision can be divided into four categories:

- The agency
- Tasks and assignments
- Supervisory skills
- Supervision meetings

Elements related to the Agency

- Making the student feel desired by the agency
- Including the student in agency functions and activities
- Treating the student like a professional
- Helping the student learn about the agency

Elements related to tasks and assignments

- Clarifying the purpose of assignments
- Providing detailed directions and instructions
- Working with the student to complete tasks
- Regularly reviewing the student's workload
- Providing a variety of learning activities
- Clarifying expectations for the student's performance
- Providing early opportunities for client contact

Elements related to supervisory skills

- Explaining your role and the role of the student
- Encouraging discussion of the student's concerns
- Encouraging discussion of taboo subjects
- Helping the student link theory to practice
- Providing clear and consistent feedback
- Validating the student's feelings
- Reassuring students that they can succeed
- Demonstrating that the student is valued as a person and a colleague

Elements related to supervision meetings

- Holding regularly scheduled supervision meetings
- Being available outside of regular supervision times
- Providing a thorough discussion of the student's learning needs
- Reviewing and analyzing the student's cases
- Providing consistent supervision throughout the placement

The Supervisory Conference

What do students want to discuss during supervision meetings?

- **Practice skills used by students**
- **Cases and clients**
- **Ongoing performance issues**
- **Personal strengths and limitations**

What topics are not associated with student satisfaction with supervision sessions?

- **Community issues**
- **Career plans**
- **Administrative issues**
- **Classroom assignments**
- **Agency gossip**

What can we learn from this?

- **Students want direct and practical information that is going to help them become ethical and effective social workers**
- **Students wanted dedicated time with their supervisor to focus on their practice issues, and areas that need improvement**

Ineffective Supervisory Behaviors

- **Supervision that is too directive – students are not given opportunities to practice skills on their own or learning opportunities are limited.**
- **Lack of monitoring – failure to monitor the student’s workload or failure to make arrangements for supervision during the field instructor’s absence.**
- **Inappropriate use of the student – assigning tasks that do not meet the learning needs of the student or assigning tasks that are too difficult or easy.**
- **Inadequate supervisory contact – meeting infrequently or allowing too little time to meet.**
- **Lack of information – failure to provide students with necessary information or instructions; failure to provide adequate feedback concerning their performance.**