Elements of Effective Supervision

Group 1: 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

Group 2: 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

Group 3: 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 as a colleague

Group 4: 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

What Students Want to Discuss During Supervision

Issues Concerning Students’ Practice Experiences
- Practice skills used by students
- Cases and Clients
- Ongoing performance issues
- Personal Strengths and limitations

Adapted from: A. Dettlaf (2003) From Mission to Evaluation, a field instructor training program. CSWE, Alexandria, VA.
What Can Field Instructors Learn From This:

- Students want direct and practical information that is going to help them become ethical and effective social workers.
- Students want dedicated time with their supervisor to focus on their practice issues.
- Although students may want to discuss issues such as career plans and classroom assignments with their field instructor, research (Gray et al., 1989) suggests that students do not want to discuss these issues during supervision.

Common Supervisory Behavioral Pitfalls:

- Supervision 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 too easy.

Supervisory Skills Self-Assessment

1. Are there certain kinds of feedback that is easier for you to give? (Paperwork versus demeanor)
2. Do you struggle with finding the right words when giving critical feedback?
3. Are there certain kinds of students you struggle with giving critical feedback to?
4. Do you feel supported by the University and/or your agency when giving difficult feedback?
5. Do you avoid giving critical feedback to students?
6. Do you know if you are perceived as intimidating or approachable?
7. Is supervision valued in your agency?
8. How do you prepare for supervision?
9. Who do you consult with when you have a challenging student?
10. What motivates you to be a field instructor?