

# THE POWER OF GOOD SUPERVISION

THEMES, TECHNIQUES AND  
TALKING POINTS FOR  
OUTCOME-BASED SERVICE  
DELIVERY SYSTEMS IN ALBERTA

# AGENDA

- ◎ Background
- ◎ Three important points to start:
  - Defining Supervision – what do you and others want?
  - Know thyself and thy contexts
  - Contracting – an agreement that sets the stage
- ◎ Types, Functions, Theory, Models & Stages of Supervision
- ◎ Top 20 tips and techniques
- ◎ Real life – Partnership powers and pitfalls
- ◎ What's Next.....?
- ◎ Questions? Comments.

# SUPERVISION – Past and Present

- Based on a social work standpoint, models of practice and philosophy
- The concept of social work supervision is about 150 years old
- Originally initiated in settlement work and with new CAS's to support & teach first volunteers and then new social workers how to deal with difficult situations
- Nothing has changed re: difficult situations
- Fits like a glove with modern day management and leadership principles

# DEFINING SUPERVISION

- ⦿ This is one of the most important first steps in any new supervisory practice
- ⦿ A definition is a key starting point in any discussion or intention as there are multiple perspectives
- ⦿ At its simplest – supervision is “oversight” (super + vision). Ensuring a job is done that in the end benefits the client system
- ⦿ The complications of definition from that point are endless
- ⦿ But really it is the “how” of supervision that matters and defines it.

# FOR EXAMPLE....

- ⦿ Administrative supervision
- ⦿ Clinical supervision
- ⦿ Hallway supervision
- ⦿ Shared supervision
- ⦿ Reciprocal supervision
- ⦿ Collaborative work
- ⦿ Task-focused supervision
- ⦿ Performance management
- ⦿ Coaching

Language is a very important thing – we cannot assume that everyone knows what we are talking about when we say “supervision”

<http://youtu.be/pzjEzohHmaM>

# WHAT INFLUENCES OUR DEFINITION?

- ◎ Leaders and their backgrounds, education, philosophies and personality or style (how they lead; what is important to each one)
- ◎ Context – professions, gender + culture, organizational mandate and pressures of all kinds, the work itself (and how these things affect decision-making, risk-taking, etc.)
- ◎ People needs – developmental, past experience/inexperience, personalities, fears and worries, strengths and challenges (the “how’s” of people are frankly endless and mostly surprising)

# THE RAW MATERIALS OF SUPERVISION – THE PEOPLE

YOU are the key to good supervision

Supervisors determine the way in which supervision will occur. There is a power differential and it must not be ignored or minimized. It does not have to be manifested as “power over”.

Supervisees have choice as well – they can be “at the mercy” of their leader or fully embrace supervision as a way to learn, understand the work and how they influence it and appreciate the balancing act of responsibility and power

Influencing human lives is a very important and powerful job that requires courageous people – on both sides of the supervisory fence.



# TYPES OF SUPERVISION

- Administrative
- Clinical
- Supervision of Supervision
- Field or Educational
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Supervising Volunteers
- Peer supervision or consultation
- Individual
- Group
- “Catch as catch can”
- Live or In vivo
- Virtual or Online
- Case reviews or consultation

**Direct/Indirect**  
**Formal/Informal**

**“Snoopervision”**  
**Regular and ad hoc**

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN IN EARNEST....

- ① Understand the three points noted previously and prepare!
- ② Know what you know (& what you don't) and why someone should want you to be their supervisor
- ③ Ask the supervisee about his background, past experiences in work and supervision, challenges, strengths. Be friendly and interested.
- ④ Tell stories about yourself; why you do the work, why you like being a supervisor, how you like to work. Be humble, be honest, don't be afraid to be vulnerable. You do not need to be perfect.
- ⑤ Ask her what she would like from you. What has worked for her in the past; what hasn't and why.

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN IN EARNEST....

- ⦿ Set parameters around the supervisory process – how will it work, who has what role, how will it unfold (where, when, how long, etc). Explain how you would like things to happen.
- ⦿ Talk about evaluation – it's a two-sided affair. Set a good example about a potentially fearful topic.
- ⦿ Agree together. It is a partnership of sorts.
- ⦿ Ideally, ask the supervisee to bring an agenda to each session. Start there
- ⦿ This is a contract.

# SUPERVISION, MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

- These areas align also especially with changes in leadership theory and practice
- Accountability – “over” “sight”. Making sure the job gets done to a quality level.
- Teaching - practical, often hands-on assistance with what it takes and how to do a job well
- Support to improve, change, work with others, take risks, make mistakes and learn from them
- Inspiring – your employees and in the end, your organization – to greatness, success, excellent service

# THE FUNCTIONS (Kadushin)

- ⦿ Administration – tasks, evaluating, observing and changing, time management and the like – the doing of things.
- ⦿ Education – teaching the ways of doing and of course the “best” ways or new ways. Sometimes managing mistakes and re-directing. A focus on learning for the future not just this one moment in time
- ⦿ Support – assisting with the why of doing, how we feel about it; why we can’t do it or do not want to; problems with others when doing something; consequences, risk-taking levels; resistance, etc. Ultimately striving to help others be the best they can be.

# THEORY AND MODELS

## THEORY

- ⦿ There is no theory of supervision
- ⦿ Supervisors use theories we have learned in other contexts: clinical theories, leadership theories, human development theory and “verite” knowledge
- ⦿ Supervisors use what they know and like – that suits their philosophy, their profession or what has worked in the past

## MODELS

- ⦿ There are many models of supervisory practice
- ⦿ They range from the simple to the complex
- ⦿ A model is based in theory, shaped by style, philosophy of practice and context
- ⦿ A good model adapts to the needs of supervisees and their developmental stages
- ⦿ And can be understood and used by many others

# RESEARCH ON SUPERVISION

- ⦿ Very little research done on social work supervision
- ⦿ Books written – the Masters – Munson (Clinical); Kadushin (all forms); Shulman (more admin and teaching)
- ⦿ Some Australian writers taking an interactive view – putting emphasis on the relationships built as a result of supervision
- ⦿ Some new online books that have promise too.
- ⦿ The “how” of supervision is the most important thing and people need to first learn HOW and then practice, practice, practice

# My one big finding?

- ◎ Besides my 4 themes:
  - Becoming and being a supervisor
  - Context
  - Content
  - Connection
- ◎ You learn how to do really good supervision by doing it for a good long time with different people and by taking chances and making mistakes.
- ◎ Encourage your supervisees to learn how to do
- ◎ balanced risk management and take chances too.
- ◎ Make sure you are behind them, supporting them
- ◎ Don't be afraid of accountability and responsibility
- ◎ Learn how to apologize.



# STAGES and SUPERVISEE DEVELOPMENT

## ◎ Beginning stage

- Building rapport, establishing goals, creating a relationship, explaining context – repetitively!
- Supervisees likely have little experience applying techniques, using theory and conceptualizing. Be careful not to expect more and yet do not stop from challenging.
- Demonstration from YOU is very important. Share your skills and knowledge.
- Make sure YOU are prepared, confident and capable as you are responsible for a developing professional
- Observe direct practice periodically
- Make expectations detailed and clear
- Refrain from criticizing organizational/professional contexts and people
- Keep supervisees busy
- Evaluate content and process

# STAGES and SUPERVISEE DEVELOPMENT

## ◎ MIDDLE SUPERVISION focuses on:

- Supervisee's thoughts, feelings, actions
- Overcoming practice blocks
- Skills in conceptualization, counselling, work complexities are taught

## ◎ LATER PHASE SUPERVISION encourages:

- Self-assessment
- Goals set by supervisee
- Working towards self-supervision with consultation from supervisor

# TOP 20 TIPS/TECHNIQUES

1. Supervision is a relationship that needs to be cultivated over time and with dependability.
2. The same things that happen in other relationships happen here: trust, shame and humiliation, honesty and lies, forgiveness (or holding grudges), conflict, jealousy, anger, fear, silence, dysfunctional politeness...the list goes on.
3. The supervisor is key here and MORE responsible to resolve all of these things. Remember that resolving these issues just makes for a better relationship.

# TOP 20 TIPS/TECHNIQUES

4. There is a power differential – like it or not - that needs to be normalized and given attention and clarity. YOU have the power. Remember - you can be magnanimous.
5. Make a space for mistakes, differences of opinion and spirited debate.
6. No one is perfect and mistakes – often big ones – will happen – especially with human beings. Know what you must forgive what needTake the high road always. Acquiesce when you can with grace. Stand your ground when necessary even if you stand alone. Do what is right and good even if it is not popular or the “party line”

# TOP 20 TIPS/TECHNIQUES

7. Learn how to forgive what needs to be forgiven quickly and also what is difficult to forgive.
8. Leave your sword and your shield at the door of any conflict..regardless of how right you think you are.
9. Ask questions that you know you should ask. Avoid dysfunctional politeness
10. Push past your fear (and your supervisees) or being shunned, anger, injustice, confrontation, arguing
11. Listen carefully. Collect data; don't jump to conclusions and call it hypothesizing

# TOP 20 TIPS/TECHNIQUES

12. Don't talk too much except when telling a story but make sure you learn how to tell a story well – keep them on the edge of their seats
13. Do not give advice unless asked
14. Disarm people with stories and opposite reactions. You will get the truth.
15. Understand what inspiration is – what inspires you and how people get inspired. Try to be inspiring once per day with someone.
16. Ask very good questions

# TOP 20 TIPS/TECHNIQUES

17. Listen with your third ear.
18. Practice mindfulness if you cannot lessen your anxiety (supervisees make lots of mistakes!)
19. Even one good supervisor can make a difference to a team, a unit, a program, an organization.
20. It's a relationship – cherish it. Don't hire anyone you do not like or cannot grow to like. You have to like them for their idiosyncracies and vulnerabilities – that is where the power is.
  - And your vulnerability is your power too.

# The Power of Vulnerability

- ◎ [http://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html)
- ◎ Brene Brown – a social worker/academic who gives us something to think about. And she is funny!
- ◎ Now – on to Real Life Experiences with Pauline, Colleen and Gary....