

## **Standards for Supervision in Child Welfare**

The key role of the supervisor is to assure that the Agency's Policies and Practices are implemented. For Maine Child Welfare services, supervisors must implement, teach and support the Child and Family Services Practice Model, joining with families and the community to promote long-term safety, well-being and permanent families for children. Effective supervision supports a collaborative team approach that builds on clients' strengths that meet their needs resulting in better outcomes for children and families. Effective supervision is based on a supervisor / caseworker relationship that promotes continuous learning and facilitates professional growth and development through self-reflection and identification of strengths and challenges. Supervisors are responsible for creating and maintaining a supportive working and learning environment through open communication, teaming and accountability at all levels both internally and externally. These standards represent the Office of Child and Family Services' expectations of casework supervision. All levels of supervision will reflect the spirit of these standards.

### **Administrative Supervision**

*The activities of the supervisor are directed toward implementing the organizational objectives and helping to ensure that the quantity and quality of work achieves outcomes articulated by the agency. The administrative function involves planning, executing, monitoring, and evaluating activities to accomplish the work of the agency through the staff.*

### **Foster ownership of agency mission, vision, goals, values, policies, procedures and the Practice Model**

#### **Expectations:**

*The Child and Families Services Practice Model provides the foundation and the direction for all work accomplished by the Office of Child and Family Services. The work of the unit must be coordinated with the Departments mission, vision, goals, values and the Child and Family Services' practice model*

- Communicate/inform staff of the agency's mission, vision and Practice Model
- Model behaviors that are consistent with the vision, values, Practice Model and a professional code of ethics
- Establish objectives and priorities within the unit that reflect the Strategic Plan, agency policies and MSRA Title 22.
- Explain the rationale supporting policies and procedures and the agency's mission and Practice Model.
- Assure implementation of the policies and practices of the Agency
- Communicate information in a respectful manner that acknowledges cultural and other differences.

## **Commit to recruitment, screening and selection of qualified staff**

### **Expectations:**

*The quality of services to children and families is dependent on staff who possess the knowledge, skills and personal characteristics to work in and remain committed to this challenging field. Attracting and selecting the right person for the job is the critical first step in assuring a competent and stable workforce.*

- Actively pursue recruitment opportunities and/or work with district administration to develop specific activities.
- Participate in agency sponsored recruitment activities.
- Maintain communication links with prospective candidates and present the agency in a positive light.
- Know and comply with law and policy related to fair hiring and selection processes.
- Develop and maintain current knowledge and skill in the screening and selection process.
- Participate in panel interviews to screen candidates.
- Conduct job specific interviews, reference and background checks to select the most suitable candidate for a vacancy.
- Identify and select people who are able to demonstrate the competencies needed and whose values and philosophy are consistent with the agency's mission and values and the
- Coordinate and support field placements and internships to attract qualified staff.
- Justify and document hiring decisions using job-related criteria.

## **A**ssure cohesion and high performance of the work unit

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*Each unit is responsible for achieving program goals for children and families. High productivity in the unit is based on a structure that provides support, consistent direction, recognition and connections for staff who each have independent functions.*

### **Expectations:**

- Identify and analyze the critical functions of the unit.
- Develop a plan for successful achievement of these critical functions.
- Develop and implement a plan for assigning work that facilitates the goals and objectives of the unit.
- Determine if unit goals are being met.
- Develop and implement methods of assessing and tracking unit performance.
- Utilize the documentation necessary for program compliance.
- Summarize and evaluate the data to identify problems and trends for unit planning.
- Modify plans and methods to adjust to crisis and changes such as caseload, staffing, and new requirements.
- Convene meetings of the unit **at a minimum of once a month**
- Formal supervision held weekly is the best practice standard. The minimal acceptable standard for formal supervision is no less than twice a month on a consistent basis. Caseworkers on probationary status must receive formal supervision at least weekly.

## **E**ncourage maximum performance of individual staff

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*Increased staff performance results in better services to families and improved outcomes. It also creates a greater sense of achievement and satisfaction by the workers. It therefore helps to increase staff motivation to perform and staff retention.*

### **Expectations:**

- Negotiate a supervision contract with supervisee and renegotiate annually.
- Be available to staff for consultation as needed and as required by policy.
- Formal supervision held weekly is the best practice standard. The minimal acceptable standard for formal supervision is no less than twice a month on a consistent basis. Caseworkers on probationary status must receive formal supervision at least weekly.
- Set and clearly communicate expectations for staff performance related to client outcomes and program compliance.

compliance.

- Evaluate and monitor the quality, quantity, and timeliness of staff performance.
- Provide frequent, timely, and specific [ deleted constructive, keep it simple!] feedback to keep workers apprised of performance.
- Provide a written performance plan and evaluation of staff a minimum of once per year.
- Take appropriate positive or corrective personnel actions.
- Document worker performance related to program compliance.
- Identify workers' strengths and help them develop those strengths.

## **F**acilitate open communication between District staff and District and Central management to achieve agency and unit goals

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### **Expectations:**

*The timely flow of information, changes, plans, and concerns between District staff and District and Central Office management staff increases ownership and commitment to the achievement of goals. The goal of supervision is to encourage upward, downward and lateral communication*

- Model and expect an atmosphere that promotes open communication conducted with genuineness, empathy and respect.
- Encourage staff communication with the caseworker advisory committee as the direct link to central office management.
- Work collaboratively with other units to foster communication across units.
- Educate other units in agency regarding unit goals, objectives and parameters.
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with the community.
- Help staff to understand roles and parameters of other units within the agency and with community agencies.
- Model cultural responsiveness in collaborative relationships.

## **Foster collaborative relationships within the Agency and with community agencies**

### **Expectations:**

*Making children and families safe is a collaborative effort. Positive outcomes are more likely when others in the agency and community understand each others program goals, objective and parameters, and they are heard, understood, and respected*

- Model and expect an atmosphere that promotes open communication conducted with genuineness, empathy and respect.
- Work collaboratively with other units and partner agencies to foster communication across units and agencies.
- Educate the community regarding unit goals, objectives and parameters.
- Develop and maintain effective working relationships with the community
- Help staff to understand roles and parameters of other units within the agency and with community agencies.
- Model cultural responsiveness in collaborative relationships.

## **Educational Supervision**

*The activities of the supervisor are directed toward helping staff learn what they need to know to carry out their jobs. This includes: helping new workers to understand the job and develop beginning competence; maintaining an ongoing emphasis on developing staff competence to complete the critical casework functions; and assisting senior level workers in their career planning and continued professional growth.*

## **Provide/assure orientation for new staff**

### **Expectations:**

*Orientation provides information about the employee's role in the agency and the agency's role in the community. This helps to reduce the anxiety new staff experience, creates a*

- Provide welcoming environment and provide necessary support to orient new staff to the office.
- Prepare new staff for Preservice and provide activities to make good use of their time in the waiting period.
- Maintain link with new staff and Preservice trainers during training to ensure the most productive training and transition back to the office.
- Assess the critical core knowledge of Child Abuse and Neglect,

*sense of belonging to the agency, and promotes the development of staff confidence and competence.*

skills, and learning styles of new staff.

- Develop a system for orientation of new staff that builds on the Practice Model, existing resources in the community and in the agency and accommodates the learning style of the new staff.
- Provide the core knowledge of the community; legal mandates; job responsibilities; various programs provided by the agency; policies and practices, the client population and cultural sensitivity.

## **Create and implement a training and/or development plan with each staff member**

### **Expectations:**

*Supervisors play an essential role in the development of staff. The joint development of a clear, specific, and realistic plan promotes its achievement and effective performance management.*

- Conduct initial and on-going assessments with staff to identify their strengths and needs relative to their critical core competencies and their use of self in practice (i.e. values, beliefs, biases).
- Examine alternatives with each staff to meet their developmental and training needs.
- Develop an individual performance plan and a written supervisory agreement with staff to meet their needs.
- Conduct periodic reviews of the plan with staff and make adjustments as appropriate.
- Provide/assure ongoing core and advanced training regarding agency, policy and procedures, and casework practice.

## **Encourage personal and professional growth and advancement**

### **Expectations:**

*Personal and professional growth helps staff achieve a sense of accomplishment and esteem which positively affects performance.*

- Assist staff in finding and utilizing educational opportunities.
- Assess, with staff, their personal and professional goals.
- Support/encourage staff to achieve their goals.
- Encourage development of specialized expertise and innovation on new projects they may embrace (as related to the job and the needs of the work unit).
- Encourage staff creativity and innovation in new projects and roles.
- Model/mentor continued growth and development for staff as life long learners.
- Promote independence and autonomy in casework practice within defined parameters.
- Whenever feasible, encourage staff to serve on relevant committees to provide job satisfaction beyond routine duties and to broaden their perspective.
- Support staff in their efforts to obtain positions of greater responsibility and to make other needed transitions.

## **Provide case supervision and consultation**

*The supervisor plays a critical role in achieving positive outcomes for long-term safety, well-being and permanency for children and families by lending and encouraging objectivity and promoting consistency and quality casework practice.*

### **Expectations:**

- Assess and consider workers' skills, strengths, interests, areas of needed development and the client's strengths and needs in assigning cases
- Discuss the worker's entire caseload with her or him at least monthly.
- In-depth review of at least 1 case per caseworker each quarter using Quality Assurance measures.
- Assist staff in case assessment including identifying strengths, needs and safety issues, the dynamics of Child Abuse and /or Neglect contributing to and underlying the needs and safety issues, and the strategies for intervention and development of the plan with the family.
- Support staff in creating family teams to develop and implement creative, individualized solutions that build on the strengths of families to meet their needs.
- Help staff identify problematic areas in work with the client and the anticipated course of intervention.
- Help staff identify community resources and how to access them as needed.
- Increase staff awareness of how their own attitudes and approaches, life experiences and cultural background potentially impact the relationship with the client and the outcome of intervention.
- Assist staff in assessing progress towards case goals.
- Support staff in making critical case decisions such as regarding safety, placement, reunification of children, termination of parental rights, and case closure.
- Encourage staff to identify the cultural diversity of all families and help staff develop plans to address individual differences.
- Accompanying each worker in the field once per quarter and providing structured feedback.

## **Supportive Supervision**

*The activities of the supervisor are directed toward creating a climate that enables staff to feel positive about the job and to know they are the Office's most important asset. These activities include showing concern and empathy toward individuals to keep them satisfied, comfortable, and positive so clients may be better served.*

## **Establish a positive work climate in the unit**

*Staff work more effectively in an environment of accountability where they are valued and there is an encouragement of individuality, comfort with professional risk-taking, and personal and professional development.. The "climate" that each staff member experiences is determined primarily by the way first line supervision is conducted.*

### **Expectations:**

- Acknowledge effective performance, caseworker efforts, client progress, accomplishment, and individual contributions.
- Create/model high standards of practice and motivate staff to meet those standards.
- Acknowledge that we work with families who experience trauma and trauma related work has traumatic effects
- Support staff in self care
- Treat staff with genuineness, empathy and respect.
- Support a climate of trust and openness, which promotes personal and professional growth.
- Encourage staff to reflect on their feelings and concerns about the work as well as the agency and help them resolve these feelings.
- Create an environment in which cultural and other differences are appreciated.
- Refer staff to employee assistance or other services when appropriate.
- Use mistakes and challenges as opportunities to teach and learn.
- Promote a "can do" attitude for staff.

## **Develop/support a team work approach**

### **Expectations:**

*The results of working as a team are greater than the sum of its parts. Shared decision making frequently provides better outcomes and decreases individual liability.*

- Involve staff in unit decision-making.
- Encourage peer consultation, collaboration, and shared decision making on cases as appropriate.
- Foster cooperative relationships.
- Assess unit strengths and needs.
- Draw upon individual strengths and expertise.
- Define roles and create expectations for how members will work together.

## **Facilitate successful resolution of conflict within and outside the agency**

### **Expectations:**

*Conflict is inherent in supervision and can be a healthy aspect of life. Successful resolution of conflict creates opportunities for growth on an individual, team and agency level. Unresolved conflict is detrimental to the functioning of the individual, team and agency as a whole.*

- Create a safe and open environment, where staff can raise issues and concerns.
- Demonstrate respect for differences of opinion.
- Facilitate discussions that create solutions which meet the needs of those involved in the conflict.
- Manage and control interpersonal conflict when the lack of resolution affects the unit, client, or relationships in the agency.
- Assist staff in professionally managing conflict.
- Actively pursue the resolution of conflict/issues or other barriers in the supervisor/supervisee relationship.

## **D evelop awareness of one's self and the effect on the supervisor-worker relationship**

### **Expectations:**

*Supervision is a dynamic process where one's own competencies, experiences, needs and issues impact supervisory relationships and effectiveness.*

- Increase awareness of how one's personality and learning style affects one's staff.
- Increase awareness of how one's life experiences and cultural background can impact on the supervisor/worker relationship.
- Seek supervision and consultation to enhance one's own effectiveness.
- Develop a system for receiving feedback from staff on supervisory practice.
- Take care of one's self.
- Exhibit flexibility and accept change in a positive manner.
- Make an effort to improve job skills as needed to accomplish assignments.
- Perform with stability even when under pressure and during emergency situations.
- Recognize and learn from one's own mistakes.

**This policy is adapted by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services and the Child Welfare Training Institute from A Supervisory Handbook developed by the State of Colorado Department of Human Services, Marsha Salus, and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Management and Administration.**