

# Supervision of Counseling Students: Theory & Practice

*The only source of knowledge is experience. Albert Einstein*

# Supervision: What is it?

- Broadly, it is the process of an experienced practitioner providing feedback and sharing expertise with a less experienced professional
  - Can be focused on:
    - Developing new professional specialties
    - Pursuing professional licensure
    - Completing the requirements for an academic degree in Counseling
- Process of teaching, mentoring, coaching, advising and guiding a professional in training or a beginning professional by an experienced professional (Bradley & Kottler, 2001; Bernard & Goodyear, 1998)
- Can be clinically focused or administratively focused
- Can be structured hierarchically or as peer supervision

*Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance. Confucius*

# CACREP

- Supervision is defined by the Council for the Accreditation of Counselor Education and Related Programs (CACREP) as:
- *A tutorial and mentoring form of instruction in which a supervisor monitors the student's activities in practicum and internship, and facilitates the associated learning and skill development experiences. The supervisor monitors and evaluates the clinical work of the student while monitoring the quality of services offered to clients (CACREP, 2009, p. 61).*

# ACES

- The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) (1993) explains that the supervisory role of counseling supervisors includes:
  - ensuring that practices support client welfare
  - promoting ethical, legal and professional standard compliance
  - observing and critiquing professional practice and professional development
  - evaluating professional performance and potential

# Why offer or require supervision?

- To promote the professional, personal and clinical skill development of counselors
- Supervision offers fresh, diverse perspectives and challenges supervisees to reflect on their professional practice, personal strengths and personal challenges.
- Through a continuing cycle of reflection, action, and feedback, the supervisee is able to develop increased professional competence, personal awareness and clinical fortitude.

# Supervision of Counseling Students & Interns

- Requires understanding of developmental trajectory of counselors-in-training
- Offered individually and through university-based group supervision sessions
- Requires weekly individual site-based sessions
- Site supervisor provides orientation to site expectations, mission, philosophy and practices for student intern
- Site supervisor works with student to identify and allow access to appropriate professional activities
- Culminates in a formal summative evaluation

# A good supervisor...

- Is committed to supporting the well-being of clients
- Has the appropriate academic preparation and professional experience
- Is committed to promoting positive relationships and supporting the development of supervisees
- Understands and adheres to professional ethical codes and mandates
- Is empathic, genuine, and willing to give praise and critical feedback
- Is flexible
- Is willing to actively engage in self-reflection
- Has a good sense of humor!

## ACES standards for Counseling Supervisors (1990) state that effective supervisors are...

1. effective counselors with appropriate training
2. committed to embodying personal characteristics congruent with role of professional supervisor
3. knowledgeable and able to apply ethical, regulatory and legal principles of profession
4. actively aware of professional and personal context of supervision and supervisory relationship
5. competent and consistent in applying professionally supported supervision methods and techniques



## ACES standards for Counseling Supervisors (1990) state that effective Supervisors are...

6. aware of the developmental processes of counselor growth
7. competent in case conceptualization and management of clinical cases
8. competent in client assessment and evaluation
9. competent in professional documentation, both verbal and written
10. competent in counselor evaluation
11. knowledgeable of contemporary counseling and supervision research

# Expectations for Supervisee

- Work diligently to provide ethical and effective counseling services!
- Come to supervision prepared and ready to engage!
- Provide opportunities for observation of professional practice (live or taped)
- Intentionally reflect upon the therapeutic skills he/she hopes to develop and/or enhance through supervision
- Actively work with supervisor to develop goals for supervision and professional development
- Be open-minded
- Bring a willingness to reflect upon personal feelings, characteristics and professional competence
- Work actively to minimize personal resistance
- Work collaboratively with supervisor to critically evaluate supervision experience

# Relationship between supervisor and supervisee

- Bordin (1983) articulated three components necessary for an effective supervisory working alliance, or supervision relationship:
  - Shared agreement and understanding about goals and expectations for supervision
  - Shared understanding and expectations of the work or tasks for supervision
  - Positive emotional bond or relationship between supervisor and supervisee

# Theoretical Frameworks for Supervision

- Psychodynamic Theoretical Framework
- Behavioral Theoretical Framework
- Cognitive Theoretical Framework
- Developmental Theoretical Framework

# Psychodynamic Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Conceptualizes supervision as a therapeutic process focused on relational dynamics between supervisee and clients, supervisor, colleagues and others (Binder & Strupp, 1997)
- Tripartite model (Dewald, 1997):
  - Didactic curriculum
  - Supervised client analysis
  - Personal analysis of supervisee

# Psychodynamic Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Foundational Assumptions
  - Parallel process between counseling and supervision, conflicts are acted out in each
  - Learning occurs through internalization
  - Interpersonal dynamics are of primary importance
  - Both verbal and nonverbal communication is key to observe
  - Intrapersonal dynamics provide opportunities to observe and make-meaning of covert behaviors, cognitive routines and sensory processes
  - Supervisory relationship consistent with counselor and client therapeutic alliance

# Psychodynamic Theoretical Framework for Supervision: Methods

- Unstructured psychodynamic supervision – examine and explore supervisee’s dynamic interactions with clients, consultees, colleagues and supervisor
  - Focuses on four areas:
    - Dynamic awareness
    - Understanding dynamic contingencies
    - Dynamic change
    - Therapeutic utilization of dynamics

# Behavioral Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Competent, effective counseling requires learned skills
- Purpose of supervision – to teach skills and extinguish behaviors that are not effective or appropriate (Rosenbaum & Ronen, 1998).
- Focused primarily on application and refinement of skills learned through counselor education preparation



# Behavioral Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Goals are developed to address skill needs of supervisee
- Strategies include:
  - Analysis and assessment of skills and abilities
  - Goal setting
  - Developing and implementing action plans
  - Self-directed learning activities
  - Self-assessment
  - Peer supervision
  - Modeling
  - Reinforcement
  - Role playing & simulation
  - Development and implementation of self-management strategies
  - Evaluation of strategies and interventions

# Cognitive Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Perceptions, affect and behaviors are founded in one's cognitive conceptualization of one's world
- Overarching, flexible supervisory framework
- Interpersonal process focused on technique development and self-awareness of cognitive processes impacting supervision and counseling

# Cognitive Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Goals
  - Gain knowledge and develop competency in application of cognitive therapy skills/techniques and strategies
  - Identify and modify misconceptions
  - Identify and work to address personal issues of supervisee impacting clinical practice and professional development

# Cognitive Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- 1 hour weekly sessions
- Biweekly group supervision
- Individual supervision structure
  - Initial greeting/conversation
  - Set agenda
  - Review concepts and skills discussed in previous session
  - Review assigned homework
  - Move to agenda items
  - Assign homework
  - Offer feedback (both supervisor and supervisee)
  - Close session
- Techniques and strategies are drawn from Cognitive Theory and Cognitive-Behavioral Theory

An understanding of the developmental process of supervisees can be incorporated into all theoretical frameworks of supervision.

However, in using a defined Developmental Theoretical Framework for practice, the developmental process takes precedence.

# Developmental Theoretical Framework for Supervision

- Foundational Assumptions
  - Development is viewed as a change over time in cognitive complexity, differentiation and ultimately integration
  - Recognizes that counselors may gain more technical skills over time, but that support and reflection are necessary for increased complexity of understanding and application of gained skills (Stoltenberg, McNeill & Delworth, 1998)
  - Initial learning is more general and specificity increases over time with exposure to diverse experiences: environment provides experiences, supervision provides reflection and integration!
  - Progression through developmental stages can be positively impacted and supported by clinical supervision
  - Supervision supports a “transformation in identity” (Bradely & Ladany, 2001)

# Developmental Theoretical Framework: Role of Supervisor

- To provide opportunities for diverse professional clinical and administrative experiences
- To provide support and opportunities for reflection about engagement in professional experiences
- To challenge supervisees to seek to expand understanding, skills and awareness
- To understand critical need for balance of challenge, support and reflection to promote development and to fully integrate these opportunities into practical experience for supervisees

# Developmental Levels of Supervisees

- Level 1 Supervisee: Lacks confidence, highly self-conscious with performance, anxious about evaluation, demonstrates confusion about behaviors appropriate for professionals, discomfort motivates actions, highly dependent on modeling and directive in supervision



# Developmental Levels of Supervisees

- Level 2 Supervisee: aware of and attuned to the worldview of the client but may struggle to retain objectivity, more confident in ability to empathically relate, more engaged in process and less preoccupied with individual performance, somewhat erratically motivated, at times overwhelmed by potential options and choices for treatment, transitioning from dependency to autonomy in supervision

Stoltenberg, McNeill & Delworth, 1998

# Developmental Levels of Supervisees

- Level 3 Supervisee: Demonstrates marked self-assurance, objectivity and intentionality, Aware of dynamics in counseling – interpersonal, intrapersonal and process dynamics, consistently motivated to enhance professional skill and identity, functions independently and responsibly

Stoltenberg, McNeill & Delworth, 1998

# Developmental Supervision Strategies

- Typically fall under one of four categories:
  - Teaching
  - Counseling
  - Consulting
  - Combined
    - Neufeldt, 1994
- In the following slides, “session observation” may refer to either live observation or taped session observation

# Supervision Strategies: Teaching

- Evaluate interactions, behaviors and techniques during session observation
- Identification of appropriate and inappropriate interventions
- Demonstrating and modeling interventions
- Discussing and explaining rationale for using strategies
- Interpreting significant events
- Formulating hypotheses about cases

# Supervision Strategies: Counseling

- Exploration of supervisee feelings experienced during counseling sessions or supervision sessions
- Facilitation of supervisee self-exploration of confidence and challenges
- Facilitation of supervisee's identification of personal competencies and goals for growth
- Provision of opportunities for self-reflection and processing of supervisee affect and perceptions

# Supervision Strategies: Consulting

- Promote potential intervention brainstorming by supervisee
- Encourage supervisee direction of supervision session agenda and goals
- Engage in case staffing including client problems and motivations
- Provide interventions, strategies and information for supervisee to explore
- Encourage supervisee to discuss personal supervision needs and work to address these needs

# Supervision Strategies: Combined

- Engage with the supervisee in case conceptualization
- Use the exploration of supervisee's feelings to more fully understand client
- Present developmental challenges to promote growth
- Use parallel process to model strategies
- Explore boundary issues
- Facilitate the supervisee's processing of feelings and distress prompted by client's presenting concern and experiences
- Work with supervisee to identify and appropriately use cues derived from client and counselor behaviors
- Reframe supervisee's ideas and behaviors to promote growth

# Cultural Competency in Supervision

- Essential to integrate a focus on cultural competency in order to promote culturally-competent practice by supervisees!
- Cultural competence includes:
  - Self-awareness of values, biases and beliefs
  - Understanding of worldview of culturally-diverse clients
  - Development and implementation of culturally-appropriate interventions
    - Ancis & Ladany, 2001



# Cultural Competency in Supervision

- Five domains within which to assess cultural competency and integrate cultural awareness, discussions and strategies for competence
  - Personal development
  - Conceptualization of cases
  - Identification and implementation of interventions
  - Process: within counselor-client relationship and dynamics and supervisor-supervisee relationship and dynamics
  - Evaluation

# Evaluation: A Critical Component!

- Evaluation is the primary difference between supervision and counseling (Inskipp, 1996)
- Purpose of Evaluation in Supervision:
  - To assess effectiveness of supervisee's professional counseling practice in order to enhance and improve that practice
  - To provide feedback to supervisee
  - Additional purposes include: to serve as a gate-keeper for the profession and to assess how well supervisee meets site standards and expectations

# Evaluation: Methods

- Using the supervisory contract developed and agreed upon at the beginning of supervision
- Focus on goal-attainment
- Use a combination of
  - Progress reviews
  - Self-evaluation
  - Site-specific Evaluation Instruments
  - Process-measurement Instruments
  - Outcome Measurement Instruments
  - Multicultural Competency Assessment Instruments

# Evaluation: Questions to Consider

- What criteria will be included and evaluated?
- Who will be conducting evaluation?
- When will the evaluation occur?
- Where will the evaluation occur?
- How will evaluation be conducted?
- What problems or challenges might arise?

Bradley & Ladany, 2001

# Ethical Issues

- There are many ethical issues to consider when entering and engaging in a supervision relationship, including, but not limited to:
  - Dual relationships
  - Gate-keeping
  - Supervisor expertise and limitations
  - Modeling ethical behavior
  - Responding to ethical concerns
  - Cultural competence and evaluation of cultural competence in practice
  - Differentiation between supervision and counseling
  - Sexual attraction and contact
  - Management of termination and follow-ups

# Ethical Guidelines

- Assess your competency as a supervisor and be actively aware of your areas of professional expertise
- Ensure that your practice is based on current professional knowledge and standards
- Set appropriate boundaries
- Provide appropriate disclosures to supervisees
- Transparency is key!
- Formulate a plan for crisis coverage and intervention
- Assess dual roles and act appropriately
- Maintain active, open lines of communication and collaboration with supervisees
- Maintain a commitment to culturally competent practice and supervision
- Seek your own supervision when necessary!

# Ethical Codes

- Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. (1995). Ethical guidelines for counseling supervisors. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 34, 270-276.
  - [www.acesonline.net/doc/ethical\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.acesonline.net/doc/ethical_guidelines.htm)

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