

MODULE 1

Skill Sets and Competencies

TOPIC: 511 FUNDAMENTALS OF CASEWORK SUPERVISION

Skill Sets

- 511-01 Ability to create a supportive and enabling unit environment that promotes effective and efficient completion of mission-critical casework activities.
- 511-02 Ability to select and use supervisory styles and strategies in ways that enhance and sustain effective job performance by caseworkers
- 511-03 Ability to plan, organize and monitor to ensure that casework activities are consistent with federal and state law and rule, agency policies and procedures, agency and unit outcomes, and standards of best practice.

Skill Set 511-01: Ability to create a supportive and enabling unit environment that promotes effective and efficient completion of mission-critical casework activities.

511-01-001	Knows the principles of family-centered, culturally competent, strengths-based casework practice, their importance in ensuring effective child welfare services, and the types of casework activities and interventions that reflect these principles.
511-01-002	Knows the agency- and unit-level factors that can undermine caseworkers' comfort and performance, unit productivity, and staff safety.
511-01-003	Understands the critical role of the supervisor in creating and sustaining a unit work environment that promotes the highest-quality caseworker services to children and families.
511-01-004	Understands the rationale for consistency in adhering to agency mission, best-practice standards, rules, policies, and procedures to promote effective casework practice.
511-01-005	Understands the supervisor's responsibility to model cultural competence and ethical conduct with staff, colleagues, clients, and

	community partners.
511-01-006	Understands the value and power of regular and open communication in the unit to ensure adherence to policies and procedures, law, regulation, and best-practice standards.
511-01-007	Knows how to model and support fundamental child welfare values and principles with caseworkers, and how to help them perform activities and choose services that are consistent with these principles.
511-01-008	Knows supervisory strategies to create and sustain a work environment that encourages continuous self-assessment, quality improvement, and ongoing staff development.
511-01-009	Can help caseworkers use strategies to manage and reduce job-related stress.
511-01-010	Can help caseworkers locate and select service providers, intervention tools, and other resources to serve children and families in the context of their own cultures.
511-01-011	Can implement strategies that monitor and promote the safety of caseworkers in the office and in the field.

Skill Set 511-02: Ability to select and use supervisory styles and strategies in ways that enhance and sustain effective job performance by caseworkers.

511-02-001	Knows the primary styles of supervision, the criteria that define each style, and their strengths and limitations.
511-02-002	Understands how various supervisory styles differ in their approach to balancing relationship development and task accomplishment.
511-02-003	Understands one's own preferred style of supervision and the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of that style.
511-02-004	Understands the importance of being comfortable and proficient in multiple supervisory styles, and of choosing the style best suited for the situation or context or to match an employee's developmental level.
511-02-005	Knows how to plan a supervisory approach that provides the most appropriate level of support and direction to help staff achieve a desired outcome.
511-02-006	Can comfortably "style flex" to meet the specific requirements of unique supervisory situations.

Skill Set 511-03: Ability to plan, organize, and monitor to ensure that casework activities are consistent with federal and state law and rule, agency policies and procedures, agency and unit outcomes, and standards of best practice.

511-03-001	Knows the core values of “best practice” and “evidence-based practice” and the importance of using this data to underpin all agency and casework practices.
511-03-002	Knows the importance of maintaining up-to-date knowledge of current research findings, best-practice standards, and laws, rules, and regulations.
511-03-003	Knows the importance of regular monitoring and feedback in assuring effective staff performance.
511-03-004	Knows data sources and data collection strategies that can support ongoing monitoring of caseworker completion of job responsibilities.
511-03-005	Understands the supervisor’s ongoing responsibility to plan, implement, and monitor completion of unit objectives.
511-03-006	Understands the importance of thorough and accurate case records in monitoring and evaluating the quality of casework activities.
511-03-007	Knows strategies to help staff plan, organize, and prioritize their work and manage their time most effectively.
511-03-008	Knows how to use case assessment and case planning conferences to model and promote the integration of fundamental best-practice principles into casework.
511-03-009	Can help caseworkers plan, organize, and reassess their work to maximize effectiveness and efficiency, and to promote desired outcomes in the unit and on individual cases.

Assessing My Unit

Assess the degree to which your unit currently possesses the following characteristics.

A – Always **M** – Most of the Time **O** – Occasionally **N** - Never

As a casework supervisor, I:

- _____ Am sensitive to the needs of my casework staff
- _____ Respect the knowledge, skills, experience, and opinions of my casework staff
- _____ Help my casework staff manage their workload
- _____ Help my casework staff deal with their feelings about the job (e.g., stress, burnout, secondary trauma)
- _____ Model self-control and composure in the face of stress or crises; project a sense of calm
- _____ Celebrate client successes
- _____ Provide ongoing encouragement to my casework staff
- _____ Recognize the accomplishments of my casework staff as they occur
- _____ Keep my casework staff engaged by discovering and developing their talents and abilities
- _____ Add humor and laughter to the unit (but not at the expense of anyone, especially clients)
- _____ Congratulate, appreciate, demonstrate, and participate
- _____ Help my caseworker staff get all the resources their clients need
- _____ Use strengths-based supervision

A – Always

M – Most of the Time

O – Occasionally

N - Never

My casework staff:

- _____ Feel supported by supervisors and colleagues
- _____ Feel safe
- _____ Have opportunities to develop personally and professionally
- _____ Feel positive about their job
- _____ Are physically comfortable in their surroundings
- _____ Have the necessary resources to do their job
- _____ Are supportive and helpful to colleagues

The work in my unit is:

- _____ Strengths-based
- _____ Ethically guided
- _____ Culturally competent
- _____ Family-centered
- _____ Mission-led
- _____ Professionally and personally satisfying

Survey of Skills Inventory

Read each statement and score yourself based on your ability to carry out each activity competently. Scoring is as follows:

- 5 = carries out activity effectively on a regular basis
- 4 = carries out activity effectively when I can “get to it”
- 3 = carries out activity fairly well, some of the time
- 2 = often struggles with this activity
- 1 = does not carry out this activity

A. Supportive Supervision

- _____ 1. I advocate for the needs of the unit, both in writing and in meetings with the administration.
- _____ 2. I negotiate unit expectations with the administration.
- _____ 3. I obtain support from the administration on difficult decisions.
- _____ 4. I am clear with staff regarding expectations for the unit’s individual social worker and the unit as a whole.
- _____ 5. I meet with my unit periodically to discuss the agency mission, affirm the unit mission, and review the importance of our work in the lives of children, families, and communities.
- _____ 6. I provide clear, useful, constructive criticism to improve performance based on job expectations and unit goals.
- _____ 7. I provide specific feedback on where staff are doing well and where they are falling short, both one on one and with the unit as a whole.
- _____ 8. I provide direction and guidance to staff who are having difficulty dealing with problems associated with case management and specific clients.
- _____ 9. I work with staff to find ways to make the job as manageable as possible.
- _____ 10. I am fair in my use of power and authority.
- _____ 11. I provide regular, scheduled, uninterrupted conference time with each staff member.
- _____ 12. I provide regular, scheduled, uninterrupted conference time with my unit.

- _____ 13. I supervise staff based on their readiness level (competence, confidence, and commitment) and not on what is comfortable for me.
- _____ 14. I show encouragement and genuine appreciation for the work that staff are doing and provide staff with a sense of belonging to the unit and agency.
- _____ 15. I encourage autonomy and interdependence among staff.

B. Educational Supervision

- _____ 1. I have reviewed the expectations of the social worker in my unit with each staff member.
- _____ 2. I have clearly identified the performance measures with my staff, both individually and collectively.
- _____ 3. I regularly update staff on how they are doing, both individually and as a unit in meeting performance expectations.
- _____ 4. I regularly meet with staff to discuss their professional strengths and partner with them to identify areas for improvement.
- _____ 5. I use the identified areas for improvement with staff as the basis for approving training requests.
- _____ 6. I use identified areas for improvement with staff as the basis for developing professional goals for the next reporting period as part of the annual performance evaluation process.
- _____ 7. I encourage staff to stretch and grow professionally.
- _____ 8. I give my staff opportunities to be creative and try new, sometimes nontraditional, interventions with clients.
- _____ 9. I encourage staff to participate in agency and state activities that will allow them to mature and develop as professionals.
- _____ 10. I formally recognize (via letter, memo, in unit meetings, one-on-one) when staff improve in areas earlier identified as needing improvement.
- _____ 11. I require staff to share in the regular unit meeting any information they received as a result of attending a training or conference.
- _____ 12. I expect staff to share with me how they intend to apply new learnings they received from a training session to their work.

- _____ 13. I follow up with staff to see how they are doing with applying new learning on the job, either through our regular conference or by reviewing case notes.
- _____ 14. I work with the unit to plan for covering a unit member's work when he/she is in training.

C. Administrative Supervision

- _____ 1. I have a method for managing my workload that is effective and efficient.
- _____ 2. I have a reputation for organization.
- _____ 3. I have a system for tracking the casework activities of my staff.
- _____ 4. I have a system for tracking the paperwork that my staff are responsible of competing.
- _____ 5. I am able to complete and submit my monthly reports on time.
- _____ 6. I am able to attend scheduled meetings.
- _____ 7. I arrive at scheduled meetings on time, most of the time.
- _____ 8. I am focused on mission; all thing flow from mission.
- _____ 9. I have developed my approach to work so as to be based on the mission of the unit and the performance measures of the unit.
- _____ 10. I manage the work; it does not manage me.
- _____ 11. I spend my days focused on mission and success rather than on putting out fires.

Source: Saunders Consulting Group: saundersconsultinggroup@yahoo.com

Survey of Skills Inventory Scoring

Supportive
Supervision: 75 - 60

Educational
Supervision: 70 - 56

Administrative
Supervision: 55 - 44

You should feel very good about your skills as a supervisor. You are doing all the right things to build a strong, highly functioning group of professionals. Your focus on mission is the right approach towards the work – staff should feel very supported by your efforts. The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) reported in their 1990 report that “a primary reason for staff turnover is lack of psychological and educational support.” You probably keep staff longer than most – your efforts will pay off! To provide competent supportive and educational supervision requires that you have a handle on the administrative aspects of the job. If you didn’t, you’d be running around doing the “last-minute hustle” or burning the midnight oil all of the time.

Supportive
Supervision: 60 - 45

Educational
Supervision: 56 - 42

Administrative
Supervision: 44 - 33

You have the skill base to do an effective job as a supervisor. However, a mark of excellence is consistency and regularity. Challenge yourself to “keep the main thing the main thing,” working to support and educate staff so they can become autonomous and interdependent professionals that want to remain with your unit because it is tops. How can you enhance your management systems to maximize the use of your time? What are you doing that you can do less of, in order to do more of the right things? Prioritizing around mission and performance measures will save you time in the long run and get you the results you’re after.

Supportive
Supervision: 45 - 30

Educational
Supervision: 42 - 28

Administrative
Supervision: 33 - 22

Doing anything fairly well some of the time is a seed of excellence that should be acknowledged! The challenge is to do more of the right things more of the time. Review the survey and identify what three activities you want to focus your attention on right now. Make a plan for doing so. Share it with a colleague you trust. Review it with

him/her in three-month intervals to keep you focused on improving in these activities. When you feel confident that you have improved in the target areas, pick three more activities until you are satisfied that you have achieved competence, confidence, and commitment in the targeted areas of supervision.

Supportive
Supervision: > 30

Educational
Supervision: > 28

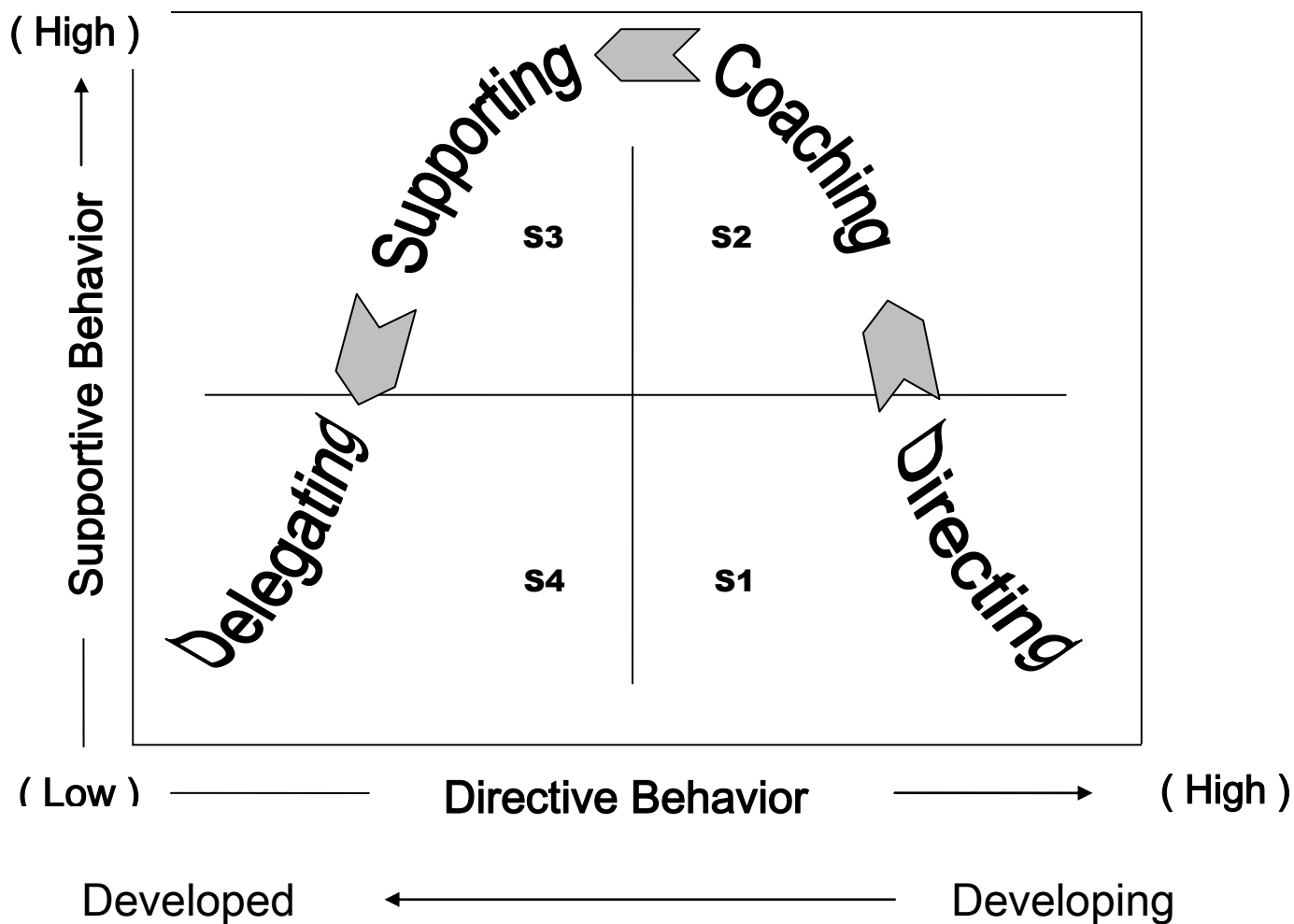
Administrative
Supervision: > 22

Rome wasn't built in a day, so...take heart and be encouraged! We all have areas that need improvement. Review the area of supervision you feel improvement is most needed in and set a plan! Consider the following strategies to support you in your effort to improve:

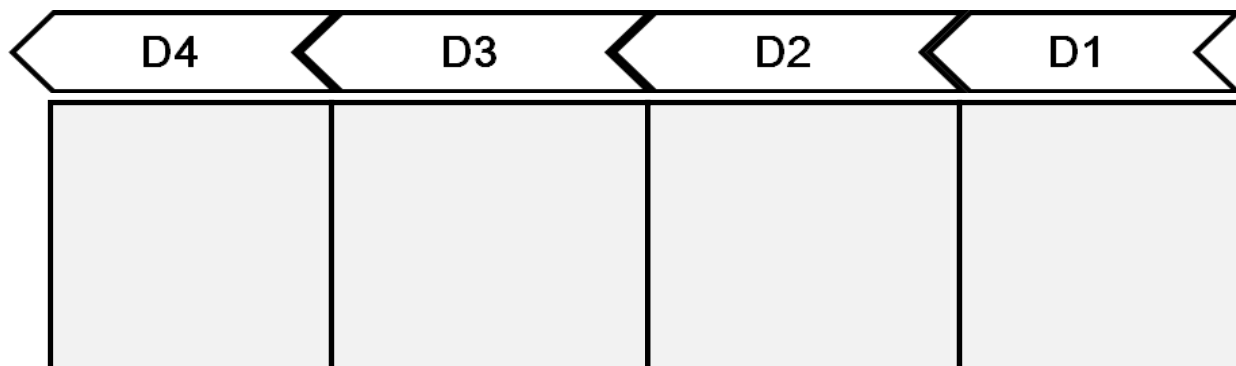
- a. Look around the agency: who there has a reputation for excelling in this area? Approach him/her. Ask that s/he consider mentoring you. Describe your areas of strength and weakness, and brainstorm interventions.
- b. Develop a six-month plan. With the help of your mentor, a colleague, or on your own, identify two areas on which to focus your attention. Write out in clear, specific language what you will do, by when and with whose support, and DO IT.

Source: Saunders Consulting Group: saundersconsultinggroup@yahoo.com

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Individual Development Level



Ken Blanchard, John Carlos, and Alan Randolph (2001). *The 3 Keys to Empowerment: Release the Power Within People for Astonishing Results*, Chapter 2, pg 23. Barrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA.

Task List

Instructions:

1. Write down everything you did the last day you were in the office.
2. Check the things you enjoyed doing the most.
3. Think about the urgency and/or importance of each task.
4. Why were they urgent and/or important?

Task	Enjoyed the Most ✓	Urgent or Important (Yes or No)	Why

Ten Most Important Tasks

Instructions: List the 10 most important tasks that will be waiting for you when you return to your office after training.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Prioritizing the Work

Covey Method

	Urgent	Not Urgent
I m p o r t a n t	I Activities: Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects	II Activities: Prevention Scheduling Relationship building Recognizing new opportunities Planning, recreation
N o t I m p o r t a n t	III Activities: Things that others demand Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Proximate, pressing matters Popular activities	IV Activities: Trivia, busy work Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities

ABC Method

The ABC method assigns values to each task:

“A” tasks are the highest priority.

- They need to be completed immediately.
- There are serious consequences if “A” tasks are not done.
- “A” tasks lead to the achievement of goals and objectives.

“B” tasks are also important but less so than “A” tasks.

- They can be postponed for a short time, if necessary.
- The consequences for not doing “B” tasks are not as significant as with “A” tasks.

“C” tasks are easy, trivial tasks.

- There are no consequences if these aren’t completed.

Once each task is assigned a value, all the tasks within each value category are assigned a number according to priority. For instance, if there is more than one “A” task, “A-1” is the most important and should be completed first.

The key to the success of the ABC method, is completing all the “A” tasks before going to the “B” tasks. Likewise, the “B” tasks should be completed before doing any “C” tasks. For example, the “A” task of finishing a report for a board meeting should be completed before “B” tasks such as, reviewing email or responding to an unimportant phone call. “B” tasks should be completed before “C” tasks such as, phoning a friend, going out for coffee, etc.

Strategies for Achieving the Ideal Work Environment

Instructions: Brainstorm various ways supervisors can duplicate the characteristics of the ideal work environment in their units.

Creating the Ideal Work Environment

In an effort to make your unit an ideal work environment, identify the top three things you can begin doing immediately.

- _____ Be sensitive to the needs of my staff
- _____ Respect the knowledge, skills, experience, and opinions of my staff
- _____ Help my staff manage their workload
- _____ Help my staff deal with their feelings about the job (e.g., stress, burnout, secondary trauma)
- _____ Model self-control and composure in the face of stress or crises; project a sense of calm
- _____ Celebrate client successes
- _____ Provide ongoing encouragement to my staff
- _____ Recognize the accomplishments of my staff as they occur
- _____ Keep my staff engaged by discovering and developing their talents and abilities
- _____ Add humor and laughter to the unit (but not at the expense of anyone, especially clients)
- _____ Congratulate, appreciate, demonstrate, and participate
- _____ Help my casework staff get all the resources their clients need
- _____ Use strengths-based supervision

How will you accomplish these three things?

Final Case Scenarios

Instructions: Using the tools identified throughout the workshop, develop a plan for addressing each of the issues identified in the following case scenarios.

Example #1

Sue is a caseworker who is fresh out of college. She has been on the job for one month. She appears to quickly pick up on things, yet she seems tentative about doing tasks without a lot of direction. She seems to know what it is she is supposed to do, but she is constantly coming to you, the supervisor, to ask what to do next. At which developmental level is Sue? What amount of support does Sue seem to need at this point? What supervisory style may be most appropriate for use with Sue?

Identified Issues:

Example #2

Three years later, Sue is now one of the most effective and efficient caseworkers in your agency. She takes initiative to complete her job tasks with little direction and she understands how the agency works and her role in the agency. She is frequently used to train new caseworkers. Now at which developmental level is Sue? What amount of support does Sue seem to need at this point? What supervisory style may be most appropriate for use with Sue?

Identified Issues:

ACTION PLANNING

My personal plan for sustaining motivation and passion:

ACTIVITIES

TIME FRAME

PROGRESS

Identify personal support persons:

HELPFUL RESOURCES

New Employee Orientation

Check OCWTP website for comprehensive orientation checklist

- <http://ocwtp.net/Orientation.html>
- Topics
- Resources and links
- Worksheets and activities

Orientation Coach available – contact your RTC for more information

Field Guide to Child Welfare

Available on line at www.childwelfarefieldguide.com

- Free 5 day trial
- Free 3 year subscription