

Supervisor Core - Module 1

# CASEWORK SUPERVISION

Supervisor Core Module 1: Casework Supervision  
Written by IHS for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program 2010 Revision

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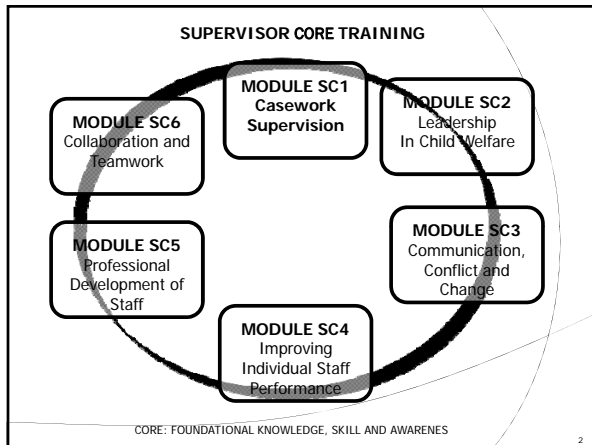
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## Overview of Module 1

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Case Conferences
- Types of Supervision
- Cultural Competence
- Ethical Issues
- Time Management, Prioritization, and Organization
- Caseworker Safety
- Managing Stress

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### Fundamental Values of the Social Work Profession

- ◎ All human beings have:
  - Worth
  - A right to liberty, including self-determination and privacy
  - A responsibility to help others achieve their social rights and human potential
  - A right to justice, including equal opportunity

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### Child Welfare Practice

“Child welfare is a field of practice within the social work profession. Its guiding value is a derivative of the fundamental values of the social work profession. This guiding child welfare value is: All children have an absolute right to a safe, permanent, stable home which provides basic levels of nurturance and care, and is free from abuse and exploitation.”  
*(Rycus and Hughes, 2007)*

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Foundational Practice Norms

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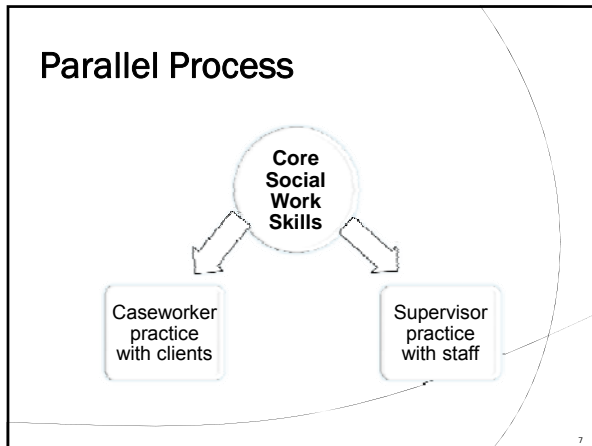
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- ### Strengths-Based Practice with Families
- Engaging families in partnership with agency
  - Empowering parents to provide safe and nurturing care
  - Emphasizing strengths when focusing on solutions
  - Helping families use their strengths to improve coping skills and resolve problems
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- ### Providing Strengths-Based Casework Supervision
- Identifying job-related strengths in caseworkers that enhance their ability to serve children and families
  - Identifying the needs of staff but addressing those needs using strengths-based approaches and strategies
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### Mission-Focused Practice

- Provides basis and direction for entire agency's work
- Keeps staff focused on purpose and goal
- Provides link between work done and goal to be achieved
- Helps caseworkers and supervisors see link between their jobs and agency's reason for being

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### Developmental

- In caseworker supervision
  - Focus on caseworker's stage of employment; prescribes frequency and intensity of direct supervision depending on developmental stage of caseworkers
- In casework practice
  - Understanding that client progress and growth comes in increments

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### Family-Centered, Neighborhood-Based

- ◎ The first and greatest investment in time and resources is in the care and treatment of children in their own homes. When that isn't possible, in their own communities.
- ◎ Neighborhoods are the primary source of opportunity and support for families.

([www.PCSAO.org](http://www.PCSAO.org))



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- It is *a/ways* in a child's best interest to remain with his or her family when at all possible.
- Supervisors should encourage utilization the neighborhood or community as a support system for children and families.
- When placement is necessary, if at all possible, children should be placed in their current communities to avoid disruption of their support networks.

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**Culturally-Competent**

“...having the awareness, knowledge and skills to recognize the complexity and relevance of culture in each life and find the tools/resources to respond appropriately to each individual according to his/her cultural identity and needs” *(OCWTP, 2009)*

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**Evidence-Based**



“...conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence...” (Sackett, et al., 2000) in making clinical practice and policy decisions.”

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## Code of Ethics

- ⦿ Identifies core values
- ⦿ Establishes specific ethical professional standards
- ⦿ Clarifies where professional obligations conflict or unethical considerations arise
- ⦿ Helps new caseworkers understand the ethical standards of the profession
- ⦿ Gives the public information about how to hold child welfare staff accountable
- ⦿ Articulates the standard for the field

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## Ethics Standards

- ⦿ NASW
  - [www.socialworker.org/pubs/code/default.asp](http://www.socialworker.org/pubs/code/default.asp)
- ⦿ Ohio Counselor, Social Worker & Marriage and Family Therapist Board
  - <http://www.cswmft.ohio.gov/ethics/code.pdf>
- ⦿ National Board for Certified Counselors
  - <http://www.nbcc.org/ethics/Default.aspx>

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## Ethics Standards

- ⦿ American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
  - <http://www.nbcc.org.sg/ethics.html>
- ⦿ Standards for Public Employees
  - <http://www.ethics.ohio.gov/ModelEthicsPolicyLocalAgencies.html>

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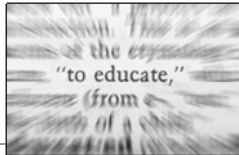
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### Small Group Activity

1. Define "casework supervision" in 3-5 sentences.
2. Appoint a spokesperson to share the definition with the larger group.



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### Casework Supervision

- ◎ Supervisory oversight of all aspects of child welfare activities performed by caseworkers:
  - Directing, consulting, guiding caseworkers as they interact and intervene with families and children
  - Adhering to best practice standards re: services caseworkers provide to children and their families
  - Meeting legal, procedural, policy, documentation requirements

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### Activity Instructions - Part 1 "Job Description"

- 1) Take 10 minutes to create job description for casework supervisors
- 2) List all responsibilities and tasks on flip chart paper; leave 3" borders on left and right sides of page
- 3) Place dots in left border relating to:
  - Red --- critical importance
  - Green --- moderate importance
  - Black --- lower importance



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### Responsibilities in Casework Supervision

Responsibilities can be divided into two categories:

1. Supervising direct services to children and families
2. Creating the ideal work environment



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Casework Supervision: Category 1

### Supervising Direct Services

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### Critical Decision-Making Points

- Intake screening
- Investigation
- Safety and risk assessments
- Placement
- Transferring a case for on-going services



- Closing a case
- Reunification
- Termination of parental rights
- Matching children with prospective foster or adoptive families

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### “Clinical” Supervision

Focusing on the:

- Ability of caseworkers to engage clients
- Rapport or the helping relationships between caseworkers and clients
- Risk and safety assessments; related decisions and plans
- Comprehensive child and family assessments

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### “Clinical” Supervision

Focusing on the:

- Development of case plans with families
- Casework decision-making
- Essential casework activities designed to facilitate change
- Review and evaluation of client progress

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### Best Practice Standards

- PCSAO      Public Child Welfare Association of Ohio
- CWLA      Child Welfare League of America
- NASW      National Association of Social Workers
- COA      Council on Accreditation
- APSAC      American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children

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**Child Welfare Requirements**

- CPOE - Child Protection Oversight and Evaluation
- CFSR – Child and Family Services Review



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**Developing Casework Staff**

- Assessing developmental readiness of caseworkers
- Delegating responsibilities appropriately
- Providing decision-making opportunities, involvement in strategic planning, developing procedures, etc.

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Casework Supervision: Category 2

**Creating the Ideal Work Environment**

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### Ideal Work Environments

- ◎ Help caseworkers:
  - Work more effectively on behalf of children and families
  - Be more realistic
  - Be more committed to child welfare practice
  - Be more resilient and better able to cope
  - Be more confident
  - Be more motivated

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### Activity Instructions

- ◎ Write phrases on the three sheets that describe the ideal work environment in the context of:
  - “Supervisors do” – what supervisors do to create it
  - “Caseworkers enjoy” – what benefits caseworkers receive being in it
  - “The work is” – what values describe the work

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### Supervisors...

- ◎ Are sensitive to the needs of caseworkers
- ◎ Respect the knowledge, skills, experience and opinions of caseworkers
- ◎ Help caseworkers manage their workload
- ◎ Help caseworkers deal with their feelings about the job (e.g. stress, burnout, secondary trauma)
- ◎ Congratulate, appreciate, demonstrate and participate

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### Supervisors...

- Model self-control and composure in the face of stress, crises; project a sense of calm
- Celebrate client successes
- Provide on-going encouragement to caseworkers
- Help caseworkers get all the resources their clients need

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### Supervisors...

- Recognize caseworker accomplishments as they occur
- Keep caseworkers 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)
- Use strengths-based supervision

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### Caseworkers...

- Feel supported by supervisors and colleagues
- Feel safe
- Have opportunities to develop personally and professionally
- Feel positive about their job



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### Caseworkers...

- Are physically comfortable in their surroundings
- Have the necessary resources to do their jobs
- Are supportive and helpful to colleagues



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### The Work Is...

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



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### Assessing Your Unit

- Complete Handout #2
- Consider what characteristics of the "ideal work environment" are currently present in your unit.



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### Kadushin's Model of Supervision



Functional roles:

- 1. Administrative
- 2. Educational
- 3. Supportive

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### Self-Assessment Tool

- Complete the Survey of Skills Inventory (Handout #3)
- Place the assessment aside until instructed



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### Administrative Supervision

- Implementation of legislation, rules, procedures
- Aligning the work with the agency and unit mission / goal
- Planning and coordinating the work; decision-making
- Monitoring and evaluating work
- Acting as advocate, change agent, administrative buffer

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### Educational Supervision

- Orienting new caseworkers to the job
- Identifying caseworker training needs
- Conducting transfer of learning from knowing to doing
- Directly observing caseworkers perform assigned tasks
- Directing, consulting and guiding caseworkers
- Coaching, modeling, giving feedback

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### Supportive Supervision

- ❑ Creating a safe, comfortable and empowering work environment
- ❑ Being available and approachable for case consultations, etc.
- ❑ Communicating confidence in and support for caseworkers
- ❑ Helping caseworkers develop a realistic perspective about the work
- ❑ Strengthening caseworker capacity to deal with job stress and safety issues

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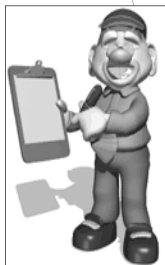
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### Activity Instructions – Part 2 “Job Description”

1. Review the chart created earlier
2. In right column, identify how job tasks break down in the following:  
A – Administrative  
E – Educational  
S – Supportive
3. Be prepared to share discoveries in 10 minutes



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 **Survey of Skills**

- Score your survey of skills inventory
- Does a balance exist between your administrative, educational and supportive responsibilities?



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**Areas of Supervision**



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**Example: Reviewing a Case**

- Administrative function – check for rules compliance
- Educational function – identify areas needing additional caseworker instruction
- Supportive function – provide positive reinforcement of good practice

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**Consider this...**

- How can supervisors ensure high quality services to children and families?
- What are the sources of data that can assist casework supervisors in their responsibilities?
- What are some examples of organizational barriers?
- Why is there so much emphasis on documentation?

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- If services to clients are interrupted, does it constitute a violation of professional ethics?
- How can casework supervisors be proactive in making sure client services are not interrupted?
- How can supervisors reduce knowledge and skill barriers, identify training needs, and help caseworkers learn all they need in order to complete their job tasks?
- What liabilities could result from having untrained and unskilled workers?

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- Why is it so important to provide supportive supervision?
- How did it feel when you were supported at work? What about when you weren't supported?
- What efforts have you made to convey support to your staff?
- What are the possible consequences if you do not give equal attention to administrative, supportive and educational supervision?

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## Situational Leadership

- ◎ Tailoring one's supervisory approach to fit each situation, with each staff person -- to achieve desired behavior or level of performance
- ◎ Providing appropriate level of support and direction (according to developmental level of staff)

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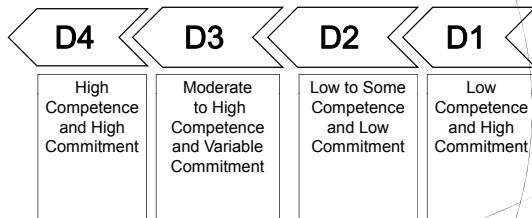
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## Individual Development Level



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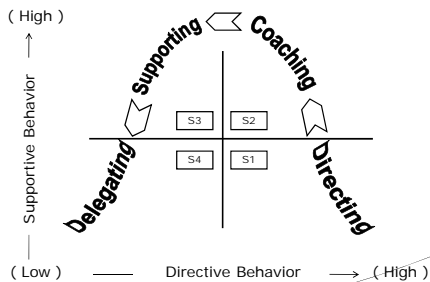
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## Supervisory Approach



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### Supervisory Approaches

<p>1. Directing / Telling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Define roles, tasks; supervise closely</li><li>• Caseworkers unable to do task but are enthusiastic and committed</li></ul>	<p>2. Coaching / Selling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Still define roles, tasks; seek ideas, suggestions</li><li>• Caseworkers have some competence but inexperienced; lack commitment; need support, praise; may be over-confident; need direction</li></ul>
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### Supervisory Approaches

<p>3. Supporting / Participating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitate, listen, praise, reinforce caseworker progress</li><li>• Caseworkers have competence; lack confidence, motivation; do not need much direction but do need support</li></ul>	<p>4. Delegating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Still involved in decisions, problem-solving; trust staff with tasks but check in occasionally</li><li>• Caseworkers have competence, commitment; able, willing to work with little support or supervision</li></ul>
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### CAPMIS Example

- ⊙ Situation: Helping a new caseworker complete a CAPMIS safety plan.
- ⊙ What factors should be considered?
- ⊙ What supervisory style would the caseworker likely respond to best?
- ⊙ What style would be most productive to completing the CAPMIS Safety Plan?

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### Small Group Activity

Scenario:

- Supervisor is new to unit
- Must make decisions about how to distribute cases

Using the Situational Leadership guide, what factors should supervisor consider before distributing cases?

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### Time Management



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### Individual Activity

1. On Handout #6 write down everything you did your last day in the office .
2. Select the things you enjoyed doing most.
3. Consider the urgency and importance of each of the tasks you did.
4. Write down why they were urgent or important.



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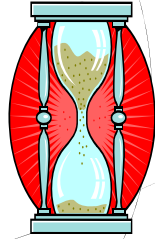
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### Discussion

- What can happen when caseworkers or supervisors mismanage time?
- What are some time wasters you have seen in your office?
- Were there opportunities when you could have better managed your time?



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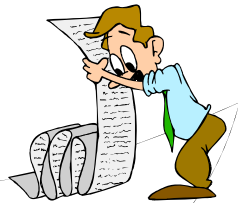
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On Handout #7 list the 10 most important tasks that will be waiting for you when you return to your office after training.



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**Important tasks** have a direct connection to the achievement of goals (e.g., the supervisor's, the caseworker's, or the unit's). These tasks should receive the greatest amount of time and attention.

**Urgent tasks** have specific deadlines. The sooner the deadline, the more urgent the tasks become.



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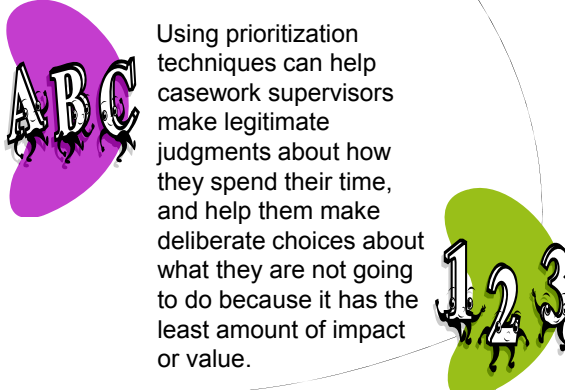
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Using prioritization techniques can help casework supervisors make legitimate judgments about how they spend their time, and help them make deliberate choices about what they are not going to do because it has the least amount of impact or value.

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### ABC Method

- “A” tasks - highest priority; lead to achievement of goals and objectives; need done immediately; serious consequences occur if “A” tasks not completed
- “B” tasks - also important but can be postponed for short time; consequences for not doing “B” tasks not as significant as with “A” tasks
- “C” tasks - easy, trivial tasks; have no consequences if not completed

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### Covey Method

Every task organized into quadrants according to urgency and importance

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I	II
Not Important	III	IV

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### Quadrant 3



- Eliminate email pop-ups and alerts
- Silence the cell phone (including text message alerts) during periods when concentration is important
- Post a schedule indicating do not disturb periods
- Learn to say no

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### Prioritizing the Work

#### Small Group Activity #1

1. Use the technique assigned to your group
2. Pick one of the individual lists developed earlier
3. Prioritize the work
4. Share with the large group



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### Prioritizing the Work

#### Small Group Activity #2

1. Return to the small group (according to unit supervised)
2. Identify 10 tasks you complete (or start) within a normal day in your unit
3. Develop a plan for how you would manage the work using the prioritizing techniques.

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### Organize Your Own Work

- Set consistent work schedule
- Know and observe your own deadlines
- Use "tickler" systems or Outlook for important duties or deadlines
- Use efficient personal workplace procedures
- Establish filing system
- Distinguish "Urgent" from "Important"

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### Organize Work of the Unit

- Establish procedures to ensure efficient, effective work flow, communication, etc.
- Set staff schedules
- Set standards for documentation
- Schedule regular supervisor/ case conferences, unit meetings)
- Develop process for supervisor consultation
- Coordinate casework efforts within the unit and with other units
- Establish communication systems

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### Negative Consequences

- ⊙ Decreased capacity / productivity
- ⊙ Wasted time and energy
- ⊙ Risk of inefficiency and duplication of work
- ⊙ Increased stress, frustration
- ⊙ Lower morale
- ⊙ Compromising ability to protect children



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### Individual Case Conferences

Primary supervisory vehicle for:

- Monitoring compliance to child welfare requirements
- Checking progress toward child and family outcomes
- Providing case consultation
- Assessing caseworker's understanding of best practice as it applies to individual cases

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### Small Group Discussion

- How do you currently use individual case conferences?
- How often are they held?
- What do you do that works best for you in the conference?
- What do you do to prepare for individual case conferences?

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### Strategies for Individual Case Conferences

1. Schedule regular meetings with each caseworker
2. Limit case conferences to maximum 90 minutes
3. Prior to meeting, thoroughly review
  - Case record
  - Notes from previous case review
  - Observation notes
  - Status of documentation and reports

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### To Review During Individual Case Conferences

- Brief review of case
- Description of last home visit
- Current safety and risk factors; strengths
- Changes in genogram or ecomap
- Case plan progress and barriers
- Placement / permanency issues
- Best practice standards
- Documentation / timeline requirements
- Plan / anticipate for next 45 days

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### On the Caseworker's Behalf

- Provide time for questions
- Discuss developmental needs in relation to case
- Discuss caseworker well-being, stress issues
- Use active listening, strengths-based feedback
- Model critical thinking

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### Examples of Critical Thinking

- How has this family changed in the course of their child protective service involvement?
- What are the strengths or partial solutions already present in the family that could become foundations for further growth and problem resolution?
- What are the family systems or environmental factors that may have led to the development of these problems? How should those factors be addressed?

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- What are the indications that a child's allegations are valid?
- What are the risk factors for future abuse?
- What does evidence-based research say about the therapeutic strategies most likely to help children with their array of problems, needs, strengths?
- How can we judge the likelihood that a given intervention will have a positive effect on a parent's caregiving abilities?
- What might have happened if child protective services involvement had not occurred?

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### Mock Case Activity

1. Two people from each group conduct a brief, simulated case conference
2. One person act as supervisor; other person as caseworker
3. One person as "coach" for supervisor
4. Others observe; provide feedback for supervisor
5. Rotate roles

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### Group Case Conferences



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### Group Case Conferences

- ❑ Uses collective knowledge to address difficult case issues and bring a fresh perspective
- ❑ Utilizes specific strengths and expertise that unit caseworkers have developed from previous employment experience or education
- ❑ Provides caseworkers with opportunities to make connections between the cases presented and their own cases
- ❑ Provides opportunities for caseworkers to be consultants

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### Develop Criteria for Group Case Conferences

- ⦿ Kinds of cases to be presented
- ⦿ Frequency and schedule for case presentations
- ⦿ Time allotted for each case presentation
- ⦿ Expectations for attendance by unit caseworkers
- ⦿ Guidelines for presenting a case

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### Presenting a Case

1. Reason for the staffing: family issue or case question
2. Family's strengths and difficulties, giving illustrative examples
3. Succinct narrative, including most important points
4. Explanation why problems may have developed



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### Processing the Case



1. The thinking of caseworker, colleagues and supervisor re: intervention strategies that have been implemented
2. Discussion of best practice standards that apply to case
3. Additional discussion – suggestions

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### Small Group Activity

1. Work with small group
2. Design a framework for preparing for and conducting group case conferences including:
  - a) how to prepare for a case presentation
  - b) criterion for the types of cases to be presented for case consultation
3. Share frameworks

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### Creating the Ideal Work Environment

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### Lightening Round Activity

- Stand by one flipchart
- Untape flip chart
- Within 60 seconds write down as many sources of stress within category
- When instructed, advance to next flipchart



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### Strategies for Managing Caseworker Stress

- Provide 1-on-1 emotional support
- Allow caseworkers to vent without interruption
- Help caseworkers prioritize, develop plans
- Acknowledge achievements
- Temporarily reassign job tasks
- Provide opportunities for peer support
- Minimize supervisor indecision, changing priorities, inconsistent work assignments
- Help caseworkers understand their "self-talk"

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### Casework Supervisors as Role Models

- Demonstrate high standards of practice
- Promote ethical practice and conduct
- Promote family-centered practice and cultural competence
- Be strengths-based
- Interact with colleagues and the community
- Demonstrate respect and responsibility



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### Casework Supervisors Who Are Mission Focused

- Articulate agency and unit mission so caseworkers understand their purpose
- Help caseworkers stay focused on mission
- Align decisions, policies and goals with mission
- Explain rationale that supports policies and procedures; articulate link between work of unit and agency mission and goals



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### Definition of a “Learning Environment”

- An environment in which all staff are “encouraged and expected to continuously improve themselves” and their unit and agency...where caseworkers are at ease and enjoy acquiring and applying new knowledge and insights.

(Potter and Brittain, 2009)

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### Create a Learning Environment

- Help caseworkers discover and develop their talents and abilities
- Promote caseworker development
- Encourage creativity and “risk” taking
- Make it safe for caseworkers to make mistakes and learn from them
- Create a climate of trust and openness
- Support caseworkers’ attempts to develop competence, effectiveness, independence, and self-directedness in their work

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### Points of Greatest Risk

During the life of a case:

- During initial assessment or investigation
- When confronting alleged perpetrators about abusive or neglectful behavior
- During family crisis situations
- When major actions are taken, e.g. removing children from their homes; filing for termination of parental rights

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### Safety Strategies

- ⊙ Implement screening alert protocol
- ⊙ Require caseworkers to:
  - Review case information before first home visit
  - Discuss perceived safety issues
  - Inform office of their whereabouts
  - Implement safety precautions
- ⊙ Review safety issues during case reviews and unit meetings
- ⊙ Alert administration to safety concerns; advocate for resources

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Complacency  
Increases  
Vulnerability

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Awareness  
Decreases  
Vulnerability

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### Caseworker Safety Standards

- ⦿ PCSAO Standards for Effective Practice  
<http://www.pcsao.org/standards.htm>
- ⦿ Addresses such topics as:
  - Field safety
  - After hours visit safety
  - High risk situations and dangerous locations
  - Staff facility safety
  - Staff safety training

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### The Reality Is This

“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

*Rachel Remen*

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### Proactive Strategies

- ⦿ Promoting a supportive environment
- ⦿ Encouraging caseworkers to share difficult experiences
- ⦿ Arranging debriefings within 24 hours of traumatic events
- ⦿ Offering on-going support and validation
- ⦿ Organizing a trauma support group
- ⦿ Encouraging staff to build resilience by not working excessive overtime; to take time off

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## Summary

- On Handout #10, choose 3 things to begin doing immediately in order to make your unit an ideal work environment
- How will you accomplish this?
  - What are the existing strengths you and/or the unit possess?
- Share plans with a partner
  - Discuss how you will know whether your efforts are successful

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## Application Exercise

### Small Group Activity

1. Review case scenario (Handout #11)
2. Using tools identified throughout workshop, develop a plan for addressing each of the identified issues
3. Share plans with the large group



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## Concluding Thoughts

1. What pressures come from being a casework supervisor?
2. How are you affected by the competing values and opinions of others outside and within the agency?
3. In what ways do you manage your stress?
4. How do you deal with your own emotional reactions?

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### Concluding Thoughts

5. How does having a supervisor who is passionate about and committed to the work make a difference for you? – to caseworkers? – to children and families?
6. What strategies can you identify for maintaining passion and commitment to the work you do?
7. How can you lead in a way that inspires, motivates and energizes casework staff?

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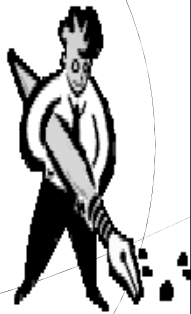
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### Action Planning

1. Take out Handout #12: "Action Plan"
2. Develop a plan for how you will sustain your motivation and passion for the work you do.
3. Identify people who you will turn to for support and encouragement.



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### Reminder...

- Ⓞ Please complete your pre-training assignment prior to attending the next Supervisor Core workshop.
- Ⓞ Pre-training assignments, post-training assignments and other resources can be found on the OCWTP website: <http://www.ocwtp.net/>
  - For Trainees
  - Companion skill-building resources for training
  - Jump to supervisor/manager core module resources

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