Minimizing Disruptions in Care

**Behavioral Telehealth (Video and Phone): Skill Development Webinar Series
Questions & Answers**

Effective Supervision: Addressing Long-Term Virtual Team Needs

Webinar 4: May 20, 2020

Question	Answer
My agency likes to give raffle tickets when a staff asks a question or speaks up in a meeting. Sometimes it feels this encourages random comments or is distracting, but some staff seem to enjoy it. What are your thoughts on "rewarding" participation in this way?	While some staff appreciate working in a rewards-based environment, it's important that organizations reward the right thing. Like discussing client celebrations during supervision, we recommend providing rewards when clients experience a good outcome as a result of their workers help. Also, rewards don't have to have a monetary value to be effective. Staff appreciate things like an email from an administrator noting a workers effort, a text from a supervisor expressing appreciation for their work, a "shout out" during a team meeting about what a staff person is doing to contribute to meaningful outcomes such as employment, community involvement, etc.
It's harder to meet these standards when we do not have this type of leadership in our supervisor. What are your suggestions for managing our own frustrations with technology, adapting to constant changes, managing the increased intensity of client feelings, feeling brain fog?	Self-care, self-care, self-care! These are highly stressful times we are living through and it is normal to feel stressed, frustrated, overwhelmed, and even traumatized by how COVID-19 is impacting all of us. Trauma impacts our cognitive functioning and can lead to "brain fog" and too much screen time can cause cyber sickness. Think in terms of what you need to take care of yourself while you are trying to be helpful to others. We often ask clients to consider creating a wellness toolbox, something we could all benefit from right now. Potential wellness strategies might include sticking to a routine, getting plenty of outdoor time, mindfulness activities, exercise, taking as many breaks as possible away from the screen, staggering video calls with regular phone calls, and looking for simple tip sheets for using new technology like Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc. The new reality of constant change can leave us feeling out of control so focusing on what you do have control over may also be helpful.

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I think getting comfortable with the supervisor is the key point. Because if we are not comfortable then it's difficult to address these areas. Sometimes supervisors don't hear you even though you try to express your concerns. I wish my supervisor would view this seminar.	Yes, having trust and a good relationship with a supervisor is always desirable. While your supervisor may not have participated in the webinar, think about any strategies that were discussed that you could share with them. We discussed the concept of "managing up" which involves clearly understanding what the expectations for your position entails, and a self-evaluation of how you are performing. This allows you to get specific with a supervisor about areas where you need support, direction, or resources versus feeling like you must approach them only with concerns or challenges.
Due to being forced to work from home without childcare, how do we manage distractions if inevitable. Also, with the complicated personnel issues related to COVID, if consistent expectations can't be applied to all staff, how do you manage different expectations for different staff and that causing resentment with other team members?	Having a lot of space for distractions such as kids or pets interrupting us is important right now. These are unprecedented times we are experiencing, and we must not expect perfection from ourselves or others. How we handle such distractions is however important. So, if I am speaking with a client and my kid is screaming in the background, I need to acknowledge that it is occurring, apologize for the distraction, and ask if they feel like they can continue the discussion. People receiving services are overwhelmingly generous and understanding and are also experiencing their own distractions, so this can be a place align with them and the same holds true for staff who report to us. Regarding adjusting expectations among staff during COVID-19, consider whether you are adjusting the expectation versus creating different pathways for each staff to meet the expectation given their own unique needs. For instance, take two parents, both working from home with two young children. One of the parents reports to you and you allow them to adjust when they work during the day/evening so they can divide up childcare duties, giving them, each dedicated work time. In this example, you're not changing the actual expectation, you're instead allowing for flexibility in how they meet it during this time. If you allow for flexibility among all the team members, it will likely cut down on resentments other staff may develop.
What if we have a staff member that says they don't	Start with the expectations related to their job description. Are there specific performance measures that are in place that staff are responsible

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need/want any additional professional development?	to achieve? Are the expectations aligned with specific measures that allow the supervisor to evaluate the degree the employee is meeting the expectation. If job expectations and our methods of evaluating performance are clear, then it is easier to discuss this with the employee in an objective manner. Also, evaluate whether professional development is an expectation written into agency policy that you can clearly point to. Are all staff held to the same standard in this regard? Explore their resistance to professional development. Learning for a living is critical to the evolution of effective mental health practices so it is always concerning when someone believes they "know everything already." Stay on the path of objectivity and consistency.
Regarding staff performance improvement discussions, how do we engage a staff member in being more open? Specifically, when motivational interviewing and open-ended questions still result in one worded response?	Sometimes it's helpful to ask the person how they best receive feedback. Some people may need to hear what your concerns are either in person or in writing and then take time to consider their response. In this case, you could offer to give them 24 hours to respond (either set a time to meet with them or if you allow for a written response, let them know when you expect to receive it). Also, providing regular, ongoing feedback, starting from day one of their employment, lets staff know that performance improvement is part of the agency culture and that it's continuous. Bottom line, what staff need to be held accountable to are the expectations related to their job. We need to be clear about what communication is needed from staff to meet the core expectations of their job. We may need to be comfortable with certain staff who are less talkative than others, if they are communicating enough information that allows work expectations to be met.
How do you manage the transition with licensed staff that were once peers?	Very carefully! Focus on engagement and building a trusting relationship with each of them. As former peers, you are likely already aware of where they excel and where they may have challenges. Look for ways to build upon their strengths and slowly support them to address the challenges. If you were friends with any of them before becoming their supervisor (friends outside of the working relationship), you will need to make adjustments as

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	it will change the nature of the relationship. While we should always be kind, supportive, and friendly with those who report to us, at the end of the day we are responsible for ensuring each employee meets job expectations required by the organizations and provides quality services to the people served by the organization.
What if before COVID-19 we were in middle of disciplinary actions with staff. Seems awkward to write up or remove person from position during COVID-19.	Yes, it does seem awkward and likely uncomfortable. However, shelter-in place-restrictions related to COVID-19 are not going to last forever so the problem is going to remain, and you will eventually need to address it. Meanwhile, how much damage is it causing by not addressing it now? This is especially important if the concern is related directly to quality client care. It is always important to stick to the expectations that are required of each staff person and ensuring these expectations are applied consistently across all staff. Just make sure the expectations for job performance are clear and be objective in your feedback about how these expectations are not being met, along with a specific plan for corrective action.
Any suggestion for a supervisee who is very rigid about time inflexibility on the part of supervisor?	Sticking to a supervision schedule could be helpful. We recommend meeting with staff individually for one hour per week, especially if they are new and still building skills. For more seasoned staff, they may not need a full hour or a weekly session. Try scheduling supervision at a time when things are generally calm (not first thing on a Monday morning when you may be responding to issues that came up over the weekend or the last hour of a Friday afternoon). If possible, do not respond to calls during supervision, reply to emails, etc. Remember to work from an agenda and set clear expectations with staff about your availability outside of their scheduled hour. Some supervisors like to say, "I have an open-door policy" and while this might seem like it would be helpful, it often models reactivity for staff and discourages them to use and build their own problem-solving skills. Of course, crises require your immediate attention, but encourage staff to keep track of what they want to cover in supervision throughout their work week.

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Is there a way to start practicum remotely? Most organizations are asking those ready and eager to wait until face to face internships can begin. Any tips on how to find those placement opportunities ready to begin remotely?	There are organizations who are planning for the potential of remote practicums beginning in the Fall. Try narrowing down organizations you are interested in interning with and reach out to them. Also, field placement departments at Universities would be a great place to contact as they are busy planning for Fall internships and will likely know who is supporting remote internships.
How to support non-clinical supervisors to lead by example and encourage management skill development?	The best way to encourage skill develop in management is to clearly write these expectations into supervisor job descriptions and pair these with performance evaluations. We need to be clear about the specific skillsets that we want supervisors to be proficient in and have a clear professional development plan that outlines the support and opportunities the organization will provide to build those skills. There are many trainings available for managers and finding ones that reflect the agency's values and skill development needs will be important.
Please provide guidance. How would I better and effectively support an elder staff with very little experience of using technologies for remote work? Thanks.	Start by narrowing down everything that will be required of them to do using technology. Once you have that established, create a professional development plan to help the person build the skills they need to use the technology effectively in their work. As with any staff member, emphasize learning and growth over perfection. You can hold the expectation of what you want the person to be able to do, but then outline the supports and opportunities you are going to provide to get there. Consider using a sequential process to skill development: Model for them the skill you want them to possess; provide simple tip sheets for how to use specific technology; give the person an opportunity to practice with you; have the person demonstrate the skill and then provide feedback; etc. There are also many online tutorials for using virtual platforms like Zoom or GoToMeeting, windows, applications in Microsoft, etc. that may be useful. Important thing is kept to the expectations you have of all staff, but tailor your supports to meet the individual specific needs related to learning.

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How would you handle not getting regular performance reviews in writing?	This may be a good time to manage up. You might try telling your supervisor that you learn best from written input and would appreciate a written performance review. Most organizations require performance reviews (at least annually) that are written. If you are uncomfortable asking your supervisor directly for this, you could consult with your human resources department. There are some organizations that do not have a formal performance review process. If this is the case, it is still reasonable to ask for written feedback on your performance from your supervisor.
I would love any suggestions on how to manage changing workflows moving quicker than our ability as supervisors to write, create and layout policies and procedures. This is a reality of our times, but are there ways to minimize the disruption this causes?	There are many things that can be accomplished related to workflows that do not necessarily require a need to write new policies and procedures. We do need to be clear with staff on their expectations and how the organization wants the work conducted. In some cases, this can be accomplished by a simple memo that goes out to all staff who are impacted by a workflow. They key things to keep in mind is if the workflow applies only to work responsibilities related to your team or if it is a workflow that impacts everyone in the organization. If it is something that impacts the work of just your team, then you have more flexibility. For example, a homeless outreach team might need to change the way they do outreach considering the COVID-19 pandemic. You can send out a memo or email with guidance outlining how you want the team to approach outreach. I would also check in with your supervisor and the human resources department though to make sure that what you are communicating to staff is consistent with current policy and procedure.
Is there a resource you can recommend for ideas to help build up the team virtually in a fun way? More specific ideas to try or a list of ideas	There are many resources out there right now related to COVID-19. Try searching online with a keyword like "virtual team building activities" and see what you like. Here is an example of one that I found: https://snacknation.com/blog/virtual-team-building/
How can I ask a micromanaging supervisor to back off a bit? I'm feeling suffocated.	Supervisors, especially if they are new, may be unaware that they are micromanaging. Also, there are situations that need more direct involvement from a supervisor such as an employee not meeting performance expectations or deadlines, poor client

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	care, etc. Staff also have different needs and skill levels, so it is important that supervisors have some flexibility to tailor their approach to meet those needs and ensure staff have the skills they need to meet work expectations. I would approach your situation with your supervision with specificity around the work expectations and the support you need (or not need) to meet that expectation. I think it is completely appropriate to ask your supervisor to give you feedback on how you are doing meeting expectations of your job. If you are meeting those expectations satisfactorily, then it might provide an opportunity to have a discussion with your supervisor about how to best structure their support for you in areas where it would be most helpful and give you more flexibility and autonomy in other areas. It might be helpful to do some thinking about what these specific areas are before you have this discussion. I think it also fine to explore with your supervisor the discrepancy in areas where your supervisor provides more direct oversight than you feel you need. Maybe get their perspective on why they think you need direct supervisor involvement in a certain area and what it might take for them to feel comfortable with you meeting the expectations in that area with more autonomy.
As a supervisee, how can you approach your supervisor about topics presented during this webinar? As encouragement, to be more productive & effective when working together. I don't want to be rude, just voice my needs respectfully.	It's completely fine to manage up! You could tell them that you attended this webinar and reflected on how the two of you may be able to be more productive and effective when working together. Get specific, though, about what you are suggesting, don't just say something like, "the way you are providing supervision to me isn't helpful." Maybe pick one or two things you learned in this webinar and ask your supervisor if the two of you could try it. Most supervisors truly want staff to perform at their best so if you can communicate what you need in order to do that, they will likely appreciate your bringing it up.
Is it possible to get a strengths model competency plan for a master's level clinician?	Since the Strengths Model is primarily a case management model, the core competencies are geared primarily to case management staff and their expectations for using the tools in their work with clients. But there are competencies within that core competency professional development plan that

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	have wide application to all staff working with people in a strengths-based, recovery-oriented way, including masters level clinicians. Feel free to take the current core competency plan and keep the ones that apply and remove the ones that don't. Also, feel free to email us (rgoscha@cibhs.org or amabry@ku.edu to discuss specific application.
What happens when a new staff starts in a program and there was no opportunity to build a relationship?	**We talked about this a little on the webinar. Creating opportunities for staff to get together in less formal ways for engagement is important. Try holding a Zoom happy hour or lunch hour. Ask staff to share certain things about themselves, what their favorite part of their job is, what has been challenging for them, what it was like when they first started, etc. I think it important to recognize that relationship building is an ongoing process. See every opportunity we engage with a person as an opportunity for relationship building. Even when we are just orienting the person to the organization. For example, even if we are doing something seemingly mundane like showing people how to report their time, you can ask "how did you report time in your previous job?" Sometimes a simple question can open the door to further conversations to get to know the person better.**
I am currently working to complete my Doctoral Degree in Behavioral Health Management and have minimal supervision experience, but want more as I am working towards clinical licensure as well, any suggestions?	**If you are currently working in a clinical setting, you might explore what opportunities exist for you to begin gaining some experience. If you are currently licensed at the master's level, you might also consider supervising students who are working toward their master's degree, or who need clinical supervision to achieve a higher level of licensure. Finally, if there are leaders in your organization that you look up to, ask them if they would consider mentoring you in this regard.**