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Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision

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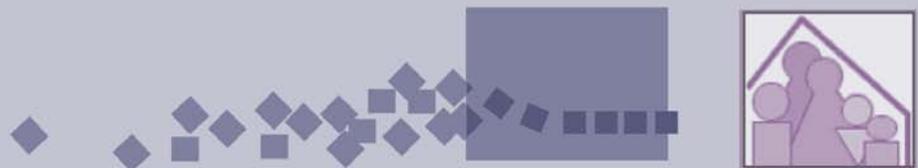
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Building a Model and Framework for



Child Welfare Supervision

Peg Hess • Susan Kanak • Julie Atkins



National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

Services of the Children's Bureau, members of the National Child Welfare Training & Technical Assistance Network

Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision

National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice
and Permanency Planning
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

A service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Executive Summary

A Call to Action for Agency Leadership

Both child welfare professionals and the literature identify the importance of the supervisory role in achieving desired service and organizational outcomes. They also stress that historically supervisors have lacked adequate support in executing their myriad responsibilities and serving their several constituent groups. Child welfare supervisors have been pivotal in identifying the need for organizational and practice change as well as evaluating progress toward positive outcomes for children, youth and families. Supervisors interact with a number of constituent groups: clients served by the agency; line staff assigned to the supervisor; the professional community and organizations and individuals providing contracted services; agency administrators and managers, and those financial and legal bodies under whose auspices the agency functions; and resource parents and child care providers. They are, thus, key translators of the organization's mission, vision, values and practice both within the agency and with external partners and stakeholders.

My supervisor is a great support. I have worked with the same manager since I've been here. I'm still here at this agency because of her. I want to give the same kind of support to my own workers. – Supervisor

In order to provide agency leadership with up to date information, the Children's Bureau asked the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to examine the responsibilities and needs of supervisory staff and develop an organizational framework to support effective child welfare supervision. This resulting document is intended to serve as a roadmap for agency leaders as they think through ways to build and sustain effective child welfare supervision in their agencies. It is a state of the art compendium of an emerging model of supervision in child welfare and ideas and practices that, if implemented by agency leadership, can radically improve the ability of supervisors and the agencies that employ them to serve the needs of children and families in their cities, states and tribes.

Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision

This report, *Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision*, presents the findings from an extensive review of the most recent literature combined with interviews of experts in the field of child welfare, currently practicing child welfare administrators, supervisors, frontline practitioners, and trainers. The report is organized into three sections:

- Section I introduces seven elements of an emerging model of supervision in child welfare.
- Section II presents an integrated organizational framework consisting of four components required to empower child welfare supervisors to effectively carry out their administrative, educational, and supportive functions.
- Section III incorporates supports useful to agencies in implementing the recommendations contained in this report. These include our interview protocols, the annotated results of our extensive literature review, a sample job description, and our methodology.

Our intent in undertaking this project is to provide child welfare leadership with proven strategies and tools that support supervisors as they carry out their diverse activities. We intend that agency leadership will use this information to design an integrated organizational response to the diverse needs of their agencies' supervisors. The Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance network is available to work with state and tribal leadership as they create and implement a customized plan to enhance their child welfare supervisory practice and thus improve organizational and child, youth and family outcomes.

Introduction

Why is a Model of Child Welfare Supervision Needed?

The need for a model of child welfare supervision and an organizational framework designed to support effective supervision emerged during and following the first round of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). At least 22 States included strategies related to supervision in their Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) to improve performance on child and family outcomes (National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement 2007:4). In recent years, federally mandated child welfare agency responsibilities have been redefined, requirements increased and the time frames revised, providing greater clarity regarding the desired outcomes of child safety, permanency, and well-being and of family preservation (e.g. Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997; Adoptive Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980). Systematic data collection and analysis have become central to child welfare service provision and evaluation (Milner, Mitchell, & Hornsby 2005). Insufficient resources require child welfare agencies to be more judicious with existing resources (Faller, Meezan, Mendez, Tropman, Vandervort, & Willis 2004; Kadushin & Harkness 2002:xiv), and also to rely more heavily on contracted services (Mallon & Hess 2005). Currently, many child welfare agencies are experiencing significant cuts in funding that create challenges for all staff who must do as much or more with fewer resources.

Within the context of these and other changes, the child welfare supervisory role has been evolving. In some agencies, supervisors have been pivotal in identifying the need for change and providing leadership in implementing change and evaluating outcomes. As change has occurred, child welfare supervisors have necessarily interacted with a number of constituent groups: clients served by the agency; line staff assigned to the supervisor; the professional community and organizations and individuals providing contracted services; agency administrators and managers, and those financial and legal bodies under whose auspices the agency functions; and resource parents and child care providers. Therefore, the Children's Bureau asked the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement to examine the responsibilities and needs of supervisory staff and develop an organizational framework to support effective child welfare supervision. Our intent in undertaking this effort was to provide child welfare leadership with the strategies and tools they need to support their supervisors as they carry out their diverse activities and accomplish the mission of the agency.

What Approach Was Used to Identify an Emerging Model?

In approaching this task, we collected information from the most recent literature, experts in the field of child welfare, and currently practicing child welfare administrators and managers, supervisors, frontline practitioners, and trainers. Collecting detailed data from these multiple sources and perspectives greatly enhanced the reliability of our data, findings, and conclusions. The design and methodology used in carrying out this examination included the establishment of a working group selected from the following positions and organizations: agency administrators, regional/area managers, county directors, supervisors, caseworkers, training

managers, state foster care managers, Children’s Bureau staff, recruitment and retention grantees, and the Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center. Based on consultation with the working group and a comprehensive review of the literature in child welfare practice and supervision and other relevant fields, a list of supervisory responsibilities was developed. This list became a core component of a protocol used to interview frontline practitioners, supervisors, and administrators regarding their perspectives about the relative importance of these responsibilities and the obstacles to and supports of effective child welfare supervision. Additional information was collected through interviews with other experts in child welfare supervision and a survey of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement’s Peer Training Network members. The data collected from these sources and ongoing consultation with working group members resulted in an emerging model for and an organizational framework to support effective supervision in child welfare. Further detail concerning the methodology is provided in Section III.

Organization of this Report

This report, *Building a Model and Framework for Child Welfare Supervision*, is organized into three sections. Section I introduces the following seven elements of an emerging model of supervision in child welfare:

- the organization’s practice philosophy and approaches, clearly articulated in writing, and the statutory and policy requirements that shape agency practice;
- the identification of the functions and current job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors and acknowledgement of similarities and differences in staff members’ perceptions of the relative importance of those responsibilities;
- the centrality of building and maintaining supervisors’ relationships with their supervisees as well as with others in the organization and community to carrying out their responsibilities effectively;
- the necessity for explicit and manageable standards for caseload size and supervisor-supervisee ratios;
- specific expectations with regard to the frequency and format for supervision;
- the organization’s expectations for ongoing evaluation of frontline practitioners;
- support for supervisors in their roles as unit leaders and change agents.

Section II presents an integrated organizational framework consisting of four components required to empower child welfare supervisors to effectively carry out their administrative, educational, and supportive functions. These components include:

- an organizational culture that values and demonstrates support for the vital role supervisors play in ensuring positive outcomes for children, youth and families;
- a model of supervisory practice that reflects how the organization views the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of supervisors and includes accurate, written job descriptions;
- systematic recruitment and retention of individuals who are a “good fit” as frontline practitioners and supervisors and;

- a continuum of professional development opportunities for new and experienced supervisors that includes initial and ongoing training, peer support, mentors, and clinical consultation.

Section III incorporates supports useful to agencies in implementing the recommendations contained in this report. These include our interview protocols, useful for collecting information about staff perspectives regarding the responsibilities of child welfare supervisors, the priorities placed by staff on these responsibilities, and the obstacles to and supports for carrying out these responsibilities. Section III also includes the annotated results of our extensive literature review. This resource provides additional information from many of the publications cited in this report as well as other resources useful in implementing the recommendations contained in this document. Also included is a child welfare supervisory job description that provides an example to agencies as they further develop supervisory job descriptions.

In addition, Section III includes a brief description of the methodology we used to gather information for this report.

Throughout the report, italicized excerpts from our interviews with agency staff highlight and reinforce selected components of the proposed supervisory model and organizational framework. In addition, support in the literature is cited for aspects of both.

SECTION I

Elements of an Emerging Model for Child Welfare Supervision

“Supervisors are the Heart of Everything”

One of our key informants stressed, “Supervisors are the heart of everything. They empower their workers; they are the ones who make the system happen. They are pivotal to the direction of the agency.” The vital role that supervisors play in achieving the desired service outcomes of child safety, well-being, and permanency and preservation of families is emphasized throughout this document.

In speaking to the significance of supervision in the social work profession, Kadushin and Harkness note, “the function and process of supervision have achieved special importance in social work as contrasted with most other professions (2002:32).” They continue:

This prominence might be explained by some distinctive aspects of the profession [e.g., the agency-based nature of the majority of practice], the nature of its service delivery pattern [e.g., the distribution of services and supplies that the agency does not own and related external demands for accountability for use of resources, including funds], the problems with which it is concerned [e.g. problems presenting a danger to the community, such as mental illness, harm to children, and family breakdown], the clientele to whom service is offered [e.g., particularly those using services involuntarily], and the characteristics of social workers [e.g., the high proportion of untrained and inexperienced frontline practitioners]. (pp. 32-43).

Perhaps nowhere are these characteristics – practice based in bureaucratic agencies, delivery of services mandated and funded by external sources, problems involving high risk, involuntary clientele, and a high percentage of untrained, inexperienced frontline practitioners - more evident than in the field of child welfare. An additional challenge facing public child welfare agencies is that the supervisors are not always trained social workers.

Developing a Coherent Model of Supervision

Both our key informants and the literature stress not only the importance of the supervisory role in achieving desired service outcomes, but also the importance of developing “a coherent model of supervision, impart[ing] it to staff and rigorously evaluat[ing] its impact” (Sundet et al 2003; also Collins-Camargo 2006:83).

Wosket and Page (2001) emphasize that although supervision models can become “a strait jacket... that can feel unnatural or constricting,” such models have numerous advantages:

We should have one model of supervision for the agency—clear policies and procedures—so that we are all supervising from the same book and have the same expectations, not some looking at quantity and others at quality. – Supervisor

- providing knowledge and security;
- establishing a reliable and familiar framework that is well known and integrated [and that] can encourage innovation and flexibility;
- providing initial impetus, confidence, and direction for new supervisors;
- averting the danger of random eclecticism;
- building confidence, especially in the face of difficult challenges;
- managing doubts and insecurity; and
- providing techniques and intervention strategies. (pp. 16-18)

In addition, supervision models provide a “common language” for supervisors and supervisees and help supervisors conceptualize the process of supervision in a holistic manner (Tsui 2005:17). Tsui notes that there are many interpretations of the term “model of supervision,” and identifies 11 social work supervision models based on the structure of practice theory (pp. 19 -32). However, currently available research and theory do not provide firm conclusions favoring one supervisory model over another (Tsui 2005: 18).

While there are several models of supervision available, one specific to supervision in child welfare has not yet been developed. Such a model would incorporate the supervisory function and responsibilities distinctive to child welfare as well as address the unique, fluid context of child welfare practice and policy. A model of supervision specific to child welfare should be aligned with, support and advance the agency’s articulated model of practice and be consistent with the values of the agency. It must be emphasized that only through deliberate and conscious activity on the part of multiple departments within the agency can a model of supervision be developed and implemented.

Based upon our review of the literature, consultation with working group members and other experts in the field, and interviews with key informants, we have found emerging consensus that a model for child welfare supervision should:

1. clearly articulate in writing the organization’s practice philosophy and approach and acknowledge the statutory and policy requirements that shape agency practice;
2. identify the functions and specific job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors;
 - administrative supervision
 - educational supervision
 - supportive supervision
3. recognize the centrality of supervisors’ building and maintaining relationships with their supervisees and others to carrying out their supervisory responsibilities effectively;
4. mandate explicit and manageable standards for caseload size and supervisor-supervisee ratios;
5. define expectations with regard to the frequency and format for supervision of frontline practitioners;
6. clarify the organization’s expectations for ongoing evaluation of frontline practitioners;
7. support supervisors in their roles as unit leaders and change agents by:

- systematically including them in quality assurance activities, program evaluation, and redesign of information systems, forms, and procedures;
- training supervisors first for all policy and practice changes;
- involving them in the recruitment, selection, and training of new frontline practitioners; and
- frequently recognizing their own and their units' accomplishments.

Each of the seven elements of the emerging model for child welfare supervision is described below.

Element 1

Articulate in writing the organization's practice philosophy and approach.

Supervision of frontline child welfare practitioners occurs within the distinctive context of the agency's philosophy and preferred practice approaches and federal and state requirements regarding service delivery and desired outcomes for children and families. Therefore, a coherent model of child welfare supervision should articulate in writing an organization's philosophy and practice approaches and the statutory and policy requirements that define and shape agency practice.

For agencies needing assistance articulating a practice model, *Practice Model Framework: A Working Document* (Bordeaux 2008) is a valuable resource. Bordeaux states that the recommended elements of a child welfare practice model are agency mission, vision, and values; practice principles; standards of professional practice; and strategies, methods, and tools to integrate the practice principles, agency values, and standards of professional practice into daily practice (p. 2). She defines a practice model as follows:

At its most basic level, a child welfare practice model is a conceptual map and organizational ideology of how agency employees, families, and stakeholders should unite in creating a physical and emotional environment that focuses on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and their families. The practice model contains definitions and explanations regarding how the agency as a whole will work internally and partner with families, service providers, and other stakeholders in child welfare services. A practice model is the clear, written explanation of how the agency successfully functions. (2008:1)

Current child welfare literature indicates that preferred practice approaches are community-based, family-centered, grounded in family systems theory, and culturally competent (Milner, Mitchell, & Hornsby 2005). Preferred practice in child welfare also integrates aspects of a task-centered model (Rooney 1992:201-230), particularly formalizing the service contract, developing initial tasks, specifying target problems, establishing clear goals, and establishing time limits (tasks essential to developing case plans). According to the Children's Bureau and aligned with System of Care principles and findings from the Child and Family services reviews (CFSR), child welfare practice should be:

- child-focused
- family-centered
- individualized to meet the specific needs of children and families
- collaborative
- enhanced to strengthen parental capacity
- community-based
- culturally responsive, and
- outcome oriented. (Bordeaux 2008:2)

Child welfare practice philosophy and federal mandates give priority to protecting children in their own homes when possible, reunifying children with their families when out-of-home placement is

necessary, and providing permanency for children through guardianship or adoption when safe family reunification is not possible. At every phase of service delivery, the over-arching federally mandated outcomes of child safety, permanency, and well-being significantly shape practice goals, services, and decision-making and guide day to day supervisory practice in child welfare.

Element 2

Identify the functions and specific job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors.

Although requirements for education and training of persons employed as child supervisors and frontline practitioners vary from state to state, APHSA findings from a recent survey of state agencies include that in 29% of the responding states a social work license is required for supervisors (APHSA 2005:21). Schools of social work have long provided professional education and on-the-job training programs for staff in child welfare agencies. Therefore, the supervision model most familiar to child welfare professionals, including those with whom we spoke, is the social work supervision model developed by Alfred Kadushin (1976). Kadushin based his model on the concept of a three-legged stool, with all three legs, or functions—administrative, educational, and supportive supervision—equally important. The supervisory functions defined in Kadushin’s model have been integrated into other models, such as the Interactional Supervision model developed by Shulman (1993).

In the most recent edition of *Supervision in Social Work* (2002), Kadushin and Harkness point out the “complementary nature” and “overlap” of these three functions: “All are necessary if the ultimate objective of supervision is to be achieved” (p. 20). As they note, specific supervisory responsibilities frequently fulfill more than one function. For example, when supervisors facilitate a group case review or peer group supervision, they are typically fulfilling all three supervisory functions.

Kadushin and Harkness define the critical supervisory functions as follows:

Administrative Supervision – its goal is to ensure adherence to agency policy and procedure by attending to their correct and appropriate implementation. By integrating and coordinating supervisees’ work with others in the agency, supervisors provide a work context that permits supervisees to do their jobs effectively.

Educational Supervision – its goal is to address the knowledge, attitude, and skills required to do the job effectively.

Supportive Supervision – its goal is to improve worker morale and job satisfaction by helping with job-related discouragement and discontent and giving supervisees a sense of worth as professionals, a sense of belonging in the agency, and a sense of security in their performance. (Kadushin & Harkness 2002: 20-21)

In identifying an emerging model for child welfare supervision, we have relied on Kadushin’s model. Building upon his definition of the three supervisory functions, we sought information from the literature, our working group, other experts on child welfare supervision, and interviews with key informants about the current job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors. *One important*

outcome of this project was finding strong consensus that the 31 job responsibilities presented below¹, organized by Kadushin's three major functions, are current and inclusive.

As discussed in the methodology section (see Section III), we viewed defining the key responsibilities of supervisors as a critical step in identifying a model for child welfare supervision. We interviewed key informants in various child welfare positions—supervisors, frontline practitioners, and administrators/managers. ***Based on the literature review and discussions with child welfare experts, we expected the supervisors we interviewed to report that being a leader and/or a change agent are currently highly valued components of child welfare supervision and that time for these activities should be protected. Those interviewed instead emphasized the importance of providing systemic organizational support for supervisors' clinical supervision of their workers' practice.*** Their emphasis highlights the critical importance of child welfare supervisors' educational and supportive functions as they strive to ensure that frontline practitioners with a range of educational degrees and prior experience master and apply relevant social work knowledge and skills in their day-to-day practice with children and families.

In addition, we found both similarities and differences in supervisors', frontline practitioners' and administrators' perspectives regarding the relative importance of supervisors' job responsibilities (i.e., “Most Important,” “Important,” “Not Important”). Although further research is needed to clarify the extent and implications of these differing perspectives, the differences may reflect the job-related needs experienced by staff in these three positions. These differing perspectives may contribute to organizations' difficulties in establishing consensus about the functions and job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors. For example, supervisors were more likely than administrators to rate educational supervision responsibilities as most important, while caseworkers and administrators were more likely than supervisors to rate anticipating and managing risks as among the most important job responsibilities. All three groups were very likely to rate case staffings/case reviews as among the most important responsibilities. However, when most important and important ratings were combined, all three groups fully agreed on fifteen of the thirty-one job responsibilities (See Table 1).

¹ Based upon the literature review and our consultation with working group members and other child welfare experts, 30 child welfare supervisory job responsibilities were identified and subsequently included in the protocols for interviews with key informants (see Section III). In analyzing our findings, it became evident that an additional responsibility should be included in the area of educational supervision, resulting in a total of 31.

Table 1. Job Responsibilities Ranked "Most Important (MI)/Important (I)" by Kadushin Categories

Job Responsibility	
	% of interviewees rating item MI/I
Administrative Supervision	
Recruit, select, train or arrange for training and retain staff	100%
Identify, manage and evaluate frontline practitioners' performance	100%
Facilitate communication and collaboration	100%
Build and maintain working relationships with other units in agency	100%
Manage caseloads in the supervisor's unit	100%
Manage time and workflow for supervisor	100%
Monitor frontline practitioner's responsibilities to supervisor	100%
Provide leadership to their unit	100%
Provide leadership within the organization	100%
Anticipate, address and manage change within the unit	95%
Interpret and influence the organizational culture within the unit	89%
Manage time and workflow for supervisees	89%
Provide leadership within the community	89%
Influence the agency	84%
Anticipate, address, and manage change within agency	84%
Use management information systems (MIS)	79%
Educational Supervision	
Provide regular case reviews and staffing	100%
Address ethics in caseworker practice and model professional ethics	100%
Address ethics in supervision	100%
Assure ongoing professional development for supervisor	100%
Develop and monitor frontline practitioners' family-centered practice competence	95%
Promote practitioners' self-reflection, critical thinking and case decision-making	95%
Demonstrate culturally-competent supervision and develop and monitor practitioners' cultural competence	84%
Facilitate ongoing professional development for frontline practitioners	89%
Promote evidence-informed practice	84%
Help frontline practitioners apply new knowledge from training, workshops in their day-to-day practice	84%
Monitor and provide resources to assist frontline practitioners in applying understanding and current knowledge regarding child development	(not ranked, added after analysis)
Supportive Supervision	
Prevent and address stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout for supervisor	100%
Anticipate issues related to safety and manage risk	100%
Prevent and address stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout for frontline practitioners	95%
Build and maintain morale and enhance frontline practitioners' job satisfaction	95%

We have categorized each job responsibility as administrative, educational, or supportive. The category selected was based on the primary function the responsibility typically fulfills. However, the overlapping and complementary nature of these functions as described by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) cannot be over-emphasized. For example, when supervisors interpret organizational culture to their supervisees, they provide both education and support. It should be emphasized that a child welfare supervisory model should recognize the need for balance among these three functions.

The job responsibilities are described briefly below.

Administrative Supervision Responsibilities

Recruit, select, train or arrange for training, and retain staff. The recruitment, selection, and training of frontline practitioners are ongoing activities critical to the quality of child welfare services. Our interviews indicate that persons other than an agency supervisor, such as human resources personnel and agency training staff, often carry out aspects of these activities. However, the retention of frontline practitioners has consistently been found to be associated with the quality of supervision and having a supportive and consultative supervisor (Dickinson & Perry 2002; Jacquet, et al. 2007; Renner, Porter, & Preister 2008). Clearly, staff retention is related to a supervisor's effective performance of all three supervisory functions.

Identify, manage, and evaluate frontline practitioners' performance. On an ongoing basis, an effective supervisor must be able to openly discuss and describe what a child welfare practitioner is doing that contributes to desired outcomes or creates problems; identify why a particular behavior should be continued or is problematic; specify what the employee should do similarly or differently; and outline consequences for succeeding or failing to maintain or change behaviors (Hughes, et al. 1991; Salus 2004). Supervisors must reward excellent performance as well as identify, document, and address performance problems and staff impairment as required in agency personnel practices (Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare 2009:10; Hopkins & Austin 2004).

The responsibility of the supervisor in performance reviews is always to be aware of the quality of work under the ethical imperative: "Do no harm." — Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare 2009:11

Facilitate communication and collaboration.

Supervisors share responsibility with other agency supervisors, managers, and administrators for communication within their units, across units, with community agencies and referral networks, and with the public. They also facilitate information sharing and collaboration with foster parents, agency attorneys, guardians ad litem, contractual service providers, and others involved in service provision.

Communication between units is very important. We all need to get along. In our agency, some of the people in different units used to not speak. Our supervisor has had a lot to do with changing that. - Caseworker

Build and maintain working relationships with other units in agency. To facilitate timely and effective services, collaborative relationships among the agency's units must be intentionally developed and maintained. Supervisors carry the primary responsibility for these collaborative relationships.

Manage caseloads in the supervisor's unit. To assure timely and appropriate services, supervisors manage case assignment and monitor services within their units. Assignment of cases takes into account policy regarding reasonable and equitable caseload size, staff members' experience and abilities, and factors such as case type and complexity.

Manage time and workflow for supervisor. Supervisors must not only know time management principles, but also persevere in applying them, including determining what investments of time will result in time saved and setting aside time for activities that require concentration.

Monitor frontline practitioners' responsibilities to supervisor. For supervision to be effective, supervisors rely on their supervisees to share information about their cases with them in a timely way, engage in ongoing self-assessment concerning their training needs and the sources and extent of their stress, and develop an agenda for regularly scheduled supervision. Supervisees should participate in planning the agenda for supervision. By identifying their needs for learning, emotional support, and assistance with administrative issues, supervisees actively engage in reflection and critical thinking about their practice and share ownership for their professional development and job performance.

Supervision is a two-way street. You need to connect with the worker, learn information about the families, and help them develop strategies. To get caught not knowing something about a case is bad. – Supervisor

Provide leadership to their unit. Child welfare practitioners are typically assigned to a unit that is supervised by one supervisor. Supervisors provide leadership to their unit by focusing on shared commitment to the organizations' service mission and to high quality services; defining best practice; serving as a role model with regard to professional ethics and standards, collaboration, and open communication; and promoting a positive and mutually respectful work culture. Promoting a positive work culture includes supervisory behaviors such as acknowledging practitioners' efforts, effective performance, and accomplishments; modeling high practice standards; being sensitive to staff needs and feelings; supporting a climate of trust and openness; and using mistakes as an opportunity to teach and learn (CO DHS 1994).

The supervisor sets the tone and the standards for caseworkers. When the unit has a strong leader, the workers in the unit perform better. – Supervisor

Provide leadership within the organization. Within the organization, supervisors are often asked to lend their knowledge and expertise to task groups as well as to initiatives regarding staff recruitment and service coordination, improvement, and/or development. Developing and maintaining positive ongoing relationships within the agency facilitates opportunities for supervisors to provide leadership through such efforts.

Organizational climate is the best protective factor—there is a real sense that “we’re in this together.” – Administrator

Anticipate, address, and manage change within the unit. Change is a constant in child welfare policy and practice. Therefore, supervisors must anticipate new circumstances within their units; involve them in generating ideas and plans for implementation of change; encourage receptiveness to change; and monitor and address its effects.

Interpret and influence the organizational culture within the unit. Although “organizations rarely think of human behavior as connected to the organization” (Carroll 2001: 61), supervisors not only must think of these connections but also interpret the organization’s formal and informal norms, values, practices, language, etc. to staff in their units. By their words and actions, supervisors should facilitate a positive work culture within the unit that may or may not fully mirror the organizational culture.

Manage time and workflow for supervisees. Managing the quantity of work, sequencing tasks appropriately, and meeting legal and other deadlines are ongoing challenges for child welfare staff. Although more experienced practitioners typically manage their own time and workflow, supervisors coach new staff as they learn these skills and monitor experienced practitioners’ management of time and workflow.

Provide leadership within the community. Supervisors interact with the community on a daily basis, including foster parents, advocacy groups, governmental agencies and service providers. Maintaining positive relationships and taking a leadership role provides opportunity for improving child and family outcomes.

Influence the agency. Supervisors provide a bridge between administrative/management and frontline practitioners. They continuously interact with personnel at multiple organizational levels as well as with families and children, community service providers, court personnel, out-of-home caregivers, and others. Thus supervisors are in a pivotal position to: assess what they observe and learn regarding client, staff, and community needs and issues; communicate their observations and concerns to others in the agency; and propose and advocate needed change in agency goals, policy, structure, processes, resources, and short- and long-term planning. Agency leadership must actively use various communication opportunities, such as staff meetings or intranets, to validate and support supervisors’ responsibility to communicate up and down the organizational hierarchy.

Supervisors’ input that influences the agency is how we develop things that work well—their input reflects what they know that others don’t. – Administrator

Anticipate, address and manage change within the agency. In addition to anticipating change within their unit, supervisors must also anticipate new circumstances within their agencies. Supervisors must provide information and input to administrators and to frontline practitioners regarding changes in policy, practice, personnel, and organizational structure.

Use management information systems (MIS). In the past two decades, MIS data have become important to supervisors for evaluation of permanency and other service outcomes, caseload management, and identification of training and resource needs and of policy problems. MIS can assist supervisors in understanding how their units’ performance contributes to the overall agency performance.

Educational Supervision Responsibilities

Provide regular case reviews and staffings. Scheduled individual and group reviews and staffings of frontline workers' practice provide significant opportunities for supervisors to identify and respond to individual and collective educational needs. Supervisors should create an open, safe environment for peer review of case activities and progress, thus facilitating practitioners' active participation in peer learning and teaching, giving and receiving interpersonal support, encouragement, and mutual aid, even as quality assurance concerns are addressed.

Case staffings and case reviews are the bread and butter of supervision in terms of protecting the safety and well-being of children and families and bringing children to permanency. – Supervisor

Address ethics in caseworker practice. Perhaps more than any other area of professional practice, the ethics of supervisors and the staff assigned to them are intertwined. It is critical for frontline practitioners to learn ethical principles regarding confidentiality, personal and professional boundaries, potential conflicts of interest, and impaired functioning. Supervisors' integrity and trustworthiness are necessary, although not sufficient, to ensure ethical practice by staff.

My supervisor's boundaries and ethics are so strong that I'm not even aware of what must be obstacles for her. This is powerful, because I'm free to focus on my own work and not have additional concerns about her. – Caseworker

Model professional ethics in supervision. For staff who have not earned a professional degree or previously worked in human services, adhering to professional ethics requires experiencing and observing ethical behavior.

Supervisors must have insight to their own strengths and areas of need in order to work on improving these and bettering themselves. – Administrator

Assure ongoing professional development for supervisor. Supervisors' own professional development may be ignored not only by the agency, but also by supervisors themselves. In our interviews, supervisors were much more likely to view their supervisees' professional development as an important job responsibility than they were their own. Supervisors must create plans for their own professional development and identify and take steps toward reaching their professional goals. Agency leadership and management must honor and support those plans.

Develop and monitor frontline practitioners' family-centered practice competence through supervision, the supervisory relationship, and other educational resources. Recent decades have seen a major shift in emphasis from child-centered to family-centered child welfare practice. Supervisors must help supervisees appreciate the importance of the family, focus on a family's strengths as well as its difficulties, and develop knowledge and skills in family assessment, family-centered interventions, and connecting families to resources that address their individualized needs. The supervisory relationship provides an opportunity to model a strengths-based approach to assessment, problem solving, and clear identification of behaviors and expectations to enhance performance.

Reflective practice and critical thinking help improve caseworkers' work—lots of self-reflection and critical thinking is needed. For example, are you too involved emotionally? Are you projecting personal things onto your client? What's driving your decisions? – Supervisor

Promote practitioners' self-reflection, critical thinking and case decision-making. Schon (1983) and others (e.g., Deal 2004; Webb 1996) have encouraged professionals to continually reflect on their patterns of action, the situations in which they practice, and on the case practice knowledge implicit in their practice activities. For child welfare staff, the ongoing development of skills in reflecting on one's own practice individually, with a supervisor, and with peers, and in applying critical thinking to decisions regarding one's practice is critical. Supervisors facilitate and reinforce these important skills as practitioners confront unique and uncertain practice situations.

Demonstrate culturally competent supervision and develop and monitor practitioners' cultural competence. Effectively serving and supporting families and children requires the knowledge and skills to work with those from diverse backgrounds and varied social cultures. Supervisors must demonstrate a value for and skills in cultural competence as well as facilitate practitioners' development of cultural competence as an essential aspect of their practice.

Facilitate ongoing professional development for frontline practitioners. Professional development includes continually acquiring and applying professional knowledge and skills as well as planning for one's professional career. Supervisors should create a professional development plan specific to and with the involvement of each supervisee, and encourage and facilitate opportunities that support their supervisees' professional goals.

We can encourage staff to do better and to stay if we are interested in their career and their skills.

– Supervisor

Promote evidence-informed practice. Supervisors must reinforce frontline practitioners' use of evidence-informed practice models. Evidence-informed practice “draws on rigorous reviews of practice-related claims, . . . attends to ethical issues . . . and helps both professionals and clients gain access to practice- and/or policy-related research findings and critically appraise what they find” (Shlonsky & Gambrill 2005:311).

Help frontline practitioners apply new knowledge from training, workshops, and other educational programs in their day-to-day practice. Integrating new learning into practice requires that practitioners regularly and self-consciously apply new knowledge and skills in specific situations in their caseloads. Supervisors play a primary role in facilitating this ongoing process. To perform this task, the supervisor must stay open to their own and others' continuous growth and development.

Monitor and, when needed, provide educational resources to support supervisees' ability to understand and apply current knowledge regarding child development, including theory and empirically-based knowledge regarding attachment, separation, and loss. Frontline practitioners must be well grounded in this knowledge to comprehend the rationales that undergird the desired service outcomes of child safety, well-being, and permanency. Moreover, it is essential that supervisees have a working understanding of the complex ways in which this knowledge must be applied daily in child welfare practice decision-making, such as in selecting appropriate out-of-home placements for children and planning family visits for children in custody.

Supportive Supervision Responsibilities

Prevent and address stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout for supervisor. While agencies must develop and have available a variety of tools and approaches to reduce stress, supervisors are responsible for monitoring their own stress levels, signs of secondary traumatic stress, and burnout, and indicators that their functioning in the supervisory role may be becoming impaired. They then must immediately use agency and other resources to address emerging problems in these areas.

We recently lost a supervisor. Some feel she was burning out and that's why she made an error she normally would not have made. When you don't pay attention to stress and burnout, workers and supervisors can make mistakes. It really affects how they are doing their job, the energy they have, and how they make decisions. – Supervisor

Anticipate issues related to safety and manage risk. The potential for anger and violence in many of the families and neighborhoods served by child welfare

practitioners requires that supervisors be knowledgeable, skillful, and sensitive in anticipating and managing risk for clients, frontline practitioners, and themselves. Relevant tasks include ensuring that case information is current and risk assessments are updated as new information becomes available or case situations change. Current information is essential to the ongoing assessment of risk to children and to making informed decisions regarding children's safety. Supervisors and staff should always have each others' current scheduling and contact information available and be familiar with agency protocols for involving law enforcement and using other protective measures. In addition, counseling and support must be readily accessible for frontline practitioners who have been threatened or injured (Salus 2004).

Prevent and address stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout for frontline practitioners. Child welfare practice is emotional, demanding, and often depleting. Child welfare practitioners directly observe others' distress, feel vulnerable as they make life-altering decisions, and experience concerns about their own and their families' personal safety. Supervisors are responsible for working directly with practitioners and

others in the agency to identify sources of stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout, and to prevent, decrease, or otherwise address them.

I was once told that I didn't do "emotional" supervision and didn't look at workers' feelings. That has stuck with me as something I want to change. Looking at what the worker is experiencing is important. – Supervisor

Build and maintain morale and enhance frontline practitioners' job satisfaction. With both individual supervisees and the team/unit, supervisors are responsible to provide a supportive and open climate by acknowledging practitioners' efforts and effective performance, conveying the value and importance of their work with families and children, treating them with sensitivity and respect, and helping them "become masters of their immediate environment" (Hughes, et al. 1991).

Element 3

Recognize the centrality of building and maintaining relationships with supervisees and others to carrying out supervisory responsibilities effectively.

Success in carrying out each child welfare supervisory responsibility depends on supervisors' capacity to develop and maintain positive, open, mutually respectful professional relationships with their supervisees as well as with others in the organization and community. Developing professional relationships requires time, commitment, interpersonal skill, and understanding of the multiple complex factors that affect these relationships, including authority, organizational culture, and personal needs.

My supervisor is a great support. I have worked with the same manager since I've been here. I'm still here at this agency because of her. I want to give the same kind of support to my own workers. – Supervisor

The literature consistently emphasizes the importance of relationships in supervision. For example, citing Fox (1983, 1989) and Kaiser (1997), Tsui asserts, "The supervisory relationship is the core of social work supervision" (2005:39). He recommends the reconceptualization of the supervisory relationship "as a multifaceted relationship involving the agency, the supervisor, the supervisee, and the client, within a cultural context" (p. 41). In discussing his Interactional Supervision model, Shulman (1993) states an assumption underlying his model:

. . . there are parallels between the dynamics of supervision and any other helping relationship . . . the way the supervisor demonstrates the helping relationship with workers will influence the manner in which staff members relate to clients . . . More is 'caught' by staff than taught by the supervisor. . . a supervisor models a view of helping relationships through his or her interaction with staff. (pp. 6-7)

Kadushin and Harkness emphasize that the supervisor's relationship with the supervisee has been found to predict practice outcomes and affect the development of counseling skills (p. 195) and has "crucial significance for learning in supervision" (2002:193).

We are in a small community, and it's important for supervisors to help facilitate relationships with providers for new workers. – Supervisor

In addition, supervisors also facilitate connections between their supervisees and other staff within the organization, foster parents, and community-based service providers. It is important for agency leadership to consider supervisors' building and maintenance of internal and external relationships when hiring, conducting performance evaluations, and designing appropriate training.

Element 4

Mandate explicit, manageable standards for caseload size and for supervisor-supervisee ratios.

When frontline practitioners' caseloads are too high, they are not only unmanageable for practitioners. Supervisors also cannot adequately monitor their supervisees' case activities and progress and thus the desired quality of services and engagement with children, youth and families may not be achieved. In order to assure that child welfare supervisors have time to develop and maintain a professional relationship with their supervisees, work one-on-one in a planful way with frontline practitioners, and carry out their responsibilities for accountability to the agency and to the community, a model for child welfare supervision must also provide for explicit manageable supervisor-supervisee ratios (Jacquet et al. 2007; Juby & Scannapieco 2007; Robison 2006; Weaver, et al. 2007).

Supervisors cannot be sufficiently familiar with the cases assigned to their unit to adequately monitor their supervisees' cases when their supervisees' caseloads are unreasonably high. And when supervisors are assigned an unmanageable number of supervisees, they can neither provide regular, individualized supervisory attention to each supervisee nor adequately monitor their supervisees' cases.

Both the Child Welfare League of America (1995, 1999) and the Council on Accreditation (2006) provide guidelines and standards for child welfare frontline practitioner caseload size and supervisor-supervisee ratios.

Element 5

Define expectations with regard to the frequency and format for supervision of frontline practitioners.

To assure individualized, uninterrupted supervisor interaction with each supervisee as well as regular opportunities for supervisees to learn from their peers and receive and give mutual aid, a model for child welfare supervision should define expectations regarding the frequency and format of frontline practitioner supervision. Supervisors should be held accountable to adhere to the defined expectations of frequency and format for meeting with supervisees and be encouraged to identify and address obstacles to accomplishing this task.

Both regularly scheduled individual and group supervision/case reviews should be incorporated in the model of supervision for frontline practitioners. Peer group supervision provides efficient, regular access to multiple perspectives for learning, the development of group cohesion and a sense of belonging among practitioners, an appreciation that these are “our” problems rather than “my” problems” (Kadushin & Harkness 2002: 391-399), and a decrease in practitioner burnout (Marks & Hixon 1986).

Mentors can share their experiences and relate them to what someone is going through. It's helpful to relate to someone else's experiences. Mentors can take their experiences and knowledge and help others individualize it. – Supervisor

Child welfare supervision should also be planned rather than provided in a crisis or an “on-the-run” approach (Collins-Camargo 2006:82-83; Kadushin & Harkness 2002: 143-146; North Carolina Division of Social Services and the Family and Children’s Resource Program 2008:5). Regularly scheduled supervisory time “can help workers better prioritize issues and plan their own days... when workers know their planned time with their supervisor will be protected as much as possible, they begin to develop lists of questions” (North Carolina Division of Social Services and the Family and Children’s Resource Program 2008:5). In addition, regularly scheduled supervision facilitates a focus on educational and supportive supervision rather than on crisis management.

Recent state supervision initiatives have explored the use of experienced frontline staff as mentors to less experienced caseworkers and of “coaching units” for new frontline practitioners (Robison 2006). A supervision model should also allow for flexible supplemental resources, such as structured crisis debriefings (Salus 2004).

Element 6

Clarify expectations for ongoing evaluation of frontline practitioners.

Shulman emphasizes that a supervisor’s evaluation of a worker’s performance “is one of the most important elements of the supervisor’s role, and when handled well, it makes a major contribution to the worker’s development and to client services” (1993:203). However, when formal evaluations are handled inconsistently throughout an organization with regard to frequency, format, supportive atmosphere, and substantive focus, child welfare supervisors’ efforts to shape supervisees’ job performance and address performance problems are seriously undermined. When agency expectations regarding the evaluation of frontline practitioners’ performance are not explicit and consistently applied, supervisors have neither the process nor the authority to identify and address supervisees’ performance difficulties. When the organization does not provide supervisors with the process and authority to address supervisees’ performance difficulties, they do not have the means to impact the quality of service that children and families receive. Therefore, a model for child welfare supervision should identify specific criteria and standards for performance evaluations of frontline practitioners that relate expectations to agency objectives, are consistent with the agency’s practice philosophy and model and include individual professional development plans.

Element 7

Support supervisors in their roles as unit leaders and change agents.

The emerging model for child welfare supervision also empowers supervisors to influence the agency as leaders and change agents (Cearly 2004; Children’s Rights & NCYL 2007; Dawson 1998; NRCOI 2007; Shanock & Eisenberger 2006). When an organization’s practices and/or policies exclude supervisors from such activities, it clearly conveys a de-valuing of their pivotal role in the organization, their expertise, and their firsthand understanding of frontline practice issues and practitioners’ and clients’ needs and concerns. Therefore, the model necessarily incorporates

- systematically including them in quality assurance activities, program evaluation, and redesign of information systems, forms, and procedures;
- training supervisors first for all policy and practice changes;
- involving supervisors in the recruitment, selection, and training of new frontline practitioners (NRCOI 2007; CO DHS 1994; Strand 2008; Dickinson 2007); and
- frequently recognizing supervisors’ own and their units’ accomplishments.

The nature and degree of supervisors’ involvement in the activities identified above will vary among organizations, ranging, for example, from having supervisors directly provide training to frontline practitioners to having supervisors create and implement a training plan with each practitioner in their unit (CO DHS 1994). However, through supervisors’ experiences with frontline practitioners, they have a front row view of practice situations in which agency policy is not having the desired effects as well as situations for which appropriate policy has not yet been developed. Therefore, organizationally, supervisors are in a critical position to identify policy issues and needs and propose and advocate for relevant changes. Similarly, supervisors directly observe the degree to which agency systems, such as information systems, and tools, such as forms, either facilitate or undermine efficient and effective service delivery.

Supervisors have their thumbs on the pulse of practice. Supervisors have to take a leadership role—they have a key role in shaping and developing policies and practices. – Administrator

Agency administrators and managers must recognize that supervisors’ observations, knowledge, and expertise are valuable resources upon which child welfare agencies can systematically draw in evaluating programs, policies, and infrastructure and in developing and implementing necessary changes. Kadushin and Harkness stress, “The supervisor is in a strategic position to act as a change agent. Standing between administration and the workers, he or she can actively influence administration to make changes and influence workers to accept them” (2002:75)

SECTION II

Components of an Organizational Framework That Supports Effective Supervision in Child Welfare

A Roadmap to Support Effective Supervision

Given the complex, rapidly changing environment in which child welfare supervisors practice, evolving federal and state requirements regarding service delivery and desired outcomes for children and families, and the pivotal role supervisors play in incorporating such changes into day to day practice, agency leadership must provide supervisors with the systemic organizational support they need to be effective in their work. Designing and delivering this support to supervisors is a leadership activity, one that can be supported by other organizational units such as training, human resources, and information technology, but one that must be lead by top administrators. Child welfare supervisors face many serious obstacles to effectively carrying out their job responsibilities. While insufficient time and resources were mentioned frequently during interviews, many other obstacles have been identified and must be addressed by agency leadership.

In this section we present an integrated organizational framework to support effective child welfare supervision that can serve as a roadmap for agency leadership as they think through ways to build and sustain effective child welfare supervision in their agencies. This framework builds on previous work conducted by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement as well as information we gathered from our literature search, interviews, and survey. The framework:

- addresses the perceived obstacles to effective child welfare supervision identified by child welfare agency supervisors, administrators, and caseworkers, experts in the field, and current literature;
- takes into account the essential functions and job responsibilities of child welfare supervisors identified in Section I; and
- incorporates key current supervisory principles.

The framework identifies the following four organizational components required to empower child welfare supervisors to effectively carry out their administrative, educational, and supportive functions:

- an organizational culture that values and demonstrates support for the vital role supervisors play in ensuring positive outcomes for children, youth and families;
- a model of supervisory practice that reflects how the organization views the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of supervisors and includes accurate, written job descriptions;
- systematic recruitment and retention of individuals who are a “good fit” as frontline practitioners and supervisors;
- a continuum of professional development opportunities for new and experienced supervisors that includes initial and ongoing training, peer support, mentors, and clinical consultation.

Several activities are included to elaborate ways agencies might implement the recommended components, along with illustrative excerpts from interviews with key informants, information from the literature, and examples of demonstration projects and other initiatives that provide encouragement and guidance for achieving effective supervisory practice in child welfare.

The greatest supports to me are my supervisor and staff. I use them as a gauge on policy changes. My supervisor provides encouragement and caseworkers provide feedback. And the workgroups I've been on have been empowering—I work with people at the state level and can see some change. – Supervisor

Component I

An organizational culture that values and demonstrates support for the vital role supervisors play in ensuring positive outcomes for children, youth and families.

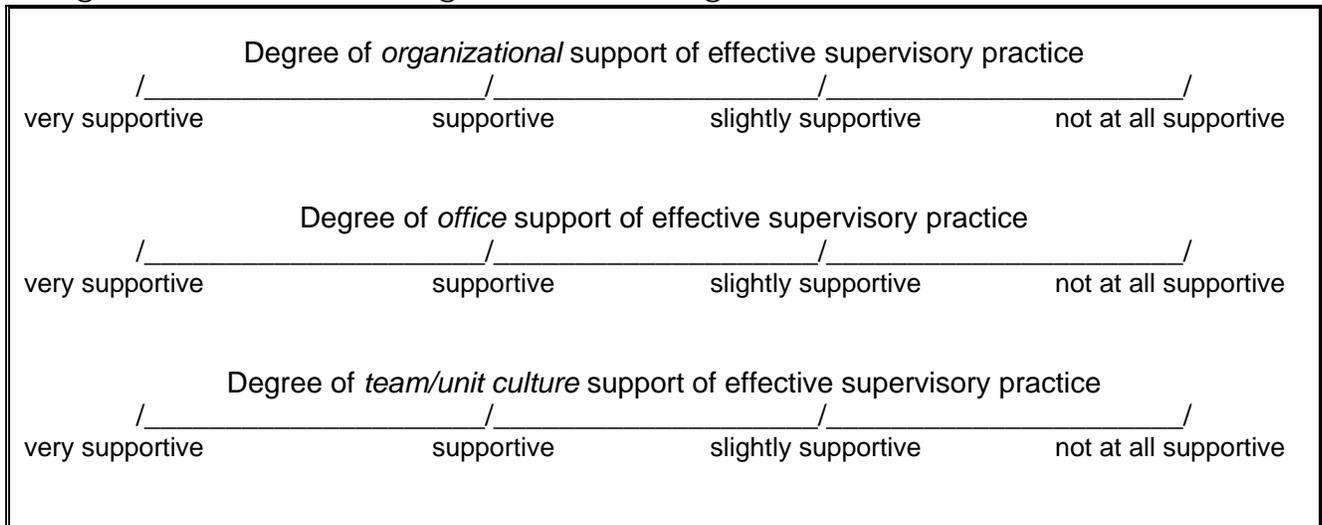
When a supervisor's pivotal role is not highly valued and actively supported within the organizational culture, the supervisor's authority, effectiveness, and morale will be undermined. In addition, when the organization fails to clearly acknowledge the centrality of the role of supervisors to the achievement of desired service outcomes, it will most likely also fail to make meeting supervisors' needs a priority, which may further contribute to its supervisors' ineffectiveness.

The connection between supervision and worker practice, as well as client outcomes, has been empirically documented. – Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center for Child Protection 2005: 6

Assess Organizational Support for Supervisors. To build a culture that effectively supports supervisory practice, the organization must first identify how it currently conceptualizes the child welfare supervisors' role, functions, responsibilities, and expectations. Such an assessment should identify how the current operational definition of supervision supports the current and projected future needs of frontline practitioners, families served by the organization, supervisory staff, and organizational leaders and managers. Information should also be sought concerning resources (e.g., technology, including internal MIS such as SACWIS data and funding) that could support supervisors and others in carrying out their responsibilities. An assessment can help determine if the conceptualization of the role must change, and if so, how. For example, changes may be necessary because the current conceptualization of the supervisory role and responsibilities is outdated and no longer fully relevant to organizational and practice needs, or because the conceptualization is too broad to effectively carry out, or too narrow, excluding essential supervisory responsibilities.

A general survey of all supervisors may help the agency focus on those areas which are creating the most stress for supervisors as priority areas to address. Agencies could place themselves somewhere along a continuum that rates organizational, office and team/unit culture from "very supportive" of effective supervisory practice to "not at all supportive" (see Figure 1). This would best be accomplished through anonymous feedback from supervisors indicating how supported they feel.

Figure 1. How is our organization doing?



Completing an assessment to determine the organization’s current level of support can identify activities and resources that facilitate, as well as obstacles that undermine supervisors’ success and must be addressed. Identifying obstacles to and supports for effective supervision provides agencies specific information upon which plans for change can be built. The use of a brief survey instrument helps focus the collection and analysis of information and assures that relevant areas are examined in the assessment. The interview protocol used in this project can easily be adapted for use in such an assessment (see Appendix C); an adapted data collection tool is included in Table 2 below. Designed to gather information from multiple perspectives (e.g., supervisors, caseworkers, administrators) concerning supervisors’ role and responsibilities, it also allows respondents to rate the relative importance of those responsibilities (e.g., most important, important, not important, not applicable/not aware) from their perspectives.

Table 2. Job Responsibility Data Collection Table

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware	Obstacles to achieving this responsibility	Supports to achieving this responsibility
1. Recruit, select, train or arrange for training and retain staff						
2. Identify, manage and evaluate frontline practitioners' performance						
3. Facilitate communication and collaboration						
4. Build and maintain working relationships with other units in agency						
5. Manage caseloads in the supervisor's unit						
6. Manage time and workflow for supervisor						
7. Monitor frontline practitioner's responsibilities to supervisor						
8. Provide leadership to their unit						
9. Provide leadership within the organization						
10. Anticipate, address and manage change within the unit						
11. Interpret and influence the organizational culture within the unit						
12. Manage time and workflow for supervisees						
13. Provide leadership within the community						
14. Influence the agency						
15. Anticipate, address, and manage change within agency						
16. Use management information systems (MIS)						
17. Provide regular case reviews and staffing						
18. Address ethics in caseworker practice and model professional ethics						
19. Address ethics in supervision						
20. Assure ongoing professional development for supervisor						
21. Develop and monitor frontline practitioners' family-centered practice competence						
22. Promote practitioners self-reflection, critical thinking and case decision-making						
23. Demonstrate culturally-competent supervision and develop and monitor practitioners' cultural competence						
24. Facilitate ongoing professional development for frontline practitioners						
25. Promote evidence-informed practice						
26. Help frontline practitioners apply new knowledge from training, workshops in their day-to-day practice						
27. Monitor and provide resources to assist frontline practitioners in applying knowledge of child development						
28. Prevent and address stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout for supervisor						
29. Anticipate issues related to safety and manage risk						
30. Prevent and address stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout for frontline practitioners						
31. Build and maintain morale and enhance frontline practitioners' job satisfaction						

This protocol is intended to identify current organizational obstacles and supports to effective supervision as well as the needs of supervisors and others (e.g., caseworkers, administrators, others) who interact regularly with them and rely on supervisors for their own job performance.

Workers rely on supervisors as their first line for every question that needs an answer. – Administrator

Information for this assessment may be collected through individual face-to-face and/or telephone interviews, focus groups, distributing a survey to individuals by mail or email, or a combination of methods. Analysis can be conducted by simply tallying the number of responses in each category (most important, important, etc) for each responsibility and by identifying commonalities in the obstacles or supports reported by survey participants. In a large agency, an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey could be used to administer the survey and automatically tally the results. The results of the survey can be shared with a workgroup of administrators and supervisors to suggest steps in addressing obstacles and expanding supports.

Think about it. Supervisors influence virtually everything in child welfare. They affect how policies are followed and what practices are encouraged. They set the tone and expectations in the work environment to such an extent that they are sometimes called the ‘keepers of the culture’ for their agencies. They influence employee turnover (or lack thereof) more than any other factor. Much of the data legislators and policy-makers rely on to make decisions come, directly or indirectly, from supervisors.

How well supervisors do their jobs affects nearly every outcome the child welfare systems seeks, including the timeliness with which we respond to reports of child maltreatment, the well-being of children in foster care, and the rate at which children are reunified with their parents. (North Carolina Division of Social Services and the Family and Children’s Resource Program 2008:1)

Recognize and Reward Good Work.

Those with whom we consulted emphasized that building an organizational culture that actively values the vital role of supervisors requires that good work be consistently acknowledged and rewarded. Success as well as failure must be studied and learned from. These assertions regarding the critical importance of a positive work climate within the organization and unit are well-supported in the literature (CO DHS 1994; Dill 2007; Hughes et al. 1991).

Frontline supervision in public child welfare is the lynchpin connecting the state agency, worker practice, and positive outcomes for children and families. It is a key vehicle for desired practice enhancement and organization improvement – Collins-Camargo 2005

At any level of the organization, focusing only on mistakes affects staff morale. As one administrator interviewed in this project noted, “We struggle with this focus within the state structure—upper management only calls about mistakes, not with praise.” In a positive organizational and team/unit culture, not only are mistakes used as opportunities to teach and learn, but successes as well as failures are acknowledged, studied, and learned from. For example, in case reviews and staffings, it is important to review cases that are progressing well and to identify the factors that contribute to progress, such as a staff member’s persistent efforts and competent and timely responses.

Standards for Supervision in Child Welfare (CO DHS 1994: p. 14) emphasizes that supervisors should be expected to “establish a positive work climate.” Specific expectations

Too often the agency fails to acknowledge, reward, and pay attention to good work. – Administrator

include "acknowledging effective performance, caseworker efforts, client progress, accomplishment, and individual contributions" and treating staff "with importance, dignity, and respect." Similarly, Salus (2004) encourages supervisors to provide both positive feedback and recognition to frontline practitioners: "Positive feedback reinforces those specific aspects of performance that the supervisor wants a caseworker to continue doing, whereas recognition is a general appraisal of someone's efforts or accomplishments" (pp. 51-52). Kadushin and Harkness (2002) note that, "The supervisor supports by praising and commending good performance and communicates agency appreciation for the workers' efforts. . . One worker talked about 'kudos memos,' complimenting her on something she had done, that her supervisor occasionally dropped in her mailbox" (p. 256). Recognition of effective performance and accomplishment is meaningful when given individually and private, but it is also important to praise publicly. For example, Hughes, et al. (1991:p. 6.6) suggest that organizations encourage supervisors to nominate a "worker of the week."

... understanding more about how we communicate has been helpful; mistakes are not discussed in a punitive way, but to learn. We try to reinforce initiative taken by supervisors as well. – Administrator

Involve Supervisors in the Organizational Communication Chain. Another key aspect of building an organizational, office, and team culture that values supervisors' pivotal role is recognizing their position as a key conduit between the organization's administration and staff. Supervisors play a vital role in translating and connecting the mission, vision and values of the agency to practice and outcomes. Kadushin and Harkness emphasize that, "The supervisor is one of the principal gatekeepers in the communications system, gathering, interpreting, distilling, and evaluating information received from others in the hierarchy and transmitting this information to others in the hierarchy" (2002:64).

Supervisors provide a feedback loop to upper management because they are on the frontline. – Administrator

Supervisors and others in the organization must understand and be comfortable with their role in communication. Supervisors must be willing and able to carry out their role in the open, accurate, timely flow of communication both ways (CO DHS 1994: p. 5). However, the organization's leadership and management must consistently validate and actively support supervisors in their responsibility to communicate up and down the hierarchy. They do so by providing information in a timely and complete way.

As a channel of organizational communication, supervisors must have credibility within the organization and community. This credibility is enhanced when supervisors have been involved in and provided full information about policy and practice changes *before* they are made; then supervisors can be fully prepared to clarify the rationale for and nature of the changes to others. Supervisors help foster ownership by communicating in a timely way about the agency's mission, philosophy of practice, goals, values, policies, and procedures, and by providing opportunities for staff to ask questions and have input when changes are being considered (CO DHS 1994). Supervisors, however, cannot openly and accurately communicate

A very important support to me as a supervisor is the creation and maintaining of an atmosphere of asking "why?"—where critical thinking and open communication are valued and expected. One caseworker asked "why?" in a staff meeting and then told her supervisor she thought she might be fired for it. But the administrator leading the meeting actually praised her for speaking up and questioning. – Supervisor

such information to staff and facilitate discussion about change unless they themselves have been informed and provided timely opportunities for input and for questions.

One Example

In an effort to improve retention and respond to the needs of its case managers, the State of Missouri's Children's Division developed a strategic plan through a participatory design process using child welfare supervisors, university training partners, and other stakeholders. The process focuses on strengthening supervisory skills and providing additional support to supervisors.

Between April and June, 2006, the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) and the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology (NRC-CWDT) worked with the Division to create the Missouri Child Welfare Supervision Work Group. Members included:

- respected supervisors from each of the Division's seven regions,
- one circuit manager,
- three clinical specialists,
- three Central Office staff (training, quality assurance, and the CFSR/PIP coordinator)
- a case manager who had helped pilot a supervisory case review tool (a requirement of Missouri's PIP),
- a University of Missouri training partner who developed a clinical supervision training curriculum through a demonstration grant from the Children's Bureau which was being piloted in Missouri, and
- three staff/consultants with NRCOI/NRC-CWDT.

Three in-person Work Group meetings were held between June and November, 2006, to complete the draft of the strategic plan. At each of these meetings, NRC staff noted increasing group cohesion, investment in the work, and overall confidence in the quality of the plan. The plan addressed four core areas, each with goals and action steps: supervisor training, supervisor support, clinical supervision, and management and administrative supervision.

It was determined in November 2006 that the supervision strategic plan was proceeding well and no further technical assistance was needed from the NRCs in implementation. However, the Division Director concluded that the Division needed a standing body of supervisors to continue to advise the leadership on the current status and needs of child welfare supervision in the state. The NRCs staff were asked to help the Work Group develop a charter that would establish its responsibilities and how individual members joined and went off the body.

The participatory design, along with supervisor and leadership buy-in are considered critical to the effort. In essence, the Missouri Child Welfare Strategic Plan was a plan to create a child welfare supervision system where supervisors were continually helping their case managers work successfully with children and their families in a way that reinforced the Children's Division Mission, Vision, Values, and Guiding Practice Principles. Supervisors were defined as the Division's practice change agents who partnered with the Division's leadership in defining new practices they both wanted to implement to get better outcomes in child and family safety, permanency and well-being.

For further information, please contact the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) at www.nrcoi.org or the National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology (NRC-CWDT) at <http://www.nrccwdt.org/index.html>.

Component 2

A model of supervisory practice that reflects how the organization views the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of supervisors and includes up-to-date, written job descriptions.

A serious, but preventable, obstacle to effective child welfare supervision is the lack of a defined child welfare supervisory practice model that reflects how the field and the organization view the supervisory position, including current, specific job descriptions for supervisors. Both the literature and key informants in the field stress the importance of developing “a coherent model of supervision, impart[ing] it to staff and rigorously evaluat[ing] its impact” (Sundet et al. 2003; also Collins-Camargo 2006:83). Our informants frequently reported that their organizations lacked both this critical resource and clearly stated expectations and job descriptions for agency supervisors.

The description of my responsibilities is very general and includes only a few tasks, such as “Provides direct supervision.” – Supervisor

Kadushin and Harkness (2002) emphasize that ongoing stress in being a supervisor “results from lack of clear definition of the supervisor’s tasks, responsibilities, and authority” (p. 293). A specific, written description of child welfare supervisors’ responsibilities should be developed (Allnoch 1998; NRCOI 2007; Sundet & Kelly 2007) and used to:

- identify the skill set and other characteristics sought when recruiting and hiring/selecting supervisors in order to “get the right people” (Collins 2005);
- develop a performance appraisal for child welfare supervisors; and
- assist supervisors in evaluating their own needs for training and professional development and identifying issues for their own supervision.

We have a generalized job description on the agency website, but it is so broad that it doesn't address what supervisors do. – Administrator

Without explicit written information about supervisors’ role, functions, responsibilities and expectations, the agency cannot recruit and select appropriate applicants for supervisory positions. As Kadushin and Harkness note, “The skills of managing are different from the skills of doing” (2002: 283). Clarity about responsibilities and expectations allows potential applicants and those selecting child welfare supervisory personnel to identify and evaluate the fit between a person’s knowledge, skills, and attitudes and a specific supervisory position. The written description of a child welfare supervisor’s role, responsibilities, and expectations also helps supervisors identify their own training and supervision needs.

A written job description for supervisors should focus equally on the three main supervisory functions defined by Kadushin—administrative, educational, and supportive supervision. A sample job description is provided in Appendix D.

Often the way staff is obtained is sort of like Russian roulette, not about matching the needs and strengths of the workers with the needs, capability, and style of a supervisor. – Supervisor

A continual and timely feedback loop regarding a supervisor's job performance should include, but not be limited to, a formal written performance appraisal conducted with the supervisor at least annually (Kadushin & Harkness 2002: 375-380). The goals and objectives of the agency and department should shape the performance objectives, which in turn should shape the supervisory job description. There should be a clear correlation between the supervisory job description and the performance appraisal. Ideally, feedback on the supervisor's performance should be obtained from those s/he supervises as well as his/her supervisor.

Component 3

Recruitment and retention of individuals who are a "good fit" as frontline practitioners and supervisors.

The literature (e.g., American Public Human Services Association 2005) and key informants identify child welfare agencies' failure to "get and hang onto the right people" for supervisory positions, resulting in constant staff turnover, as a serious obstacle to effective child welfare supervision.

However, high turnover among frontline practitioners and among supervisors in many agencies appears to be a reality for the foreseeable future. Child welfare organizations often have serious difficulties recruiting and retaining fully qualified staff.

Build Systems that Recognize Recruitment and Retention Challenges. It is important for agencies to identify obstacles to the recruitment and retention of experienced and effective frontline practitioners and supervisors, and develop and implement an organization-wide short- and long-term plan to address these obstacles.

The development of an organizational plan should draw upon the assessment recommended in Component 1 above, as well as information collected through exit interviews, focus groups, etc. regarding the primary factors contributing to staff turnover. Such a plan might include

- systematic responses to stress, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout;
- reduction in caseloads, workloads, and supervisor-supervisee ratios;

Vacancies are the greatest obstacle to effective child welfare supervision. Vacancies also affect all other staff - especially those positions open for a long period of time. One supervisor has had caseworker positions open for a year. Too much is asked of staff, family time is suffering -- that's why workers are leaving. Supervisors are affected by having to fill in and be on call. – Administrator

It's hard to teach a rock a new trick. You can train all day long, but if you haven't got the right people it won't work. - Administrator

The most serious obstacle to child welfare supervisors' effectiveness is staff turnover. The supervisors often have to pick up additional cases and job duties due to employees leaving. This doesn't give them ample time to focus on ongoing supervision, training, and employee retention, etc. – Caseworker

- assigning ongoing cases to an experienced and a less experienced practitioner as a two-member team to provide mentoring to the new worker and functional support to the experienced worker;
- over-hiring so that staff are trained and prepared to move into positions as they come open
- strategies to secure increases in salaries and other benefits such as partnering with universities and other organizations to provide non-monetary professional development opportunities; and
- other factors documented in the literature and/or identified through exit interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.

A serious obstacle for child welfare supervisors is not having a stable staff. Our most experienced worker in one unit is one year. Supervisors often end up being a 5th worker instead of a supervisor. – Administrator

If we can retain workers, it's better for families. – Supervisor

Such plans should also identify and implement a variety of proven recruitment tools, including realistic job previews (Dickinson 2007) and competency-based recruitment, pre-screening tools to assess suitability to child welfare and supervision, and regular use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to address staff issues related to stress and burnout (such as at team meetings and retreat days) (Dill 2007).

If stress isn't addressed, burnouts are more likely to occur. – Administrator

Identify and examine proven and evolving recruitment and/or retention strategies. To support such efforts, the organization should draw upon information concerning successful recruitment and/or retention initiatives in several states. For example, the Delaware Department of Services to Children, Youth, and Families implemented a range of workforce initiatives that reduced staff turnover from 40 to 20 percent in a two-year period. Among these initiatives is a focus on mentoring and coaching (Robison 2006). Maine conducted a “reengineering” study that identified a number of recommendations to improve retention, including reducing the time spent by caseworkers on locating placement for children in custody; providing recognition and rewards for longevity; authorizing non-emergency overtime pay; and offering workshops to help caseworkers bridge the two-three year transition period (Bernotavicz 1997).

Child welfare liaisons in the state agency provide policy interpretation, case consultation, etc. Supervisors have easy access to that, so that is helpful. However, the state liaisons are in an authoritative position, so a good balance to that is the supervisor mentors. They aren't in positions of authority over the supervisors, so supervisors can feel free to ask whatever they want. In addition, case consultation groups meet monthly, facilitated by a professor from the local university. The facilitator comes from outside the agency chain of authority. Only supervisors attend, so they are free to discuss their concerns. These have been great resources for support. – Administrator

New strategies, such as realistic job previews, and curricula, are also available providing training to address issues related to recruitment, selection, and retention of qualified child welfare workers (Brittain 2005; Dickinson 2007).

Address Supervisory Stress, Secondary Traumatic Stress, and Burnout.

In times of tight resources, organizations must create fiscally conservative innovations to support practitioners and supervisors. For example, the organization could recruit, either internally or externally, at least one as-needed supervisory and/or advanced practitioner position. Such positions can be used to cover caseloads when workers leave and to assist supervisors when unanticipated crises and other issues place additional stress on supervisors and their workers. Such positions provide a less costly resource than creating full-time permanent positions, yet provide additional flexibility and support in case and supervisory coverage.

Supervisors often don't have anyone providing them with evaluation. They need to be aware of their own stress and burnout. This is a very important piece of mentoring and helping them transfer from worker to supervisor. – Administrator

For an experienced supervisor, a lateral transfer to a supervisory position with a different unit or a specialized area may decrease stress and help retain the supervisor. Such an option may provide an opportunity to work in an area of interest, develop new knowledge and skills and vary opportunities and challenges experienced in the role.

Another cost-efficient option for addressing stress is rotating supervisors from a high-stress supervisory situation to another assignment to reduce the development of burnout (Dill 2007). A rotation or respite period might be scheduled after a specific period of time, such as two years in the high-stress position. Supervisors would be assigned to another role with new responsibilities, such as training frontline practitioners, foster parents, and/or others; recruiting and licensing foster caregivers; assessing relatives interested in guardianship; recruiting adoptive families; or another non-case specific assignment.

Component 4

A continuum of professional development opportunities for new and experienced supervisors that includes initial and ongoing training, peer support, mentors, and clinical consultation.

Professional Development of New and Experienced Supervisors. Obstacles to an organization's capacity to provide effective child welfare supervision to frontline practitioners include failing to provide supervisors with professional development opportunities, such as orientation for new supervisors, on-the-job training and formal educational programs. To identify supervisors who are interested in further promotion within the organization, agencies should:

Focus on getting and hanging on to the right people in the first place—those who are productively neurotic, those who are self-motivated and self-disciplined, those who wake up every day, compulsively driven to do the best they can because it is simply part of their DNA—instead of using incentives to “motivate” otherwise unmotivated or undisciplined people. In the social sectors, when big incentives are simply not possible, this becomes even more important. Lack of resources is no excuse for lack of rigor—it makes selectivity all the more vital. – Collins, 2005, p.1

- Develop an internal process to identify practitioners who are potentially a “good fit” for the supervisory role. Using the organization’s current supervisory practice model, promote *only* individuals who display beginning competence in supervisory skills, excellent performance in their current positions, high motivation to undertake the demands of the position, and commitment to continue to develop in the role through supervision and mentoring.
- Provide a program of preparation for supervisors new to the position and ongoing education and support to continuing and experienced supervisors. Such a program includes clear communication of supervisory responsibilities, duties, procedure and protocol to new supervisors and ongoing training; regularly scheduled, frequent supervision; access to mentors; and accessibility to structured, facilitated, regularly scheduled peer learning and support groups, such as facilitated learning labs and peer group case review and problem solving.
- Provide opportunities and resources for supervisors to develop knowledge and skills in advanced and/or specialized areas that support their professional goals, including completion of the MSW degree.
- Give first consideration to experienced supervisors who are interested in a lateral transfer when child welfare supervisory positions open within the agency.
- Develop a training curriculum for mid-level managers. Such training provides a second level of management training and addresses identified performance gaps (Preston 2004).

We often hire from within, but just because someone is a good worker doesn't mean she will be a good supervisor. The criteria for promotion to supervisor don't necessarily fit with what is needed in the role. In addition, the agency is now promoting people to supervisory positions after they have been with the agency only two years. There is a lack of experience and training. The system is currently dysfunctional—we've got the tools, but we need to use them.
 – Administrator

Kadushin and Harkness note that, “Some training in supervision is, of course, absorbed as a consequence of being a supervisee” (2002:282). However, organizations must acknowledge that the successful transition from practitioner to supervisor, while building on a practitioner’s knowledge and skills, requires additional skills. This transition also results in changes in self-perception, degree of responsibility, pressures associated with accountability, peer relationships, and orientation and perspective (Kadushin & Harkness, pp. 280-291). Therefore, access to pre-service and initial in-service training, mentors, and peer groups are critical prior to and during the transition.

Identify Career Ladders with Frontline Workers and Supervisors. The organization should promote into supervisory positions only those individuals who meet the criteria described above of supervisory competence, consistent performance, high motivation, and willing to undertake the responsibilities and challenges in the supervisory role. When frontline practitioners who appear to be a “good fit” for a supervisory position are identified, they should be consulted regarding their career goals and plans. When a practitioner is interested in promotion to a supervisory position, a plan to prepare the staff member for promotion should be implemented in a timely way. “Timely” may mean planning for additional time in the current position to develop further experience and expertise.

Preparing for supervision is a great obstacle to people becoming effective in the position. Very little preparation occurs for the role transition. We need a more systematic approach instead of taking frontline staff and dropping them in supervisory roles. – Administrator

Ongoing professional development, education and support for new and experienced supervisors are essential and should include a range of instructional and supportive activities. In addition, each supervisor should create a plan for professional development that identifies professional goals, the new knowledge and skills necessary to reach these goals, and concrete steps toward goal achievement. Managers and supervisors should review the supervisor's professional plan together and identify how the organization might support its achievement, such as securing administrative approval for a flexible work schedule or unpaid educational leave to complete the MSW or other professional degree (Bernotavicz 1997; Salus 2004).

An experienced supervisor's professional goal may include promotion within the organization. Training or mentoring by mid-level managers or initial involvement of supervisors in mid-level management activities may serve to retain experienced supervisors and prepare them for promotion should an appropriate position become available (Preston 2004).

One Example

The Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center (SR QIC) utilizes working partnerships between child protection agencies, university social work programs, and the community in ten states to support and evaluate innovative projects designed to improve the child protective services system within a Learning Lab Model. The Learning Labs provide collaborative problem-solving, program evaluation and practice improvement in child welfare, and build lasting capacity in public and private agencies throughout the region. These Learning Labs are places where practitioners, researchers, community partners and recipients of service can focus and work together to solve child protection practice issues.

For example, Mississippi Child Protective Services developed 12 modules (19 days) of learning lab curriculum designed for use by child welfare supervisors, social work educators and child welfare training units. The supervisors used a democratic approach centered on dialogic learning to determine the topics and offered case scenarios to problem-solve in a peer-to-peer learning atmosphere. Group leaders modeled interaction, leadership and problem-solving techniques and highlighted parallel processes.

The supervisors and regional directors report a higher level of teamwork, individual growth in leadership and clinical supervision skills, and continued use of a clinical supervision model.

See <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/indexqic.html> for more information.

A Continuum of Initial and Ongoing Training for Supervisors Including Peer Support, Mentoring, and Clinical Consultation. A primary obstacle to effective child welfare supervision most consistently identified by key informants and by the literature (e.g., Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare 2009; Faller 2003; NRCOI 2007; Robison 2006) is the pervasive lack of ongoing supervisory training.

When you first become a supervisor there is good training, but no ongoing training is provided. – Supervisor

Although the Child and Family Services Reviews found that ongoing training is offered to frontline practitioners in most states (CFSR final reports are available at http://basis.caliber.com/cwig/ws/cwmd/docs/cb_web/SearchForm), generally training for supervisors is either non-existent or focuses on practice-relevant topics. For example, a supervisory training session might focus on domestic violence, without addressing how supervisors should specifically apply the content in their role with supervisees.

Other obstacles to supervisory practice identified by key informants and the literature include uneven provision of accessible and informed supervision for supervisors and the lack of regularly available peer support, mentors, and clinical consultation. To address these obstacles, organizations must:

Insufficient training is the biggest obstacle to effective supervision. The state is currently in the process of creating supervisory training and tools to help guide them in their support of workers and cases. – Administrator

- Make training an accepted part of everyone’s job. Day-to-day job demands shouldn’t put training on the “back burner.” “Ensure extra staffing to allow for training attendance” (Blase & Fixsen 2004).
- Demonstrate the value placed on training for supervisors by expecting, encouraging, and ensuring supervisory participation in training events.
- After training events, reinforce key learning points to ensure that classroom skills are used in day-to-day work.
- Provide a continuum of educational supports for supervisors, including initial and early in-service; regularly scheduled supervision; accessibility to mentors and clinical consultants; and accessibility to structured, regularly scheduled peer learning and support groups, such as facilitated learning labs and peer group case review and problem-solving.
- Ensure that training design and content balance knowledge and skills-building in the administrative, educational, and supportive aspects of supervision; and include instruction and practice in sharing and applying the learning with supervisors’ teams/units.
- Offer training opportunities in varied formats and locations (e.g. on-line, local classroom, teleconference, webcast, partial day format, interactive web-based, etc.) to accommodate supervisors’ demanding responsibilities and schedules

There is a lack of ongoing training that’s really targeted to supervisor competencies. You can go to substance abuse training, but it’s not targeted to supervisors. – Supervisor

Administrators and managers must communicate the importance of ongoing educational support for supervision, and consistently expect and protect supervisors’ participation. For example, placing supervisors in double-bind situations by requiring their attendance at meetings scheduled in conflict with supervisory training or peer group meetings conveys to supervisors and all agency staff that ongoing supervisory training is not a priority.

Educational supports for supervisors should include a continuum of ongoing opportunities. Regularly scheduled initial and early in-service training should include content on the transition from practitioner to supervisor and be designed to deepen supervisors' knowledge, enhance their problem-solving and assessment skills, and address emerging practice, policy, and organizational changes. Topics include, but are not limited to: administrative, educational, and supportive roles of the supervisor; using data in decision-making; leadership styles; time management and organizational skills; conflict resolution strategies; structuring supervision; managing difficult people; using progressive disciplinary procedures; monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating performance; and, assessing the quality of case plans and court reports and guiding caseworkers in improving documentation (Collins-Camargo, Jones, Shackelford, Shiell, & Sundet 2005; Faller 2003).

Peer support relieves the stress of feeling like you are the only one out there. –Administrator

Topics for ongoing supervisory training might include adult learning/learning styles; clinical supervision; critical thinking; collaboration; organizational culture; facilitating group supervision; conducting case reviews; managing self in supervision; managing transfer of learning in the workplace; working with outcomes; using data and reports from the information system to manage for results; family-centered meetings; supervisors as coaches; and supervisors as change agents (Faller 2003; Collins-Camargo, Jones, Shackelford, Shiell, & Sundet 2005; North Carolina Division of Social Services and the Family and Children's Resource Program 2008).

At the weekly staffing meeting, supervisors are able to share issues and problems in cases and brainstorm. They can then report back to caseworkers with ideas or solutions. This process helps them become better supervisors and collaborate more with each other. – Caseworker

Helpful Child Welfare and Training Websites

The following websites provide valuable training resources and materials.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Children's Bureau Express

<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/>

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

www.nrcoi.org

Look for audio files and tools from teleconferences on supervision, including a Supervisory Case Review Tool.

National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning

<http://www.nrcfcppp.org>

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Peer Training Network

www.peertrainingnetwork.org

National Staff Development and Training Association

<http://nsdta.aphsa.org/>

Action Child Protection - Supervisors as Safety Decision Makers Training

<http://www.actionchildprotection.org/>

California Social Work Education Center

<http://calswec.berkeley.edu/CalSWEC/CommonCoreCurricCA.html>

State of Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Supervisory Leadership and Management Training

<http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/portal/site/DHRDFCS/menuitem.83054cda1a084d2f7da1df8dda1010a0/?vgnnextoid=d44629c8facb0110VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD>

Ohio Child Welfare Training Program

Supervisor/Manager Training

<http://www.ocwtp.net/Types%20of%20Training%20SU%20Man.htm>

Oklahoma DHS Child Welfare Training Program

<http://www.ou.edu/cwtraining/>

Maine Child Welfare Training Institute

<http://www.cwti.org/>

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program

www.pacwcbt.pitt.edu

Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center (SR QIC)

<http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/indexqic.html>

Conclusion

We offer this integrated organizational framework for supporting effective child welfare supervision as a roadmap for agency leadership. As they design and implement an agency model for supervision and a system to support their supervisors, administrators will want to use and even expand the variety of proven tools, strategies, and approaches suggested in this report. The Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance network is available to work with state and tribal administrators as they create and implement a customized plan to enhance their child welfare supervisory practice and thus improve organizational and child, youth and family outcomes. If you have questions on this report or want to discuss how your agency might use some of the concepts and tools presented in the report, please feel free to contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at www.nrcoi.org or the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at <http://www.nrcfcppp.org>.

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Appendix A

Methodology

Literature review

We began this project with a thorough review of child welfare and social work literature, focusing specifically on supervisory functions and job responsibilities, models for supervision, and organizational and practice supports and obstacles that impact supervisors. When information regarding a topic was not available, literature in other disciplines, such as business and human services, was included. The project's working group members reviewed the topics for the literature review and recommended additional areas for investigation. Topics included in the literature search are identified in the summary in Appendix B.

Identified supports to effective supervision were organized into the following eight sections: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, and selecting a supervision model.

When the literature review was completed, the information was used to inform the development of the interview protocols.

Interview protocols and key informant interviews

To better ground our understanding of current child welfare supervisory practice in the field, we designed protocols for interviews with child welfare administrators and caseworkers as well as supervisors. We examined not only supervisors' own experiences with supervision, but also the effects of their efforts and the perspectives on others within child welfare organizations whose work relies on supervisors' effectiveness. Whenever possible, we interviewed triads of a supervisor, an administrator/manager in the supervisor's agency, and a caseworker in the supervisor's unit.

Members of the project's working group recommended individuals to be interviewed, focusing on agencies and jurisdictions having success in the area of child welfare supervision. In selecting key informants, we considered geographic diversity across the country as well as the inclusion of urban, rural, and Tribal child welfare agencies.

Although separate protocols were designed for interviews with supervisors, administrators, and caseworkers, the majority of questions were consistent; this allowed for comparison of the three perspectives. Topics addressed in the interview protocols included: background information (e.g., respondent's education and work experience, agency supervisor-supervisee ratios, etc.); the nature and relative importance of supervisory job responsibilities (including a detailed list of 30 responsibilities listed in Table 1.); obstacles to and supports for effective supervision; and respondents' own job-related needs relative to supervision within the agency. We also requested that key informants share a copy of their organization's child welfare supervision job description and any written tools or resources they had found helpful in supervision.

The project team contacted potential interviewees by email or telephone and made appointments with those who agreed to be interviewed. In advance of the appointment, the interview protocol was emailed to them. Interviews were conducted by phone, with at least two project team members attending; one conducted the interview and the other took notes. Interview length ranged from 30 minutes to over an hour. Respondents were assured that their comments would remain anonymous and that interview excerpts included in project products would not be attributed by respondent's name or agency. One respondent chose to complete the interview protocol and return it via email rather than complete the interview over the phone.

Once an interview was completed, we inquired whether it would be possible to interview the respondent's administrator, supervisor, and/or caseworker in order to complete the triad. Due to the unpredictable nature of child welfare staff activities, it was difficult to complete interviews as scheduled. Nineteen (19) interviews were completed: nine administrators, six supervisors, and four caseworkers.

Data analysis

The interview data were compiled and analyzed by the project team. A content analysis was conducted by each of the three project team members; themes identified in the data and responses to specific protocol questions were compared. Data were reviewed in the aggregate as well as by interviewees' agency job positions to identify similarities and differences between supervisors, administrators and caseworkers. Descriptive statistics of key informants' ratings regarding the importance of child welfare supervisors' job responsibilities (i.e. most important, important, not important, not applicable/not aware) were also analyzed and compared to determine the ways in which these were similar and different when findings were grouped by agency position. When these analyses were completed, the findings were reviewed with working group members, who provided feedback regarding the consistency of the findings with their observations in the field and also raised questions for further data analysis.

Interviews with subject matter experts

Following data analysis, we reviewed our findings with three subject matter experts who have worked extensively in the area of child welfare supervision and have completed demonstration projects addressing effective supervision. These experts, Crystal Collins-Camargo, Ph.D. of the University of Kentucky School of Social Work, and Steve Preister, Ph.D. and Joe Murray of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, were either members of the advisory committee or were identified by members knowledgeable of their work. The findings were shared and reviewed with the subject matter experts in order to seek their perspectives about the ways in which the findings were consistent or inconsistent with their own observations in the field. All project team members attended each subject matter expert interview, and the notes from the interview were transcribed. These experts also provided written materials on their demonstration projects.

Email survey of peer training network members

We also gathered information from members of the Peer Training Network sponsored by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. This listserv group is comprised of child welfare trainers from across the country. We asked “Are you providing on-going training to the supervisors in your agency? If so, will you share some information about it, such as the content, frequency, delivery methods, and evaluation process, and any other information you think would help us understand your training?” We also asked, “Do the child welfare supervisors in your state have job descriptions? Are they current? Can you share them?” We received responses from 16 states.

Integration of data from all sources

Following the data analysis, the team incorporated information from the multiple sources of data -- the review of the literature, consultation with working group members, interviews with key informants and subject matter experts, and the email survey of Peer Training Network members -- to further refine the themes and develop preliminary recommendations regarding a framework to support effective child welfare supervision. Working group members reviewed and discussed the preliminary recommendations and provided comments.

Completion of project publication

A draft of the project report, identifying an emerging model for child welfare supervision and a framework for support of child welfare supervision, was developed and subsequently reviewed by working group members. The final document reflects their observations and feedback.

Appendix B

Literature Review

The following organizational and practice supports have been identified from the literature and focus on those that impact supervisors. Specific examples of programs implemented and contact information are provided when possible. The following topic areas were included in the search:

Anticipating/addressing/managing change

- Within community
- Within agency
- Within unit

Facilitating communication and collaboration

- Supervisor-caseworker
- Agency-community (including public and media)
- Agency-foster parents
- Supervisor-agency administrators
- Agency-courts
- Supervisor-caseworker-Contractual service providers

Empowerment of supervisor/influencing agency

- Goals
- Policy
- Structure
- Processes
- Resources
- Short-and long-term planning

Recruiting, selecting, pre- and in-service training, and retaining child welfare staff/providing on-going professional development

- Caseworkers
- Supervisors

Enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance

- Knowledge/Skill development and application
- Rewarding excellent performance
- Addressing performance difficulties

Preventing/addressing stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout

- For caseworkers
- For supervisors

Enhancing job satisfaction/building and maintaining morale

- For caseworkers
- For supervisors

Anticipating/managing risk (safety)

- To clients
- To caseworkers
- To supervisors

Managing caseloads

- Supervisor unit size (number of supervisees)
- Caseworker caseload size
- Assigning and covering cases

Managing time and workflow

- Supervisor
- Caseworker

Using management information systems (MIS)

- In evaluating outcomes (permanency planning)
- In identifying resource needs
- In identifying training needs
- In identifying policy problems
- In managing caseloads

Organizational responsibilities to supervisor

- Clarity of job expectations and ongoing appraisal
- Training and professional development
- Career ladder and opportunities
- Supervision/consultation/mentoring
- Peer support
- Role in strengthening agency and its services
- Involvement in caseworker training
- Information and training re: policy and practice changes

Caseworker responsibilities to supervisor

- Timely information sharing
- Developing agenda for formal supervision
- Self-assessment re: training/stress/professional development

Ethics in supervision

- Boundary issues
- Confidentiality

Developing practice competence in caseworkers

Selecting model of supervision

Providing leadership within organization/community

Disproportionality

Roles and responsibilities of supervisors related to quality improvement

Identified supports are organized into the following sections: Training and Information Sharing, Administrative/Fiscal, Recruitment and Retention/Preventing Stress/Enhancing Morale, Facilitating Communication and Collaboration, Enhancing/Managing/ Evaluating Caseworker Performance, Anticipating and Managing Risk, Ethics in Supervision, Selecting Model of Supervision.

Training and Information Sharing

Link faculty from schools of social work with MSW-level supervisors (Strand & Badger, 2005)

- The Clinical Consultation for Child Welfare Supervisors program was designed to assist supervisors with their roles as educators, mentors, and coaches for casework staff, specifically in relation to case practice decisions.

Develop comprehensive mentoring programs for supervisors (Children's Rights & NCYL, 2007; NRCOI, 2007)

Build a local informal and/or formal network of supervisors (Blythe, et al., 1992; Landsman, 2007; NRCOI, 2007)

Provide supervisors opportunities to practice skills through "learning laboratory projects" and case study review (Robison, 2006)

- With a grant from the federal Children's Bureau, universities and child welfare agencies in four southern states (Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee) are conducting "learning laboratory" projects to improve supervision. Each project emphasizes on-the-job skill-building in addition to classroom training for supervisors. Arkansas is focusing on mentoring of supervisors by field educators. Classroom training for supervisors is followed by mentoring strategies that are especially useful for supervisors in small offices where daily, face-to-face support is not available. Support for supervisors in the field includes; direct mentoring every other week using structured on-the-job activities, on-line educational offerings, peer group sessions using video conferencing to practice applying theory to actual case/supervision situations.

Contact: Debbie Schiell, Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services,
debbie.schiell@arkansas.gov, 501-682-1554

- After discovering that poor decision-making was partly to blame for several high-profile tragedies, Arizona's Child Protective Services reform initiative began working to improve practice throughout the child welfare system. Arizona State University conducted a needs assessment of supervisors. The study found that the agency's supervisors are highly committed individuals who value opportunities to learn from their peers above classroom training or instruction.
- With these preferences in mind, the agency and university are developing quarterly group sessions for all supervisors and assistant program managers, which will be part of ongoing, required supervisor training. Supervisors bring cases to staff and practice their decision-making skills, and the assistant program managers provide information on new agency

policies and practices. Supervisors pass on the skills they learn to case managers, integrating better decision-making throughout the agency. Contact: Holli Sanger, Training Supervisor for Child Protective Services Arizona Department of Economic Security
hsanger@azdes.gov

Offer targeted general, ongoing training for supervisors (Faller, 2003; NRCOI, 2007; Robison, 2006)

- Faller, et al. describes a needs assessment conducted with approximately 250 public child welfare staff on the topic of training for child welfare supervisors. The following seven sessions were designed based on the findings:
- Supervising - The Front End
- Training/Coaching/Teaching/Educating/Mentoring: The Learning Connection
- Supportive Communication: Three Major Conversations
- Working with Workers (and others) With Strong Opinions: Managing Difficult People
- Decision Making/Problem Solving
- Supervising - The Back End including Monitoring, Reviewing, and Performance Architecture
- Management of Self

Develop a training curriculum for mid-level managers (Preston, 2004, p.93)

- "Providing a second level of management training to supervisors promoted into middle management affords states the opportunity to address the training gaps identified [i.e., leadership, strategic skills and competencies]"

Train supervisors in policy and practice changes before they are made and provide tools for supervisors to promote these changes with their workers (NRCOI, 2007)

Involve supervisors in training workers (NRCOI, 2007)

Ensure extra staffing to allow for training attendance (Blase & Fixsen, 2004)

Ensure that supervisors create and implement a training and/or development plan with each caseworker (CO DHS, 1994)

Administrative/Fiscal Supports

Create a managerial level dedicated solely to providing supervision to field supervisors (Children's Rights & NCYL, 2007)

Require and provide funding for supervisors to obtain advanced social work degrees (Children's Rights & NCYL, 2007)

Encourage responsive/flexible relationships with referral or other organizations including:

- Joint training sessions (Blythe, et al., 1992)
- Common screening and referral forms (Blythe, et al., 1992)

Develop an articulated practice model to ensure that all staff members understand the agency's philosophy on working with children and families (Bordeaux, 2008)

Ensure manageable staff/supervisor ratios allowing time to work one-on-one with staff (Jacquet et al., 2007; Robison, 2006)

"Facilitative administration at the program or regulatory level actively looks for ways to decrease barriers to implementation and improve supports that are needed for effective intervention... Some examples of administrative issues are extra staffing needed so that other staff can participate in training, funding mechanisms that support the new way of doing business, organizational supports necessary to accomplish the change, and technical assistance and management information systems that take into account the new procedures and the needs of staff and management for timely information." (Blase & Fixsen, 2004. p 4)

Build MIS systems that improve policy and practice, take into account new procedures, and allow for efficient entry and useful reports (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001; Blase & Fixsen, 2004; Lyons, et al, 2002; NRCOI, 2007)

- Self-evaluation in Family to Family entailed three types of effort: first, to build databases that tracked children through their experiences in out-of-home care by drawing on data already being collected in routine program operations; second, to compile information about children in out-of-home care from a variety of agencies that serve families and children (mental health, special education, juvenile justice, etc.); and third, to build "self-evaluation teams" that would pull together information on an ongoing basis, and more importantly, use it to improve child welfare policy and practice. Contact John Mattingly of the Annie E. Casey Foundation for further information. The following persons also can answer questions about self-evaluation: Lynn Usher, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 919.962.6496, Fax: 919.962.1486; or Stan Schneider, Metis Associates, Inc., New York, New York, 212.425.8833, Fax: 212.480.2176. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001)
- Provide tools to help supervisors talk with workers about agency goals and current performance [i.e., data reports and clinically focused case review processes] (NRCOI, 2007)

Support system-level problem solving to reduce funding and regulatory barriers (licensing, funding, reporting) that hinder or present implementation of "what works" (Blase & Fixsen, 2004)

Anticipate/address/manage change (O'Connor, 1997)

- Requires "systemic thinking" that views each part of the child welfare system in relation to the entire picture. Repeated crises in the system are not departmental breakdowns but signals, symptoms of something wrong at a systemic level. When a crisis occurs, attention goes to the breaking point, but treating the symptom alone will not suffice. Managers must build understanding at every level of how each part fits the whole system, and they must spread the "work of worry" about the whole system across every managerial level. For further information, contact Mal O'Connor at the Center for Applied Research, 617-576-1166.

Empower supervisor to influence agency (Cearley, 2004; Children's Rights & NCYL, 2007; Dawson, 1998; NRCOI, 2007; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006)

- "Supervisors' empowering behaviors toward workers significantly affect workers' sense of empowerment – this author suggests an intervention in the form of training in child welfare agencies." (Cearly, 2004, p. 325)

- “Facilitate the robust involvement of supervisors in the reform efforts through their inclusion in task forces and focus groups and the development of supervisor-directed reform plans at the local level” (Children’s Rights & NCYL, 2007, p.13)
- Autonomy in carrying out job responsibilities (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006)

Ensure clarity of job expectations (Allnoch, 1998; NRCOI, 2007; Sundet & Kelly, 2007)

Work toward managing caseloads (Juby & Scannapieco, 2007; Weaver, et al, 2007)

- Supervisor support positively impacted worker ability and was positively associated with availability of resources, indicating supportive supervisors may provide more direction toward available resources. (Juby & Scannapieco, 2007)
- Easing new workers into a full caseload more likely to retain workers.(Weaver, et al, 2007)

Use consultants to address specific needs (Blythe, et al., 1992)

Provide adequate vacation/respice for supervisors (Blythe, et al., 1992)

Recruitment and Retention/Preventing Stress/Enhancing Morale

Engage supervisors in preventing turnover through regional goals and corrective action plans (Robison, 2006)

- In Delaware, supervisors have been key to reducing turnover by half. The child welfare division’s goal is to continue reducing turnover until it is below ten percent throughout the state. The individual performance plan of each regional administrator and assistant regional administrator (the staff who supervise supervisors) sets the expectation that frontline staff turnover will not exceed ten percent, though each region has its own goals based on past performance. If unit turnover tops this target, a corrective action plan is developed for supervisors, and they receive specialized training. The agency uses routine exit interviews and informal “stay” interviews with workers to evaluate supervisors’ effectiveness. Findings indicate that high worker turnover rates are more likely to stem from the personality of supervisors than their practice skills. Contact: Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, 302-633-2601

Use supervisors as mentors (Robison, 2006)

- The Delaware Department of Services to Children, Youth and Families has implemented a range of workforce initiatives that are credited with reducing staff turnover from 40 to 20 percent in a two-year period. Among these initiatives is a focus on mentoring and coaching. The agency defined mentoring and established written standards and competencies. Supervisors select experienced line staff, usually family crisis therapists, to complete special training and serve as mentors. These mentors then coach new staff who have completed core training. Mentors receive no extra payment or caseload reduction, but report great satisfaction from working with other staff.
- The department also found that supervisors overseeing more than one new worker at a time were not able to provide the support that new staff needed. “Coaching units” were established regionally to ensure that new workers received the training they needed and to prevent supervisors from being spread too thinly. Now, all new staff in these regions are assigned to coaching units, in which supervisors work very closely with them to ensure that they are prepared for their permanent assignments later. Workers report that they feel better

prepared to move into permanent positions as a result. Contact: Marcia Roe, Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, Marcia.Roe@state.de.us, 302-633-2706

Support supervisors in addressing staff recruitment and retention through methods including targeted training and other methods described below (Children's Bureau, 2007)

- Putting the Pieces Together, Supervisor Core Curriculum. Effective supervision spans three main areas (Administrative, Educational, and Supportive Supervision). Each unit emphasizes self-reflection and application to the unique circumstances of each supervisor. All modules are competency-based, highly interactive and accommodate a variety of learning styles to maximize the learning experience. Supervisor Core Curriculum, Putting the Pieces Together:
http://tatis.muskie.usm.maine.edu/pubs/pubdetailWtemp.asp?PUB_ID=B060065
For more information, please contact: Charmaine Brittain, MSW, Ph.D.
Charmaine.Brittain@du.edu, (303) 871-6336
- Supervisory Support: To enhance supervisory skills at all levels, the Standards for Supervision and the Supervisory Competency Model was revised to reflect current practice; the concept and content outline for a Supervisory Academy was developed for all supervisors and a certificate program was designed for experienced supervisors. A syllabus was also developed for a three credit MSW course on Creating a High Performance Workforce in Child Welfare, offered in 2005 and 2006.
For more information please contact: Freda Bernotavicz, Child Welfare Training Institute, Muskie School of Public Service, Fredab@usm.maine.edu, (207) 626-5241
- In Connecticut, managers were more satisfied than either supervisors or social workers. Of the three job categories, supervisors were the least satisfied, and the most dissatisfied with their own supervision. Supervisory support has included the development of an agency-wide supervisory training plan, the identification of competencies for supervisors and the development of a behavioral interview protocol for hiring new supervisors. Dr. Virginia Strand: PI Children FIRST, Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service
- A Supervisor's Guide to Recruitment, Selection and Retention: A 4-day curriculum to enhance the ability of supervisors and managers to recruit, select and retain qualified child welfare workers. Nancy S. Dickinson, MSSW, PhD, Jordan Institute for Families, ndickins@email.unc.edu, (919) 962-6407
- Supervisory Skills: Retaining Child Welfare Workers: Public child welfare supervisors often receive training in agency policy, but not in skills to use in supervising staff. Our research to date, and that from other studies, indicates that the competence of supervisors plays a major role in worker turnover and retention. We have developed a curriculum that draws upon the human services management literature and our past experience training child welfare supervisors. Recruitment & Retention of Child Welfare Professionals Program, <http://www.ssw.umich.edu/public/currentProjects/rrcwp/>, (734) 998-9700
- Supervisory Needs and Interests Survey. Based on a sample of over 150 supervisors and middle managers, training needs and areas of competency were identified to inform future training and mentoring activities. Final report is pending. Curriculum Development: A supervisory training curriculum was developed with a focus on retention issues. The six interactive workbooks are:
 - A. The Role of Leaders in Retention
 - B. Practice of Retention-focused Supervision

- C. Working with Differences
- D. Communication Skills
- E. The First Six Months
- F. Recruiting and Selecting Staff

Gary Anderson, MSU School of Social Work, gary.anderson@ssc.msu.edu , 517-355-7515

Train supervisors to improve their supportive skills to enhance worker retention (Jacquet, et al., 2007)

"When supervisors provide support, help, and a positive environment, workers' commitment is strengthened and they remain with child welfare regardless of the size of their caseload.(p.30-31)"

Acknowledge that the agency has an “influential and multidimensional role in the retention of child welfare staff” (Ellett, et al, 2007; Rycraft, 1994)

- Agency has control over mission, goodness of fit, supervision and investment – all key elements in caseworker retention. (Rycraft, 1994)

Use peer-group supervision - it demonstrates a commitment by agency leadership to provide ongoing training and personal growth for caseworkers and a desire to prevent burnout among them (Marks, J.L. & Hixon, D.F., 1986).

Prevent burnout. Tips for supervisors to prevent staff burnout and compassion fatigue:

- Implement crisis debriefings after a traumatic event has taken place to provide support and validation.
- Offer ongoing or further support and validation to casework staff when a traumatic event occurs.
- Institute a trauma support group.
- Initiate supportive activities on the unit level. For example, a practice could be started of coworkers helping with paperwork or assisting with home visits during particularly traumatic periods. Supervisors can establish flexible work schedules, including “mental health days” or days spent in the office not making home visits.
- Provide a religious or spiritual consultant to offer solace and counseling when children or fellow staff members die.
- Deliver training to create self-awareness regarding stress and how to manage it, how to understand the effects of trauma, and how to develop coping skills that enable staff to better manage trauma (Salus M, 2004).

Improve retention. Maine's "Reengineering Study" revealed a number of recommendations to improve retention (Bernotavicz, 1997):

- Conduct a pilot program to reduce time spent by caseworkers on service negotiation and payment.
- Reduce the time spent by caseworkers on locating placements for children in DHS care and custody. Assign responsibility to a Central Office staff member to oversee the exploration of innovative ways to increase the number of foster homes including improved marketing materials and to develop more efficient databases to locate placements.

- Place ASPIRE (TANF welfare to work) participants in offices to provide backup administrative support.
- Re-engineer the Payments Process;
- Eliminate regional review of transportation bills;
- Place MSW students in offices to provide program support;
- Train Mental Health providers to work effectively with Child Welfare system;
- Provide administrative support for authorization and payments.
- Help supervisors support new caseworkers through the two-three year transition period.
- Provide a supportive climate for debriefing traumatic situations
- Provide recognition and rewards for longevity.
- Disseminate information on options for unpaid educational leave.
- Support the use of flexible work schedules.
- Continue gathering data on retention through exit interviews of caseworkers.
- Authorize non-emergency overtime pay.
- Conduct a salary/benefits survey of child welfare caseworkers in public and private agencies.
- Develop a plan that will allow caseworkers to take educational leave to complete MSW degrees and ensure that their work is covered in their absence.
- Strengthen the role of the supervisor.
- Provide opportunities for caseworker sabbaticals for independent study after two years on the job.
- Provide workshops to help caseworkers bridge the two-three year transition period.
- Incorporate findings from retention literature into training for supervisors.

Use training programs to prevent supervisor burnout in child welfare agencies. Training must focus on (1) how to recognize symptoms of stress, (2) how to develop effective coping mechanisms for managing stress, (3) how to identify work stresses in the agency and in the profession of social work, (4) how to develop political acumen and skill, (5) how to communicate with and better relate to colleagues so that strong peer support may be developed, and (6) how to improve supervisory skills and techniques (Zischka, 1981).

Expect supervisors to establish a positive work climate. Specific expectations include:

- Acknowledge effective performance, caseworker efforts, client progress, accomplishment, and individual contributions.
- Treat staff with importance, dignity, and respect.
- Create/model high standards of practice.
- Be sensitive to the needs and feelings of staff.
- Support staff in taking care of themselves physically and emotionally.
- Treat staff as professionals.
- Support a climate of trust and openness.

- Encourage staff to express their feelings and concerns about individual clients as well as the agency and help them to resolve these feelings.
- Create a sense of safety and stability to support risk-taking.
- Create an environment in which cultural differences are appreciated.
- Refer staff to outside assistance (e.g., employee assistance program), when appropriate.
- Use mistakes as an opportunity to teach and learn.
- Developing/supporting a teamwork approach;
- Facilitating successful resolution of conflict within and outside the agency (CO DHS, 1994).

Help workers “to become masters of their immediate environment” in the workplace and “to feel that their work and they themselves are important -the twin ingredients of self esteem”. Workers need to feel valued and needed and not manipulated or used. This is central to the quality of service delivered by clients. Example of “worker of the week” where worker is nominated by supervisor (Hughes, et al, 1991, p.6.5-6.6).

“To help identify, recognize, and prevent burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress,...organizations must acknowledge the emotional aspect the work can take on supervisors.” The following strategies are offered:

- Develop pre-screening tools to assess suitability to child welfare and supervision
- Regular use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) that meet with staff on a regular basis (team meetings, retreat days)
- Provision of regular and frequent supervision to front-line supervisors
- Develop peer supervision within agency
- Create job rotation to facilitate moving from high-stress situations (ex. intake to foster care after two years)
- Regular professional development on the concepts of burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress.
- Implementation of a Peer Support Program to promote a caring community where all provide support in times of stress (Dill, 2007)

"Focus on getting and hanging on to the right people in the first place—those who are productively neurotic, those who are self-motivated and self-disciplined, those who wake up every day, compulsively driven to do the best they can because it is simply part of their DNA - instead of using incentives to “motivate” otherwise unmotivated or undisciplined people.

In the social sectors, when big incentives are simply not possible, this becomes even more important. Lack of resources is no excuse for lack of rigor—it makes selectivity all the more vital." (Collins, 2005, p.1).

Facilitating Communication and Collaboration

Supervisor-caseworker

Ensure supervisors understand their role and responsibilities relating to communicating with workers. Standards for Supervision in Child Welfare (CO DHS, 1994) defines specific expectations of supervisors related to communication and collaboration with caseworkers:

- Foster ownership of agency vision, mission goals, values, policies and procedures
- Assure cohesion and high performance of the work unit
- Encourage maximum performance of individual staff (see also enhancing, managing, evaluating caseworker performance)
- Facilitate open communication between staff and upper management to achieve agency and unit goals
- Provide/assure orientation to new staff
- Provide case supervision and consultation
- Develop self-awareness of one's own attitudes, needs and behavior and its effect on the supervisor-worker relationship

Train supervisors on how to provide effective feedback. Nine criteria are essential for effective feedback: descriptive, non-evaluative, refer to behavior the worker can change, specific rather than general, constructive rather than destructive, include positive points as well as negative, honest, explain how behavior affects you/others in the organization; negative feedback should be sandwiched with positive feedback (Hughes, et al, 1991).

Agency-Community (including public and media)

Ensure supervisors understand their role and responsibilities relating to fostering collaborative relationships within the agency and with community agencies. Strategies include:

- Participate in the development of a system for communication across units and agencies;
- Provide staff with feedback regarding the messages they are communicating about the unit and the agency;
- Assure consistent visibility of unit/agency in community;
- Educate the community and other units in agency regarding unit goals, objectives and parameters;
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with the community;
- Help staff to understand roles and parameters of other units within the agency and community agencies;
- Model cultural responsiveness in collaborative relationships (CO DHS, 1994).

Involve supervisors in outreach that targets specific audiences through mainstream and community-based media. This outreach can support recruitment, expand funding, and provide access to elected officials, even as it familiarizes local reporters with agency operations - invaluable when and if a crisis occurs and the agency is suddenly in the media spotlight (Omang, J., Bonk, K., 1999).

Ensure that supervisors understand their role in developing good relationships between the agency, the public, and the media.

- While the major responsibility for this rests with the agency's administration, it also may be part of the responsibility of supervisors to inform the public and the media about the complex issues of child abuse and neglect. CPS agencies have a responsibility to inform the public about the causes of child maltreatment, what constitutes a reportable incident, and how the agency is organized to serve children and families. One of the most fundamental reasons that agencies do not speak with the media about specific child abuse incidents is confidentiality concerns. One recommendation for dealing with this issue is to avoid the specifics of the case and to speak in general terms about the agency's response in a given scenario (Salus, M.K., 2004, p. 26, 27).

Value the importance of community values/community context in a cross cultural setting:

- Focus on positive aspects of supervision applicable to child welfare agencies in the context of acknowledgement of, and sensitivity to, the values, situations, and circumstances of Native American clients and practitioners (Hughes, et al, 1991).
- Supervision in a reservation community setting requires that the supervisor maintain an awareness of the 1) community values, 2) community political structure and 3) informal political structure which is linked to the family systems in a community. Supervisors have to maintain an awareness of these factors from two perspectives which are: their own role in the scheme of things and the relationship of these factors to those they supervise. Another factor that influences the relationship of supervisors and their supervisees is the operation of the dual perspective in family practice. Dual perspective: functioning within the norms and rules of the dominating culture while maintaining one's own norms and rules (Hughes, et al, 1991).
- The cultural values which have the greatest influence in the daily work place are 1) concept of time, 2) team or group consensus rather than individuation, 3) cooperation rather than competition, 4) listening and observing rather than verbalizing and reacting, 5) interdependent rather than independent action. To be an effective practitioner, family practice worker cannot base the clients' treatment goals on his/her personal values. (Hughes, et al, 1991).

Supervisor-Agency Administrators

Provide supervisors with the tools to create an atmosphere where workers are treated with respect and their dignity as individuals are valued. Without this atmosphere, it is unlikely that the best interest of clients will be served (Hughes, et al, 1991).

Enhancing/Managing/Evaluating Caseworker Performance

Provide supervisors with the skills needed to encourage maximum performance of individual staff. Supervisors are expected to:

- Evaluate and monitor the quality, quantity, and timeliness of staff performance.
- Provide frequent, timely, and specific positive feedback and constructive criticism to keep workers apprised of performance.
- Be available to staff for consultation as needed.
- Provide a written performance plan and evaluation of staff a minimum of once per year.
- Take appropriate positive or corrective personnel actions.

- Document worker performance related to program compliance
- Identify workers' strengths and help them develop those strengths (CO DHS, 1994)

Ensure that supervisors are aware that positive feedback and recognition must be provided to caseworkers.

- Positive feedback reinforces those specific aspects of performance that the supervisor wants a caseworker to continue doing, whereas recognition is a general appraisal of someone's efforts or accomplishments (Salus, p. 51-52).

Provide supervisors with a process for analyzing performance problems and coaching for improved work performance.

- An effective supervisor must be able to describe what the employee is doing that creates problems, express why a particular behavior is problematic for the supervisor or the organization, specify what he/she wants the employee to do differently, and outline consequences for succeeding or failing to change behaviors (Hughes, et al, 1991; Salus, 2004).

Anticipating and Managing Risk

Caseworkers

Common strategies employed by States emphasizing caseworker safety include:

- Mandatory safety training for all casework staff;
- Use of communication technology (e.g., cell phones or pagers)
- Protocol and written agreements for involving law enforcement;
- Counseling and support for caseworkers who have been injured or threatened (and, as appropriate, for the families of those caseworkers) (Salus, 2004).

Share proven tips for supervisors to maintain caseworker safety (Salus, 2004):

- Ensure that caseworkers obtain the latest case information and familiarize themselves with the area they will be visiting before making home visits.
- Make sure that staff members provide an up-to-date schedule of their visits.
- Remind caseworkers to observe everyone in and around the home visit area and watch for signs that indicate the potential for personal violence.
- Assist caseworkers in reviewing what is known about the client before making contact.
- Encourage caseworkers to follow their instincts. If they feel unsafe on a visit, they should take whatever action is needed to ensure their protection.
- Remind caseworkers to learn the layout of families' homes, the immediate surroundings, and typical activities that occur there to provide a baseline from which to judge potential danger.
- Reinforce that caseworkers should avoid dangerous or unfamiliar neighborhoods at night without law enforcement protection, if possible, or at least taking another coworker along.
- Prompt caseworkers to be sensitive to the timing of their visits. For example, early morning is usually the best time to go to drug-ridden areas.
- Remind caseworkers to use the safest route to and from a family's home.

- Ensure that caseworkers maintain their or the agency's car in good working order and keep it filled with gas.
- Demonstrate how to decline tactfully offers of food or refreshments.
- Instruct caseworkers on how to maintain their personal safety during home visits. For example, they should ask who is at home and if they have any problems with the caseworker's presence.
- Teach caseworkers to respond effectively to client anger and hostility.

Ethics in Supervision

Provide training to normalize sexual feelings in supervisory relationships and increase supervisors' awareness and understanding of these feelings.

- Includes discussion of socialization (impact of gender, sex role), use of power, social and cultural context (Koenig, T.L. & Spano, R.N, 2003).

Selecting Model of Supervision

Develop a coherent model of supervision, impart it to staff and rigorously evaluate its impact.

- Current theory and research on practice do not provide firm conclusions favoring one particular form of intervention over another (Sunde, P. et al, 2003).

Managing Change

Develop a comprehensive approach to implementing change:

- Develop and articulate a vision
- Plan and provide resources
- Invest in training and development
- Assess or monitor progress
- Provide continuous assistance
- Create a context conducive to change (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994).

Provide manager authority to exercise influence on project requiring change; even backing them up with a letter assigning them as leader of the project when necessary (Remoussenard, 2007).

Assign projects requiring significant change to a supervisor with the skills to do so - someone who can keep workers motivated and focused and overcome resistance (Remoussenard, 2007).

Thank supervisors and workers involved for their efforts and accomplishments in implementing a change (Maurer, 2007).

Disproportionality

Assume that bias exists and implement certain actions for anti-racist to create effective checks and balances that don't just function as a rubber stamp by:

- Hiring diverse staff
- Training all staff to be alert to bias
- Requiring objective measures of family capacity (such as consistent use of risk and reunification assessments)
- Strengthening the voice of a variety of representatives from communities of color
- Providing supervisory oversight with training
- Alerting educated judicial oversight
- Using alternate decision-making processes (such as family group conferencing)
- Employing placement resources (such as kinship care or culturally-based programs) that honor cultural ways of caring
- Tracking services offered to kin, parents and families by race (King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality, 2004).

For more information or a copy of the report, please contact Catalyst for Kids at 206-695-3238 or marikoo@chs-wa.org.

Provide training for supervisors and direct service workers on what the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) was designed to do and how to implement it. The general lack of knowledge about MEPA and confusion over its guidelines suggests that there may be a gap between policy and practice when it comes to understanding, interpreting and implementing MEPA (Chibnall, et al, 2003).

Recognize the importance of a strong agency infrastructure (experienced workers, proper supervision and oversight, strong peer relationships, and manageable caseloads) in reducing disproportionality by allowing supervisors and workers alike to do their jobs more effectively. If supervisors are able to supervise properly, then workers will be able to do their jobs more effectively, leading to better outcomes for children and families, including fewer children coming into the system in the first place (Chibnall, et al, 2003).

- Communicate the rationale behind administrative decisions. Supervisors find it difficult to see the big picture if they lack important information regarding changes in practice or policy (Chibnall, et al, 2003).

Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors Related to Quality Improvement

Actively promote continuous quality improvement (CQI) through organizational culture:

- Supervisors, managers, administrators, and other agency leaders are champions of continuous quality improvement work, as reflected by their decision-making and communications with staff.
- Clear communication and regular feedback occurs between agency leaders, managers, supervisors, staff, children, youth, families and stakeholders.

Empower supervisors and staff to advocate for, test, and implement changes in policy, practices, programs, and/or training, based on priorities of strengths and best practices.

Train, prepare, and support staff on how continuous quality improvement should be the way the agency does its work. The support must be consistent and come from all levels of the agency, including supervisors, managers, and leaders (Casey Family Programs, National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, 2005).

For more information, contact Peter Watson, Director of the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, at pwatson@usm.maine.edu or (207)228-8330.

Use structured methods of clinical casework supervision in child protection to positively impact satisfaction with supervision, organizational culture, preventable worker turnover, worker practice in assessment and intervention, and client outcomes. Agency administrators, supervisors, and workers alike have expressed a desire for quality supervision and techniques focused on the educational and supportive roles of supervision. The SR QIC Supervision Learning Laboratory Projects were implemented in:

- Arkansas Mentoring Family Service Worker Supervisors: focused on the mentoring of supervisors by field educators, and had four primary components: 1) classroom training on a model of clinical casework supervision; 2) mentoring by field educators every other week, utilizing a structured process; 3) On-line auto-tutorials on theory and research in the field; 4) Peer group supervision in which information from on-line offerings is applied case/supervision situations. Contact: Debbie Shiell, Division of Children and Family Services, 501-682-1554
- Mississippi Child Protective Service Casework Supervision Project: involved three major components in which the intervention group will participate: 1) assessment of supervisor competencies through cultural consensus analysis and development of supervisor-driven learning; 2) small group learning on a clinical casework supervision model; 3) establishment of a peer support system to promote transfer of learning and peer problem-solving. Contact: Kim Shackelford, University of Mississippi, 662-915-1563
- Missouri Role Demonstration Model in Child Protective Service Supervision: involved the training and provision of consultation on-site with supervisors to implement a four stage role demonstration model: worker observation of the supervisor providing clinical services; cooperative provision of clinical services; observed provision of clinical services by the supervisee; and independent provision of services by the supervisee with clinical feedback from the supervisor via case discussion and group consultation. Contact: Paul Sundet, University of Missouri, 573-882-0915
- Tennessee: Child Protective Services Supervisors Development Project: focused on two primary components: 1) classroom training focused on clinical decision-making; 2) a mentoring system to provide learning reinforcement in the field; 3) Use of auto-tutorials to make practice information readily accessible in the field. Contact: Jenny Jones, Virginia Commonwealth University, jljones2@vcu.edu .

For more information about the SR QIC, contact: Crystal Collins-Camargo, MSW PhD, Training Resource Center, University of Kentucky College of Social Work , 859-257-5476 or Crystal.Collins-Camargo@uky.edu

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Appendix C

Interview Protocols

**National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement**

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SUPERVISORS

The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement are developing a framework to support supervision in child welfare. The publication presenting the framework will contain numerous examples, proven tools and protocols, and case studies of child welfare agencies engaged in implementing effective child welfare supervision. We're asking you to help us gather that information by participating in this survey. We will use your answers to inform the development of the framework however we'll keep your responses confidential.

For additional information about this survey or the project, please contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at 1-800-HELPKID (435-7543) or <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/> or the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at 212-452-7053 or <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/index.html>.

Your Name _____
Telephone _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1. Position Title:
- 2. Years in Current Position:
- 3. Previous Position:
- 4. Educational Background/Degree:

5. a.-f.	Number
a. Number of caseworkers you currently supervise	
b. Number of caseworkers to be assigned to supervisor according to guidelines (state, county, legislation)	
c. Average number of cases assigned to each caseworker	
d. Number of cases per caseworker in guidelines	
e. Total number of cases you supervise	
f. Number of cases you currently directly serve	

5g. If you are currently directly serving cases, for what length of time have you done so?

5h. If there is a discrepancy between the guidelines and actual assignments for either case and/or supervisee assignments, what are the reason(s) for the discrepancy?

YOUR JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

6. Please describe the model of supervision you currently use. Has this changed over time? Vary with different caseworkers? What has influenced your approach to supervision?

7. Please rate your perception of the importance of each job responsibility listed below by placing a check in the appropriate column as either most important to you in your position, important, not important, or not applicable/not aware (not included in job description/unsure whether included in job responsibilities). Your perception of what is important may understandably differ from that of your agency or supervisor. Please identify the reasons for rating the job responsibilities as “most important to you” and "not important to you." If you need more space, please use the back of the survey.

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
a. Develop/monitor caseworkers’ family-centered practice competence				
b. Develop/monitor caseworkers’ cultural competence				
c. Assist caseworkers in applying learning from training, workshops, etc.				
d. Promote evidence-informed practice (assisting caseworkers in using practice and outcome data to assess practice effectiveness and adjust practice strategies to promote desired outcomes)				
e. Promote caseworkers' self reflective practice and critical thinking and case decision-making				
f. Recruit, select, train (or arrange training), and retain staff				
g. Identify/manage/evaluate caseworker performance (reward excellent performance, address performance difficulties)				
h. Provide on-going professional development for caseworkers (<i>develop knowledge/skill/career</i>)				
i. Case staffing/case reviews				
j. Anticipate/address/manage change within				

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
agency				
k. Anticipate/address/manage change within unit				
l. Facilitate communication and collaboration (supervisor-caseworker, agency-community (public and media), agency-foster parents, supervisor-agency, agency-courts, administrators, supervisor-caseworker-contractual service providers)				
m. Build and maintain working relationships with other units in agency				
n. Influence agency (re: goals, policy, structure, processes, resources, short-and long-term planning)				
o. Interpret and influence the organizational culture within the unit				
p. Prevent/address stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout for caseworkers				
q. Prevent/address stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout for self				
r. Enhance caseworkers' job satisfaction/Build and maintain morale				
s. Anticipate/Manage risk (safety) (to clients, caseworkers, supervisors)				
t. Manage caseloads (assign and cover cases)				
u. Manage time and workflow for caseworkers				
v. Manage time and workflow for self				
w. Use management information systems (MIS) (to evaluate outcomes; identify resource needs, training needs, and policy problems; manage caseloads)				
x. Monitor caseworker responsibilities to supervisor (timely information sharing, developing agenda for formal supervision, self-assessment re: training/stress/professional development)				
y. Address ethics in caseworkers' practice (<i>boundary issues, confidentiality</i>)				
z. Address ethics in supervision (boundary				

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
issues, confidentiality)				
aa. Provide ongoing professional development for self				
bb. Provide leadership to unit				
cc. Provide leadership within organization				
dd. Provide leadership within community				
ee.				
ff.				

7a. Are there additional responsibilities that your job includes? If so, please list above and rate.

8. Do you have a current written job/position description? If yes, does it accurately reflect your current job responsibilities?
If yes, would you be willing to provide it to us?

OBSTACLES AND SUPPORTS FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

9. Other than time and money, are there serious obstacles to your ability to carry out your current job responsibilities effectively?

Probe for: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, salary/incentives, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, selecting model of supervision

9a. Have these obstacles been addressed? If so, how? With what outcomes?

9b. Are there obstacles to carrying out your responsibilities that you and/or the agency have been unable to address? Please describe.

10. What (or who in what positions) are the greatest supports to you in carrying out these responsibilities effectively?

Probe for: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, salary/incentives, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, selecting model of supervision

- 10a. In what ways are these supports helpful to you?

- 10b. Are there supports you have needed to carry out your job responsibilities you/agency have been unable to access?

11. Are there written resources (training handouts, agency protocols, etc.) that have been particularly helpful in being effective in your position as a child welfare supervisor? If yes, describe. Would you be willing to provide a copy to us?

12. Is there training you have received that has been particularly helpful to you in being effective in your position as a child welfare supervisor? If yes, who provided? How contact?

YOUR OWN SUPERVISION NEEDS

13. In your position as supervisor, what are the three greatest needs that you have of your own supervisor?

- 13a. Does your supervisor effectively address these needs? If yes, what do you believe supports him/her in doing so? If no, what obstacles does she/he face in doing so?
14. In your position as supervisor, what are the three greatest needs that you have of the caseworkers that you supervise?
- 14a. Do your caseworkers effectively address these needs? If yes, what do you believe supports them in doing so? If no, what obstacles do they face in doing so?
15. Is there information we have not asked about that you believe is relevant to the ability of supervisors to provide effective child welfare supervision? If so, please describe.

**National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement**

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ADMINISTRATORS/DIRECTORS

The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement are developing a framework to support supervision in child welfare. The publication presenting the framework will contain numerous examples, proven tools and protocols, and case studies of child welfare agencies engaged in implementing effective child welfare supervision. We're asking you to help us gather that information by participating in this survey. We will use your answers to inform the development of the framework however we'll keep your responses confidential.

For additional information about this survey or the project, please contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at 1-800-HELPKID (435-7543) or <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/> or the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at 212-452-7053 or <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/index.html>.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1. Position Title: _____
- 2. Years in Current Position: _____
- 3. Previous Position: _____
- 4. Educational Background/Degree: _____

5. a.-e.	Number
a. Average number of caseworkers assigned to child welfare supervisors in your agency	
b. Number of caseworkers to be assigned to supervisor according to guidelines (state, county, legislation)	
c. Average number of cases assigned to each child welfare caseworker	
d. Number of cases assigned to each child welfare caseworker according to the guidelines	
e. Average number of cases that child welfare supervisors currently directly serve	

5f. If supervisors currently directly serve cases, for what length of time have they done so?

5g. If there is a discrepancy between the guidelines and actual assignments for caseworkers' cases and/or for number of supervisees assigned to supervisors, what are the reason(s) for the discrepancy?

SUPERVISOR JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

6. In your current position, what are the three greatest needs that you have of agency child welfare supervisors?

6a. Do the child welfare supervisors in your agency effectively address these needs? If yes, what do you believe supports them in doing so? If no, what obstacles do they face in doing so?

7. Please rate your perception of the importance of the job responsibilities of a child welfare supervisor in your agency, as you are aware of them, using the table below. Please rate each responsibility by placing a check in the appropriate column, rating each as either most important to you in your position, important, not important, or not applicable/not aware (not included in supervisor's job description/not sure whether included in a supervisor's job description). Please identify the reasons for rating the job responsibilities as "most important to you" and "not important to you." If you need more space, please use the back of the survey.

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
a. Develop/monitor caseworkers' family-centered practice competence				
b. Develop/monitor caseworkers' cultural competence				
c. Assist caseworkers in applying learning from training, workshops, etc.				
d. Promote evidence-informed practice (assisting caseworkers in using practice and outcome data to assess practice effectiveness and adjust practice strategies to promote desired outcomes)				
e. Promote caseworkers' self reflective practice and critical thinking and case decision-making				
f. Recruit, select, train (or arrange for training), and retain staff				
g. Identify/Manage/Evaluate caseworker performance (reward excellent performance, address performance difficulties)				
h. Provide on-going professional development for caseworkers (develop knowledge/skill/career)				
i. Case staffing/case reviews				

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
j. Anticipate/address/manage change within agency				
k. Anticipate/address/manage change within unit				
l. Facilitate communication and collaboration (supervisor-caseworker, agency-community (public and media), agency-foster parents, supervisor-agency, agency-courts, administrators, supervisor-caseworker-contractual service providers)				
m. Build and maintain working relationships with other units in agency				
n. Influence agency (re: goals, policy, structure, processes, resources, short-and long-term planning)				
o. Interpret and influence the organizational culture within the unit				
p. Prevent/address stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout for caseworkers				
q. Prevent/address stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout for supervisor				
r. Enhance caseworkers' job satisfaction/Build and maintain morale				
s. Anticipate/Manage risk (safety) (to clients, caseworkers, supervisors)				
t. Manage caseloads (assign and cover cases)				
u. Manage time and workflow for caseworkers				
v. Manage time and workflow for supervisor				
w. Use management information systems (MIS) (to evaluate outcomes; manage caseloads; identify resource needs, training needs, policy problems)				
x. Monitor caseworker responsibilities to supervisor (timely information sharing, develop agenda for formal supervision, ongoing self-assessment re: training needs/stress level/professional development needs)				
y. Address ethics in caseworker practice (boundary issues, confidentiality)				

Job Responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
z. Address ethics in supervision (boundary issues, confidentiality)				
aa. Provide ongoing professional development for supervisor				
bb. Provide leadership to unit				
cc. Provide leadership within organization				
dd. Provide leadership within community				
ee.				
ff.				
gg.				

7a. Are there additional responsibilities that are included in the child welfare supervisors' job in your agency? If so, please list above and rate.

8. Does your agency have a current written job/position description for child welfare supervisors? If yes, does it accurately reflect their current job responsibilities? If yes, would you be willing to provide it to us?

OBSTACLES AND SUPPORTS FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

9. What do you perceive to be the most serious obstacles (beyond time and money) to the ability of the child welfare supervisors in your agency to carry out their current job responsibilities effectively?

Probe for: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, salary/incentives, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, selecting model of supervision

- 9a. Have these obstacles been addressed? If so, how and with what outcomes?
- 9b. Are you aware of obstacles to child welfare supervisors' ability to carry out their responsibilities that the agency has been unable to address? Please describe.
- 9c. Is there anything your agency is currently planning to eliminate obstacles and better support child welfare supervisors in carrying out their job responsibilities? If yes, please describe.
10. What (or who in what position) do you perceive to be the greatest supports to agency child welfare supervisors in carrying out their responsibilities effectively?

Probe for: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, salary/incentives, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, selecting model of supervision

- 10a. Please describe in what ways these supports are helpful to supervisors.
- 10b. Are there supports that child welfare supervisors have needed to carry out their job responsibilities that the agency has been unable to access?

11. Are there written resources (training handouts, agency protocols, etc.) that you have observed to be particularly helpful in to child welfare supervisors in being effective? If yes, describe. Would you be willing to provide a copy to us?

12. Is there training you perceive to have been particularly helpful to child welfare supervisors in being effective in their position as supervisor? If yes, who provided? How contact?

13. Is there information we have not asked about that you believe is relevant to the ability of child welfare supervisors to provide effective child welfare supervision? If so, please describe.

**National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement**

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CASEWORKERS

The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement are developing a framework to support supervision in child welfare. The publication presenting the framework will contain numerous examples, proven tools and protocols, and case studies of child welfare agencies engaged in implementing effective child welfare supervision. We're asking you to help us gather that information by participating in this survey. We will use your answers to inform the development of the framework however we'll keep your responses confidential.

For additional information about this survey or the project, please contact the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement at 1-800-HELPKID (435-7543) or <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/> or the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at 212-452-7053 or <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/index.html>.

Name _____ Telephone _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Position Title: | 2. Years in Current Position: |
| 3. Previous Position:
Background/Degree: | 4. Educational |
| 5. Number of years supervised by your current supervisor:
assigned to your supervisor: | 6. Number of caseworkers |
| 7. Number and type of cases in your caseload: | |

YOUR SUPERVISOR'S JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

8. In your current position as a caseworker, what are the three greatest needs that you have of your supervisor?
- 8a. Does your supervisor effectively address these needs? If yes, what do you believe supports her/him in doing so? If no, what obstacles does she/he face in doing so?
9. Please describe your supervisor's job responsibilities as you are aware of them, using the table below. Please rate each responsibility by placing a check in the appropriate column, rating each responsibility as either most important to you in your position, important, not important, or not applicable/not aware (not included in supervisor's job description/not sure whether included in supervisor's job description). Please identify the reasons for rating the job

responsibilities as “most important to you” and “not important to you.” If you need more space, please use the back of the survey.

Job responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
a. Develop/monitor caseworkers’ family-centered practice competence				
b. Develop/monitor caseworkers’ cultural competence				
c. Assist caseworkers in applying learning from training, workshops, etc.				
d. Promote evidence-informed practice (assisting caseworkers in using practice and outcome data to assess practice effectiveness and adjust practice strategies to promote desired outcomes)				
e. Promote caseworkers' self reflective practice and critical thinking and case decision-making				
f. Recruit, select, train (or arrange for training), and retain staff				
g. Identify/Manage/Evaluate caseworker performance (reward excellent performance, address performance difficulties)				
h. Provide on-going professional development for caseworkers (develop knowledge/skill/career)				
i. Case staffing/case reviews				
j. Anticipate/address/manage change within agency				
k. Anticipate/address/manage change within unit				
l. Facilitate communication and collaboration (supervisor-caseworker, agency-community (public and media), agency-foster parents, supervisor-agency, agency-courts, administrators, supervisor-caseworker-contractual service providers)				
m. Build and maintain working relationships with other units in agency				

Job responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
n. Influence agency (re: goals, policy, structure, processes, resources, short- and long-term planning)				
o. Interpret and influence the organizational culture within the unit				
p. Prevent/address stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout for caseworkers				
q. Prevent/address stress/secondary traumatic stress/burnout for supervisor				
r. Enhance caseworkers' job satisfaction/Build and maintain morale				
s. Anticipate/Manage risk (safety) (to clients, caseworkers, supervisors)				
t. Manage caseloads (assign and cover cases)				
u. Manage time and workflow for caseworkers				
v. Manage time and workflow for supervisor				
w. Use management information systems (MIS) (to evaluate outcomes; manage caseloads; identify resource needs, training needs, policy problems)				
x. Monitor caseworker responsibilities to supervisor (timely information sharing, develop agenda for formal supervision, ongoing self-assessment re: training needs/stress level/professional development needs)				
y. Address ethics in caseworkers' practice (boundary issues, confidentiality)				
z. Address ethics in supervision (boundary issues, confidentiality)				
aa. Provide ongoing professional development for supervisor				
bb. Provide leadership to unit				
cc. Provide leadership within organization				

Job responsibility	Most important to you (and reasons)	Important to you	Not important to you (and reasons)	Not applicable/ Not aware
dd. Provide leadership within community				
ee.				
ff.				

- 9a. Are there additional responsibilities that your supervisor's job includes? If so, please list above and rate

OBSTACLES AND SUPPORTS FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

10. What do you perceive to be the most serious obstacles to the ability of the child welfare supervisors in your agency to carry out their current job responsibilities effectively?

Probe for: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, salary/incentives, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, selecting model of supervision

- 10a. Have these obstacles been addressed? If so, how, and with what outcome?

- 10b. Are you aware of obstacles to supervisors' ability to carry out their responsibilities that the agency has been unable to address? Please describe.

11. What (or who in what position) do you perceive to be the greatest supports to agency child welfare supervisors in carrying out their responsibilities effectively?

Probe for: training and information sharing, administrative/fiscal, recruitment and retention/preventing stress/enhancing morale, salary/incentives, facilitating communication and collaboration, enhancing/managing/evaluating caseworker performance, anticipating and managing risk, ethics in supervision, selecting model of supervision

- 11a. Please describe in what ways these supports are helpful to supervisors.

- 11b. Are there supports that child welfare supervisors have needed to carry out their job responsibilities that the agency has been unable to access?

12. Are there written resources (training handouts, agency protocols, etc.) that you have observed to be particularly helpful to your supervisor in being effective? If yes, describe. Would you be willing to provide a copy to us?

13. In thinking about your career path, do you plan to become a child welfare supervisor? If not, why not? If so, what will you need to make that transition successful?

14. Is there information I have not asked about that you believe is relevant to the ability of your supervisor to meet your needs as a caseworker and to provide effective child welfare supervision? If so, please describe.

Appendix D

Sample Job Description

JOB TITLE: CASEWORKER SUPERVISOR **GENERAL STATEMENT OF JOB**

This position is responsible for the direct administrative, educational, supportive, and case consultation supervision needs of workers in the various program and support areas of the Division. This position is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of available services to children, youth, and families in accordance with agency, state, and federal guidelines and laws.

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ADMINISTRATIVE JOB FUNCTIONS

These responsibilities of the supervisor are directed toward implementing the organizational objectives and helping to ensure that the quantity and quality of work achieves standards articulated or assumed by the Division.

- Recruiting and selecting staff
- Operationalizing and fostering ownership of the mission, vision, values, policies and procedures of the Division
- Assuring cohesion and high performance of the work unit
- Assigning and planning work
- Monitoring , reviewing, and evaluating work to encourage maximum performance of individual staff
- Facilitating open communication with staff and upper management to achieve Division goals
- Fostering collaborative relationships within the agency and with community agencies
- Managing change
- Monitor for compliance with County, State, Federal, and Department guidelines and laws

EDUCATIONAL JOB FUNCTIONS

These responsibilities of the supervisor are directed toward helping staff learn what they need to know to carry out their jobs.

- Provides/ensures orientation for new staff
- Teach, mentor and/or facilitate learning about specific job duties
- Encourages personal and professional growth and advancement
- Assures accurate documentation of all services per established guidelines

SUPPORTIVE JOB FUNCTIONS

These responsibilities of the supervisor are directed toward maintaining morale and job satisfaction by ensuring that staff are managing the challenges of the job and resulting stress; so that they find satisfaction with their job and remain motivated and committed to achieve positive outcomes with their clients.

- Establish a positive work climate in the unit encouraging stress and tension management strategies
- Develop and support a team work approach
- Facilitate successful resolution of conflict within and outside the agency
- Develop self-awareness of one's own attitudes, needs and behavior and its effect on supervisor-worker-client-colleague relationships
- Recognize individual and team achievement

CASE CONSULTATION JOB FUNCTIONS

These responsibilities of the supervisor are directed toward specific clinical and casework feedback, guidance, coaching and support to workers concerning their relationship and work with children and families. The goal of case consultation

is to ensure that client services are reflecting best practice, complying with policy and procedure guidelines, and meeting the agency goals of safety, permanency, and well being.

Providing quality assurance
Evaluating clinical and casework tasks for strengths and needs
Helping workers solve problems
Assessing compliance with policy
Guiding best practice activities

ADDITIONAL JOB FUNCTIONS

- Performs other work as required and/or assigned

MINIMUM TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

Minimum of a Bachelor's degree in one of the Behavioral Science fields, Masters degree or above preferred; and a minimum of two years relevant experience.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Must possess a valid driver's license issued by the State by 30 days of hire, and in order to be approved, you must have no more than three driving convictions, no major violations and no suspension for moving violations in the past three years. Requires excellent oral and written communication skills. Requires knowledge of the Dependency and Neglect Court System as it relates to children, adolescents, and families. Must pass a background check.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of county, state and federal legislation pertaining to the administration of Child Welfare programs.
Knowledge of community resources, agency rules, regulations, and procedures related to child protection issues.
Knowledge of child welfare principles and methods.
Knowledge of County/State organization and operational policies and procedures.
Knowledge of ethical guidelines applicable to the position as outlined by professional standards, federal, state, and local laws or ordinances.
Knowledge of the effects of child maltreatment and the laws dealing with child abuse, neglect and other dependency conditions. Knowledge of medical symptoms related to injuries.
Knowledge and skill in interviewing techniques and crisis intervention methods.
Knowledge of administrative, educational, supportive, and case consultation supervision principles.
Knowledge of personnel and management principles, practices and techniques as they relate to the administration of staff resources, position management, staff development and training, policy development and administration, employee relations, and related personnel and management functions and services.
Ability to clearly and concisely express oneself both verbally and in written format.
Ability to establish and maintain collaborative professional relationships with other employees, outside agencies, and the public.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS OR STANDARDS REQUIRED

TO PERFORM ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

Physical Requirements: Must be physically able to operate a variety of machinery and equipment such as computers, etc. Requires the ability to exert up to 50 pounds of force occasionally, and/or up to 25 pounds of force frequently, and/or up to 10 pounds of force constantly to move objects. Physical requirements are those for Medium Work.

Data Conception: Requires the ability to compare and/or judge the readily observable, functional, structural, or composite characteristics (whether similar to or divergent from obvious standards) of data, people or things.

Interpersonal Communication: Requires the ability to speak and/or signal people to convey or exchange information. Includes giving instructions, assignments and/or directions to subordinates.

Language Ability: Requires the ability to read a variety of correspondence, forms, reports, etc. Requires the ability to prepare correspondence, reports, forms, etc., using prescribed formats and conforming to all rules of punctuation, grammar, diction and style. Must be able to speak to people with poise, voice control and confidence.

Intelligence: Requires the ability to apply principles of logical or scientific thinking to a wide range of intellectual and practical problems; deal with nonverbal symbolism in its most difficult phases; deal with a variety of abstract and concrete variables; and comprehend the most abstruse classes of concepts.

Verbal Aptitude: Requires the ability to record and deliver information, explain procedures, and follow oral and written instructions. Must be able communicate effectively and efficiently in a variety of professional and technical languages.

Numerical Aptitude: Requires the ability to utilize mathematical formulas, add, subtract, multiply, divide, calculate decimals and percentages and interpret graphs; and compute discount, interest, profit and loss, ratio and proportion, etc.; and perform statistical calculations including advanced statistical inference with applications.

Form/Spatial Aptitude: Requires the ability to inspect items for proper length, width and shape.

Motor Coordination: Requires the ability to coordinate hands and eyes rapidly and accurately in using automated office equipment.

Manual Dexterity: Requires the ability to handle a variety of items, control knobs, switches, etc. Must have minimal levels of eye/hand/foot coordination.

Color Discrimination: Does not require the ability to differentiate between colors and shades of color.

Interpersonal Temperament: Requires the ability to deal with people beyond giving and receiving instructions. Must be adaptable to performing under stress and when confronted with persons acting under stress.

Physical Communication: Requires the ability to talk and hear (talking - expressing or exchanging ideas by means of spoken words; hearing - perceiving nature of sounds by ear). Must be able to communicate via telephone.