Supervision

The social work supervisor has three primary roles – administrative, educational, and supportive. These roles may overlap and they have a shared objective – to ensure social workers are providing the best possible service to clients.

Administrative Supervision:

Administrative supervision is the same as management. The supervisor ensures social workers are complying with agency policies. The supervisor is responsible for providing social workers with the resources necessary to perform the job.

**Examples:** Assigning and delegating work, assessing work load, evaluating progress on cases, ensuring social workers are adhering to the agency’s procedures, conducting performance evaluations

Educational Supervision:

Educational supervision provides social workers with training and guidance. Educational supervision helps social workers improve their understanding of social work philosophy, deepen their self-awareness, enhance their professional competence, and improve their practice skills.

**Examples:** Discussing specific cases, addressing professional concerns, providing staff development and training

Supportive Supervision:

Supportive supervision is intended to reduce social workers’ stress and increase their motivation and job satisfaction. Supervisors provide a safe place for social workers to process their experiences. Supervisors also provide structure for social workers by clearly defining their roles and their expectations of the social workers.

### Examples: Building rapport with social workers; providing empathy, encouragement, and praise for achievements; addressing burnout; encouraging self-care

Practice Questions:

1. A newly hired social worker is assigned supervisory responsibilities for an experienced social worker. The supervisor observes impressive agency commitment and knowledge of community resources on the part of the supervisee. However, after a review of three of the supervisee’s notes, the supervisor has reason to believe that there may be inequities in the services that the supervisee provided to certain clients. Which approach would BEST allow the supervisor to determine whether or not this is occurring?
2. Ask clients if they have noticed any deficiencies in the supervisee’s work
3. Contact a random group of the supervisee’s clients to inquire about the services they received.
4. Ask the supervisee if frequent practice dilemmas occur when serving specific clients
5. Arrange to periodically observe the supervisee’s work with certain clients
6. For the past year, a 25 year-old social worker has developed a pattern of increased absences and incomplete work assignments. Additionally, during staff meetings and in supervisory conferences, the social worker frequently makes comments such as “most people know that psychiatric patients never improve, and no one should expect us to help people who are this sick.” The supervisor should do FIRST:
7. Discuss with the social worker how these behaviors interfere with job performance
8. Advise the social worker of the necessity to change this negative attitude
9. Reflect the social worker’s job performance behavior in an annual performance evaluation
10. Develop a plan with the social worker to improve performance
11. A family services agency has a family preservation outreach team. One social worker on the team is of the same ethnicity as the client population served. This social worker reports to the social work supervisor that teammates seem to be unable to work effectively with the client population. What is the MOST appropriate response by the supervisor?
12. Reassure the social worker that the teammates are experienced, committed and competent
13. Suggest that the social worker may be too sensitive and overly identified with the client population
14. Ask the social worker if a diversity consultant would be helpful
15. Assist the social worker in identifying how this can be discussed within the team
16. A social work supervisor becomes aware that agency crisis workers are not offering in-home assessments according to agency policy. The supervisor should:
17. Structure the hierarchy in the agency to allow for less staff autonomy
18. Assess the staff members’ perspectives on the agency policy
19. Report the findings to agency administration
20. Adjust the policy to better match practices

## Answer Key:

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. B

# Sources:

<http://www.naswdc.org/practice/naswstandards/supervisionstandards2013.pdf>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=U2caAwAAQBAJ&pg=PT197&lpg=PT197&dq=administrative+supportive+supervision&source=bl&ots=XNHwINCH09&sig=5EigERgJcqiM8hQyrDEhppaihp4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAWoVChMIw6fd9vGSxgIVwwmsCh07vg50#v=onepage&q=administrative%20supportive%20supervision&f=false>

<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/socialwork/field_education/field_instructors/articles/upload/Supervision-in-Social-Work.pdf>