



## STAFF SUPERVISION POLICY AND STANDARDS

### 1. Supervision Policy – Purpose of Supervision and Rationale

Anglicare Victoria believes that the quality of supervision is central to the development and maintenance of high standards of professional service and client outcomes. This policy applies to all Anglicare Victoria Practitioners, Team Leaders/Managers/Senior Service and Regional Managers involved in the provision of services directly to children, young people, adults and families. Generally supervision will be provided by the immediate line manager. Any divergence from this would require authorisation by the Regional Manager. All paid staff are covered by this policy and will have a current supervision agreement in place.

The primary purpose of professional supervision is to facilitate competent practice to ensure quality services to clients through:

- ensuring staff are clear about roles and responsibilities;
- providing professional development and support for staff;
- accountability to service standards and regulatory requirements;
- maintaining professional ethics;
- creating learning opportunities;
- feedback to service planning and development.

A supervisor will ensure that the supervision is consistent with the definition outlined below, and encompasses the following key functions; management and administration, mediation, education and support. Issues that arise in supervision that have broader implications for service planning and organisational processes will be pursued through the mediatory role undertaken by supervisors.

Anglicare Victoria's supervision policy and standards are an important component of how we support, manage and develop our staff. This includes recruitment and selection, induction, professional development, staff care and the annual formal performance review.

Anglicare's Supervision Policy and standards are derived primarily from those of the Social Welfare Work profession<sup>1</sup>. Tony Morrison's<sup>2</sup> work has also been a key reference point. While many programs employ staff trained in other professions these expectations are considered relevant to most of the direct work undertaken by staff.

#### Registration Standards

This policy complies with Standards 3.5a of *Registration Standards for Community Service Organisations: Performance Criteria*, Department of Human Services, 2007.

#### DEFINITION

<sup>1</sup> AASW *National Practice Standards: Supervision*, 2000, .

<sup>2</sup> Morrison T (2005 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) *Staff Supervision in Social care Making a Real Difference for staff and service users.* Pavilion UK.

'Supervision is a process by which one worker is given responsibility by the organisation to work with another worker(s) in order to meet certain organisational, professional, and personal objectives which together promote the best outcomes for service users.'<sup>3</sup>

A strong and positive supervisory relationship provides the firm ground from which workers can recall, digest, reflect on, analyse their practice experiences, before planning and deciding what should happen next. It should provide a safe forum and process to address the powerful emotional and moral responses that can arise in this work. In that sense supervision is not only a series of tasks and roles, it is the key helping relationship for the worker. Good supervision provides not only clarity of tasks and purpose, but also supports the worker to maintain a sufficient level of personal motivation, emotional responsiveness and tenacity to enable them to be a true problem solving resource to vulnerable people.

Supervision is also essential to the integration of learning and development derived from formal or informal training. The vast majority of professional development happens on, rather than, off the job. The role of the supervisor in assisting the supervisee to integrate theory, research and practice is vital to learning and development. To achieve this, both supervisors and supervisees must work together to create the necessary climate of clarity, openness, curiosity and safety, in which not only the nature of the work can be examined, but also the attitudes, values, feelings and motivations that lie beneath.

Providing supervision is a high priority for all supervisors and managers employed by Anglicare Victoria.

## **2. FOUR CORE COMPONENTS OF SUPERVISION**

### **2.1. Administration & Management**

This is a management function which includes: the clarification of roles; the interpretation of the position description; the planning and assignment of work; the review and assessment of work; accountability and responsibility for the supervisee's work; adherence to Anglicare Victoria's policies, standards and procedures.

- The overall quality of the worker's performance is measured (against explicit expectations and standards)
- Agency policies and procedures are understood and followed
- The worker understands her/his role and responsibilities
- The worker is clear as to the limits and use of her/his personal, agency and statutory authority
- The purpose of supervision is clear
- Work is reviewed regularly in accordance with agency and legal requirements
- Work plans are formulated and carried out by staff within the context of agency functions and statutory responsibilities
- The basis of decisions and professional judgements are clear to you (the supervisor) and the worker (the supervisee) and made explicit in agency records
- Client records are maintained according to agency policies
- The worker knows when the supervisor expects to be consulted

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<sup>3</sup> Morrison T (2005 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) Staff Supervision in Social care Making a Real Difference for staff and service users.' Pavilion UK. page 32

- The worker is given an appropriate workload
- Time management expectations of the worker are clear and monitored
- The worker acts as a positive member of the team
- The worker understands the function of other agencies and relates appropriately to them
- The worker receives regular formal appraisal <sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 Education

This involves the provision of knowledge and skills, which are the worker's necessary equipment for effective practice. Reflection with and feedback from the supervisor regarding performance allows for the on going development of the worker's self-awareness in relation to his or her work; the enhancement of skills and knowledge focussed on best outcomes for clients and their community; and examination of ethical issues arising in the work.

Supervisors are unable to be the fount of all knowledge, rather the task is to enable staff to reflect honestly on their performance, assist them in setting relevant professional goals and help them to identify the sources of professional development available to them, including; sharing of relevant literature, consideration of internal and external workshops or courses for the supervisee and modelling through direct supervision (See Section 5.1 Live Supervision)

The aims of the educational function are to develop:

- The professional competence of the worker
- An appreciation and assessment of the workers theoretical base, skills, knowledge and experience
- An understanding of the workers value base and its impact on their work
- An understanding of the workers preferred learning style and blocks to learning
- An assessment of the workers training and development needs and how they can be met
- The workers ability to reflect on their work, learning constructively from mistakes and interaction with clients, colleagues and other agencies
- Regular and constructive feedback to the worker on all aspects of their performance
- The workers' ability to generalise learning and to increase their knowledge about how they learn

## 2.3 Support

The support function of supervision is concerned with helping the supervisee deal with job-related stress, and with developing attitudes and feelings conducive to maximum job performance. The discussion of matters of values raised by the work, tensions between professional and organisational expectations and open discussion of the supervision relationship are important means of support.

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<sup>4</sup> Morrison T (2005 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) Staff Supervision in Social care Making a Real Difference for staff and service users.' Pavilion UK. page 32

Supervision helps sustain worker morale; gives the supervisee a sense of professional self worth and a feeling of belonging in the agency; and helps the worker to develop clarity about the differences between personal and professional judgements and perspectives.

Supervision should encourage and build self reliance. Supervision does not provide therapy for a worker with substantial personal problems. The supervisor and supervisee may in some instances agree that the supervisee would benefit by referring to an independent professional for assistance with personal difficulties, such as Employment Assistance Program. The aims of the supportive functions are:

- To clarify the boundaries between support, counselling, consultation and confidentiality in supervision
- To create a safe climate for the worker to look at his/her practice and its impact on them as a person.
- Debrief the worker and give them permission to talk about feelings that arise from carrying out their work.
- Helping the worker to develop insight into their emotions, values and belief system and the impact on their capacity to work effectively with clients.
- To explore in a safe setting issues about discrimination.
- To support workers who are subject to any form of abuse either from clients or from colleagues, whether this be physical psychological or discriminatory and to ensure adequate support plans are in place to prevent re-occurrence.
- To monitor the overall health and emotional functioning of the worker, especially with regard to the effects of stress.
- To help the worker reflect on difficulties in colleague relationships and to assist the worker in resolving conflict.
- To clarify when the worker should be advised to seek external counselling, and its relationship with the monitoring of performance.

#### **2.4 Mediation – Service planning and development**

There are issues that arise in supervision that relate to service planning and organisational processes. Where the supervisor identifies issues that fall within this realm the supervisor will play a mediator role which entails the following:

- Brief higher management about resource deficits or implications.
- Allocate resources in the most efficient way.
- Represent staff needs with higher management.
- Initiate, clarify or contribute to policy formulation.
- Consult and brief staff about organisational developments or information.
- Advocate between worker, or team, and other parts of the agency or with outside agencies.
- Represent or accompany staff in work with other agencies.
- Involve staff in decision making.
- Deal sensitively, but clearly, with complaints about staff.
- Assist and coach staff, where appropriate, through complaints processes or difficult interactions where a worker may not be confident in managing the situation on their own. This may include seeking the assistance of a another senior practitioner.

### 3. STANDARDS

#### 3.1 Supervision will be guided by a written, mutually negotiated, supervision agreement

The agreement should include objectives to be achieved under the four broad components of supervision. It will also include long term professional development objectives, with specific annual tasks towards those objectives. The agreement will make reference to the supervisee's position description, and will be periodically reviewed by supervisor and supervisee, and formally at least on an annual basis. The annual review will confirm, achievement of professional development objectives established for the year, including key performance indicators, and items that will be carried into the new years contract and the annual Performance, Review and Development process.

The content of supervision Agreements must define:

- the purpose of supervision;
- respective roles and responsibilities;
- the frequency of supervision and the reasons for this pattern;
- how agendas are drawn up;
- how issues in the working relationship between supervisor and supervisee will be managed;
- how confidentiality limits within the supervision relationship will be managed;
- how the supervisor's records (including decisions and action points) are to be shared with the supervisee and senior management;
- the frequency at which the agreement is to be reviewed; and
- how diversity principles and anti-oppressive practice concerns will be addressed.

An example of the content and issues covered in a Supervision Agreement is attached in appendix 1.

#### 3.2 Unplanned supervision is required to provide on the spot guidance, instruction and debriefing for the supervisee, and in response to crises.

Where consultation occurs between the supervisee and supervisor out side of scheduled supervision meetings, the supervisee will bring to the next planned supervision the discussion that occurred and outcomes of the guidance/direction that was provided in this unplanned supervision. This ensures that the instructions provided are recorded and clarity of expectations.

#### 3.3 Supervision must be matched to the levels of experience and length of employment. The regularity and scope of supervision will also be adjusted to account for Part time and Casual staff.

The regularity, focus and content of supervision, will vary according to staff's years of experience, length of time employed in the agency and the intensity of work with clients.

Recent recruits with less than six months experience or students on placement with the organisation will have at least two hours of uninterrupted formal supervision per week for the length of their placement or probationary period. The regularity and length of supervision will be reviewed after this point, and the supervision agreement will be updated accordingly.

Newly recruited staff that have more than six months of relevant paid work experience will have at least one hour per week of uninterrupted formal supervision for the

duration of their probationary period. The regularity and length of supervision will be reviewed after this point, and the supervision agreement will be updated accordingly.

With increased experience and expertise, that is more than 12 months experience in the profession and 6 months employment with the organisation, supervision will be provided for at least two uninterrupted hours once a fortnight.

Part time and casual staff are also required to have one-on-one supervision, however the frequency and length of this will be adjusted pro rata in accordance with the number of hours of that an employee works in a week.

### **3.4 Developing an effective professional relationship is a mutual responsibility.**

In order for effective learning, professional development, and accountability to take place, staff must open all their work for review by their supervisor. This is also an implicit dimension of improving quality.

The development of a trusting professional relationship is a mutual responsibility of both parties, and must be teased out in the processes of establishing the supervision contract. Elements of an effective working relationship require the following:

- Development of trust and confidence.
- Discretion and respect are evident.
- The Supervisor is credible, consistent, reliable, and shares information about the organisation and the context.
- Diversity is appreciated and utilised.
- The process is experienced as two-way, with a sense of learning from each other, with clear communication on the part of both parties.

### **3.5 Supervision will be recorded and securely filed.**

Notes taken during the supervision session by the supervisor will be sufficient to track directions and action plans as they relate to a specific client and the supervisee's professional development and performance. These records will be filed in a secure filing cabinet and will be referred for management purposes, where required. The way notes will be taken and recorded should be negotiated in the learning agreement and noted. Notes will also include:

- Recording the occurrence, duration and frequency of supervision, Which will be subject to periodic audit
- Ensuring continuity of service provision if either or both the supervisor and supervisee are unavailable because they are on leave or are no longer employees.
- Recording professional development activities, which will be subject to periodic audit
- Reviewing staff performance.

Decisions made in relation to clients, will also be noted on the relevant client file.

### 3.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of supervisors and supervisees vary, however both have an equal responsibility to ensure that supervision occurs regularly and on time, and that it meets agency expectations and staffs' individual professional development needs.

Supervisors **are responsible for:**

- Guiding professional judgements.
- Encouraging creativity and lateral thinking.
- Imparting skills and techniques for staff in carrying out their duties.
- Encouraging and providing opportunities for staff to learn and practice new skills and techniques.
- Creating a positive team environment.
- Encouraging reflective practice.
- Picking up on cues indicating personal values or judgements that may be affecting staff work with clients and reflecting this back.
- Ensuring that practice is client centred; and where applicable, child centred and family focussed.
- Participating in training programs, seminars and conferences designed to improve supervision skills and knowledge.
- Being attentive to the fact that supervision extends beyond formal, planned sessions and will be required on an ad hoc and informal basis, as situations arise. It is important that Supervisors are readily available to deal with urgent issues and crises.
- Providing feedback in a planned, clear, consistent way that is based on specific, observed behaviours and balances strengths and weaknesses.
- Advising management of significant and potentially critical client and staff related issues.

**Supervisees** are responsible for:

- Planning, preparing for and attending supervision
- Being open and honest about challenges, dilemmas, and blocks to learning
- Bringing written work eg, assessments, case plans, case notes for review
- Bringing ideas, and knowledge into supervision
- Taking responsibility for learning and development
- Being open to constructive feedback and new ideas and approaches

## 4. Reflective Practice Based Supervision

Supervision is an essential part of staff learning the knowledge and skill base required to undertake their role. Adults' best learn when they are able to integrate the following on a continuous basis:

- Experience – Being open to and aware of and valuing experience.
- Reflection – Making use of and investigating experience, use of feelings/intuition ideas and options.
- Conceptualisation – Analysing and creating meaning; asking why.
- Active experimentation – Preparing for action and trying things out.

Supervision provides the space to enable staff to exercise all parts of this learning to varying degrees, but most importantly provides space for the integration process to occur.

The supervisor must take into account the supervisee's different learning styles. For instance some like to learn by doing and need assistance in connecting their practice to theory. Others can focus on conceptualisation and get stuck when it comes to applying this in practice. It is the role of both the supervisor and supervisee to identify preferred learning styles, and to take this into account.

#### **4.1 Selection of developmental activities or strategies**

When choosing development activities or strategies for learning, supervisors should assist the worker to identify their preferred learning styles (and barriers to learning). Professional development requires assessment, planning and evaluation and will often combine a number of strategies that suit the learning style of the supervisee, take advantage of available resources and enhance collaboration and team work. The following are examples of professional development strategies that might be initiated in supervision as appropriate:

Supervisor sharing knowledge and experience	Knowledge exchange with peers	Reading selected text/policy/legislation/theory
Shadowing	Training programs	Project planning
Job rotation	Project assignments	Conference attendance
Demonstration/modelling	Simulation exercises	Study/further education
Pairing with experienced staff	Immediate feedback	Team training
Coaching	Practice	Recorded observation
Mentoring	Role play	Peer/group supervision
Computer training package	Self evaluation	Research
Tutorials	Reflection	Brainstorming

Whichever development strategies are used, their effectiveness in enhancing the skills of the supervisee should be the subject of reflection in supervision sessions following their implementation.

## **5. ADDITIONAL SUPERVISORY PROCESSES**

### **5.1 Live Supervision**

Live supervision is an important, additional tool to planned supervision sessions. Live supervision entails the supervisor working alongside the supervisee in direct work with clients. This is done with the aim of both modelling techniques and approaches, and to observe the supervisee's work. Live supervision will occur periodically and is also available in response to particularly challenging situations that have been identified by either party. It is an additional method to ensure that the direction taken in supervision to progress staff's learning and development is matched to the demands of the work and supervisee's needs. It is preferable to seek prior consent from clients to including the supervisor in direct client contact. Program brochures regarding privacy will cover the issue of client confidentiality in relation to supervision.

## 5.2 External Consultation and Supervision

External Consultation and Supervision is another supervisory tool and is supervision by someone other than the line manager. For some staff, the need for external supervision will be to satisfy professional accreditation requirements. In other situations, external consultation will enable the exploration of and attention to specific issues related to the work area of the staff member.

External Consultation and Supervision must be approved by the Program Manager and Senior Service/Regional Manager, who will be provided with written advice outlining the rationale and objectives for external consultation or supervision. This will include one or a combination of the following:

- To maintain or to achieve professional accreditation.
- To address specific performance issues.
- To identify areas for further training, the development of specific skills and practice issues.
- Where the decision is made to separate the four functions of Supervision (Administration and Management, Education, Support and Mediation) to distinct supervision sessions.

The relationship and accountabilities between supervisee, supervisor and line manager are to be clearly defined prior to the external consultation or supervision commencing. This will be documented in a written agreement that will also outline the specific objectives or focal point for supervision, and issues that the external supervisor/consultant is expected to feedback to the line manager.

## 6. DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN SUPERVISOR AND SUPERVISEE

Issues of concern causing tension or blocks to effective dialogue in supervision must be raised by either party, so that problems can be proactively identified and resolved. It is the mutual responsibility of both parties to listen to concerns respectfully and to participate in a mutual problem solving process.

Where concerns persist, the matter can be referred to the next line Manager by the supervisor. This is best done with the full knowledge and preferably the agreement, of both parties. Difficulties may also fall under the formal grievance policies outlined by Anglicare Victoria Human Resource Department.

## 7. TRAINING IN SUPERVISION

Co coordinators, Team Leaders, Program, Senior Service and Regional Managers who provide supervision, will have the opportunity to participate in the Professional Supervision Skills program provided by Anglicare Victoria, and any other relevant professional development opportunities associated with supervisory practice.

The purpose of the Professional Supervision Skills program is to enhance the skills and capacity of Supervisors, to meet the challenges associated with delivering and sustaining high quality supervision practice that supports supervisees to work to the best of their ability.

**This policy becomes effective as at:** July 2011

**This policy was last amended:** June 2011

**This policy is due to be reviewed:** June 2014

**Queries about this policy should be directed to:** Deputy CEO – Community Services

## Appendix 1 Core Supervision Agreement

The following Agreement stipulates the essential aspects of supervision that must be discussed at length by both parties, and documented. Some programs may wish to augment this core agreement with additional supervision processes and tools such as a LAC Checklist, or Family Services assessment and action plan checklists. In these cases additional processes must not undermine the Supervision Policy or this core agreement.

Between: \_\_\_\_\_Supervisee & \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor

Commencing \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose of Supervision

Supervision will cover the core functions of Administration & Management, Support, Education and Mediation and will operate alongside Annual Performance Review process. In summary the core purpose of Supervision is to:

- To be a primary source of support for you and recognize the considerable impact and demands of the work with clients.
- To ensure that you understand and carry out your roles and responsibilities as identified in the position description, program manuals and policies. These can be found on the Anglicare Victoria intranet.
- To drive and support your professional development consistent with the outcomes of the Annual Performance Review and Key Performance indicators.
- To feedback issues and experiences pertinent to service planning and policy development.

### The content the sessions will include:

Whilst the content of supervision will broadly cover the core components outlined about and in the Supervision Policy Sections 2, and 4, it will regularly entail:

- Reviewing your work through discussion, reports and observations.
- Agreeing on action plans that address specific client related issues.
- Reflect upon your experience, and its impact, integrating this with relevant theoretical frameworks.
- Providing an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge base that are essential to the work and may target a particular area of practice.
- Reviewing your professional development needs as identified in the Annual Performance Review, and monitoring the achievement of Key Performance Indicators.
- If you are a new member of staff and have not been part of an Annual Performance Review; specific learning and development objectives will be

established in supervision, and reviewed in the next Annual Performance Review Process.

- Mutual constructive feedback and periodic review of the supervision process and agreement.

**The structure we have agreed on is as follows:**

In accordance with the Supervision Policy, Section 3 Standards,

Supervision will be provided for \_\_\_\_\_hour/s \_\_\_\_\_ per week/fortnight (in the case of casuals month).

- Recording of session will be undertaken by \_\_\_\_\_,and filed \_\_\_\_\_. Decisions relating to specific clients will also be recorded in the client file by you at the end of our sessions.
- We will set the agenda by \_\_\_\_\_.
- Key Performance Indicators will be central focus of learning and development strategies that will be identified and reviewed in the supervision session.
- Interruption and cancellation will only occur when an emergency arises. Rescheduling sessions is the responsibility of the party prompting the cancellation or interruption and will be done at the time.

**Review**

This Agreement will be annually on the following date\_\_\_\_\_.

In the training I would be saying you should review the agreement every 3 months (6 months latest)