

6.3 SUPERVISING PEERS: CLINICAL SUPERVISION



Sylvia Young (left) with Anna Jackson, FCN
Consumer Task Force and Retreat Coordinator

I hope everyone understands the importance of mental health supervision. I need that support. This is hard work. I wouldn't be here anymore if I didn't have it.

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Introduction

Although much of this guide is focused on developing peer programs that utilize an asset-based approach to program development by building programs from the resources that are readily available, it should be noted that while clinical supervision for peers is ideal, it may not be realistic, given budget constraints. It is important for programs to have an understanding of clinical supervision so that if resources permit, programs can invest in this level of support for their peers.

Some peer support programs are able to provide clinical supervision by a licensed clinical provider who may or may not be part of the organization. The following outlines a model and limited guide to providing clinical supervision for peers.

A clinical supervisor is defined as someone who is licensed by the state in which he or she practices clinical work and is in the position to provide guidance and direction to both clinical and nonclinical staff. In general, clinical supervisors have been in practice for at least five years.

Below is a comparison of clinical supervision for prelicensed practitioners versus clinical supervision for peers.

Clinical supervision for prelicensed practitioners:

- Provides individualized support and training.
- Allows for close monitoring of caseload.
- Assists supervisee in providing accurate diagnoses.
- Assists supervisee in forming a treatment plan.
- Helps supervisee manage feelings that arise about/towards clients (countertransference).
- Helps supervisee manage feelings that arise from the client about/toward the supervisee (transference).
- Teaches supervisee how to monitor therapist/client interpersonal dynamic and intervene therapeutically when difficult interactions arise.
- Supports supervisee in identifying and addressing work stress related to working with clients with significant life stressors.

SUPERVISING PEERS: CLINICAL SUPERVISION



Two peers at Christie's Place.

Supervision has been an ongoing issue for us. There are challenges of boundaries, there's countertransference. So we hired a clinician supervisor, an MFT with 20 years of clinical supervision experience. With her counseling background, she's able to provide a higher level of supervision and support to the peers.

Elizabeth Brosnan
Executive Director
Christie's Place, San Diego

- Helps supervisee maintain realistic expectations for self and clients.
- Helps supervisee identify and build on what works with clients.
- Ensures that supervisee works within scope of practice and makes appropriate referrals when necessary.
- Evaluates supervisee for eventual licensure.

Similarly, clinical supervision for peers:

- Provides individualized support and training.
- Allows for close monitoring of caseload.
- Can assist peer in forming client care plans.
- Helps peer manage feelings that arise about/towards clients.
- Supports peer in identifying and addressing work stress related to working with clients with significant life stressors.
- Helps peer identify and build on what works with clients.
- Helps peer maintain appropriate expectations for self and clients.
- Ensures that peer stays within scope of work and makes appropriate referrals when necessary.
- Can be used as a venue for supporting peer's professional development.

However, clinical supervision for peers:

- Does not diagnose clients.
- Does not treat clients, although they may come up with a plan for care and support.
- Rather than focusing on helping peers intervene once a difficult interpersonal dynamic arises, helps peers proactively navigate client relationships in which both flexibility and good boundaries are important. When a difficult dynamic arises, supportive supervisors help peers address difficulties in practical ways.
- Helps identify and address personal stress as well as work-related stress to a limited degree.
- Helps link personal experience and knowledge to peers' work with clients, but with a clear understanding of the boundaries and limits of the peer support provided (based on the peer role).

Clinical Case Consultation

Case consultation is the section of clinical supervision where peers present their client work in a clinical framework. In general, it can follow the case discussion framework below:

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- Narrative description
 - Basic history or client story
- Current issue
 - Client questions/concerns
 - Supervisee questions/concerns
- Supervisee's thoughts/reactions
 - Transference
 - Countertransference
- Action planning
 - What is the plan to address:
 - Client needs
 - Supervisee needs

Although it is important that the peer not diagnose the client, clinical supervision can offer an opportunity for the peer to learn about mental health issues. In this way, peers may have a better understanding of their clients and the referrals they are offered and may be able to troubleshoot any obstacles for that client in seeking additional care.

[Read More: The Coaching Model for Clinical Supervision](#) contains more information about the clinical supervision model.

► FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read More for Subsection 6.3

- The coaching model for supportive supervision
- Troubleshooting difficult cases and supporting peer efforts
- Recognizing and addressing countertransference
- Tasks and tools for developing a supportive approach
- Peer support groups and structured group supervision

Resources for Section 6

- Framework for supportive supervision case discussion (JRI)
- Framework for clinical case consultation tool (JRI)
- Administrative supervision tools (The Lotus Project)
- Supportive supervision tools (The Lotus Project)
- Supervision Tools (The PACT Project)
- Peer weekly staffing report (Project ARK)

Additional Supervision Subsections

- Supervising Peers: Introduction
- 6.1 Administrative Supervision
- 6.2 Supportive Supervision
- 6.3 Clinical Supervision

Further Reading

- Janine M. Bernard and Rodney K. Goodyear, *Fundamentals of Clinical Supervision* (2nd Edition).
- Marijane Fall and Jack Sutton, *Clinical Supervision: A Handbook for Practitioners*, University of Southern Maine.
- National AIA Resource Center "[Building Upon the Unique Strengths of Peer Workers](#)" *Newsletter of The National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center*, Volume 11, No. 3, Fall 2002.
- Michael J. Austin, Karen M. Hopkins, *Supervision as Collaboration in the Human Services: Building a Learning Culture*, 2004. [Preview book](#).
- James M. Benschoff, "[Peer Consultation as a Form of Supervision](#)," *CYC online: Reading for Child and Youth Care Workers*, Issue 31, August 2001.

This section is part of the online toolkit *Building Blocks to Peer Program Success*. For more information, visit http://peer.hdwg.org/program_dev