



Alliance for the Advancement of
Infant Mental Health

Grounding Ourselves in Best Practice for Reflective Supervision

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Sign in Code: B5F

*IT'S SO GOOD
TO SEE YOU*



Alliance for the Advancement of
Infant Mental Health

Best Practice Guidelines for Reflective Supervision/Consultation



Best Practice Guidelines for Reflective Supervision Consultation (BPGRSC)

- To emphasize the importance of reflective supervision/consultation (RS/C) for best practice
- To describe the knowledge, skills, and practices that are critical to RS/C
- To better ensure that those providing RS/C are appropriately trained and qualified
- To define the type of RS/C that is required for Endorsement®

Orientation to BPGRSC

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Working Assumptions

- Within the RS/C process, practitioners are able to examine with a trusting supervisor/consultant the thoughts, feelings, & reactions evoked in the course of working closely with pregnant women, infants, young children, & their families
- The relationship is the foundation of the work
- RS/C is best practice for infant-young child professionals
- A hallmark of RS/C is the shared exploration of the parallel process
- Relationships for learning include safety, trust, & consistency
- “Self-awareness leads to better services for families”
(Diversity Informed IMH Tenets)

Grounding Principles

- Development – Where is each supervisee in his/her development? Where is the group? Where are you? How does this impact your work?
- Culture – individual, group, systems
- Feelings are named & wondered about and are used to inform the work
- The baby is always present in the work
- There is a great emphasis on listening, waiting, & allowing the supervisee to explore her/her work without interruptions



Program Supervisor as Reflective Supervisor

- Reflection benefits the carrying out of both administrative tasks and direct service responsibilities
- Both roles/jobs of the supervisor are essential for a quality program and services
- Requires a strong ability to tolerate, process and contain conflict

Vignette

Sarah, a home visitor in an infant mental health program, came back to the office feeling guilty because she had just returned from paying an electric bill for a family. She became so upset to find out the family's electricity went out that she immediately rushed to the electric company and paid the bill. Upon calming down a bit, she realized this may not have been the best intervention for this family.

She immediately went to her supervisor's office and, with some anxiety, shared what had happened.



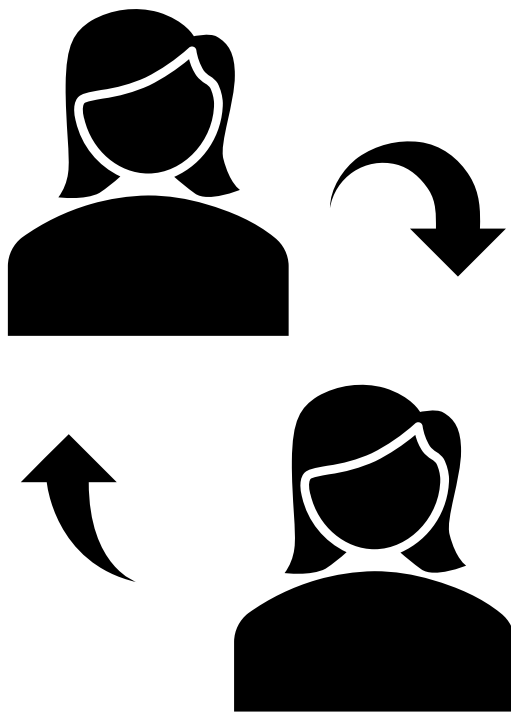
Things to Consider

What does this vignette bring up for you?

What is your comfort level with demands of accountability?

How do you use the process and relationship to approach problem solving?

What do you understand about yourself and your ability to tolerate, process and contain conflict?



Discussion

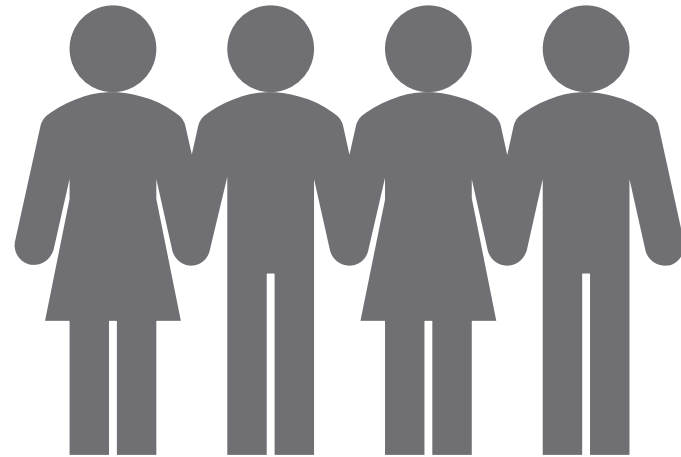
Strategies

- Frontload the process – how to set up expectations
- Explore past experiences of supervision for both
- Supervisor shares their model
- What is RS? Discuss together the different kinds of supervision (Admin, Clinical, Reflective)
- What are we doing together?
- What are our mutually determined goals?
- Mutually create agendas for sessions
- How will we address performance concerns together, in a reflective way?
- Keep administrative & reflective times separate
- Disciplinary action should never occur within a group setting
- Supervisor must be comfortable periodically asking the supervisee how the process is working for them, with openness to explore differences & disagreements
- Use of one's own RSC is critical to effective balancing of the dual purposes of supervision provided



Group Reflective Supervision/Consultation

“RS/C provided in a group setting can prove to be quite valuable in many ways. It allows for the opportunity to practice reflection with others, provides a larger holding environment for a team or group of professionals who are all serving pregnant women, infants, young children, and families, enables participants to learn from one another’s work, and may be more reasonable as it reduces the cost per supervisee (Heller & Gilkerson, 2009).”



Vignette

You just started providing reflective consultation to a group of 7 home visitors. You have been providing individual reflective supervision for the last 4-years and this is your first time providing RC within the group format. Going into your first session with them, you know very little. What you do know is that they had been with their previous reflective consultant for 6-years and that many of the practitioners have 5+ years of direct service experience.



Things to Consider

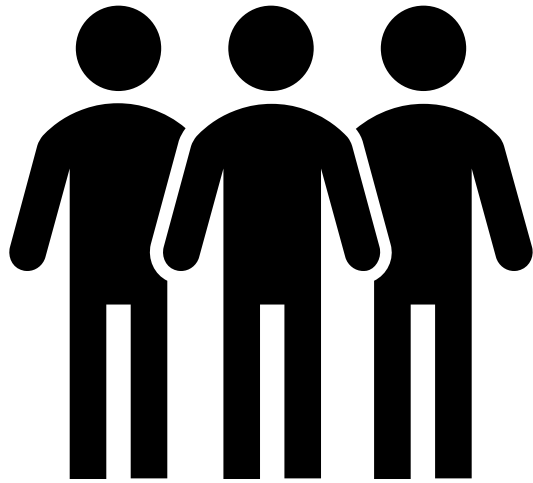
What does this vignette bring up for you?

Do you prefer individual or group RS/C? And why?

What is your comfort level with managing the needs of multiple group members?

What are unique benefits you've experienced in group RS/C?

What are unique challenges you've experienced in group RS/C?



Discussion

Strategies

- Ongoing training and support for group RS/C providers
- Manageable group sizes so all can participate effectively
- RS/C provider should monitor group to be sure there are no invisible members or absent voices

Heffron, et. al. (2016)



Strategies

- Offer space at the beginning and on an ongoing basis for the group to discuss how things are going
- Establish a routine, then allow for flexibility within that routine
- The consultant sets the stage for consistency, reliability and predictability
- The group will need ample time to consider ground rules (e.g. confidentiality, attendance, guidelines for listening, boundaries, etc.)
- Offer a space to think about why everyone is coming to RS/C and what their expectations may be, including those of the RS/C provider, is important
- The provider of RS/C might want to share a bit of information about what RS/C is in the beginning



Distance Technology Reflective Supervision/Consultation

“Technology has revolutionized the art of RS/C, making it possible for many more people to work together in a reflective relationship, spanning vast distances between rural and urban communities as well as across countries and states. With the emphasis on relationship as the instrument for growth and change for families and for service providers, a significant factor to consider when using distance technology is how to build a relationship that will fuel development as well as reflective capacity.”
~Deborah Weatherston, 2016



Vignette

You have been asked to provide reflective consultation for a group of early childhood educators in another state. You learn that they are required to attend these sessions with you via distance technology due to grant support for the group, but they do not have a foundational understanding of reflective consultation.



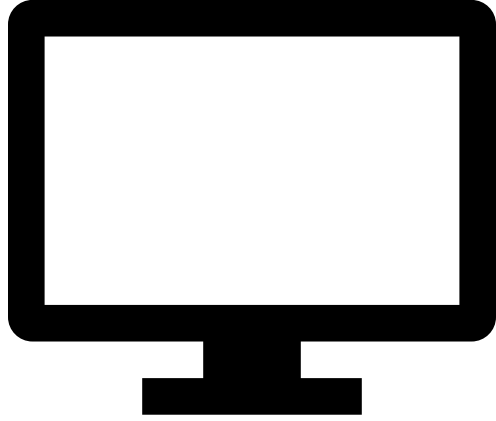
Things to Consider

What is your comfort level with RSC via distance technology?

How will you establish a sense of “being with” without being in the same room together? What extra things might need to be thought and talked about?

What parameters do you want to set up for the time to be most effective?

Talk about a success you have had providing or receiving RSC via distance technology.



Discussion

Preparation

- What technology platform will you use? Is it accessible to all? What will you do if it fails?
- If there is a group, what is the ideal size?
- If it is a group, are they all in the same room or in different places?
- How will you set up appropriate expectations before the first group? (need to have wifi access, computer with video option, etc.)
- How will silence be navigated?




Strategies

- Discuss special issues of privacy & confidentiality specific to the use of distance technology
- Discuss "etiquette" for this way of being together
- Establish a "back up" mode of communication in case primary mode fails & clear troubleshooting guidelines
- Name what might be hard about meeting in this unique way
- Begin each time with a quiet period or a transitional relaxation or mindfulness activity
- Consider having a metaconversation after the first 2-3 sessions to discuss how the communication is flowing. Include attention to eye contact, i.e., does the technology enable enough eye contact between participants to foster relationship development. Appropriate adjustments can be made based on the feedback generated from this metaconversation
- It can help to supplement with face-to-face contacts when possible



*“When it’s going well, supervision is a **holding environment**, a **place to feel secure enough** to expose insecurities, mistakes, questions and differences.”*
~ Rebecca Shahmoon-Shanok



*“In virtual reflective supervision, our job is to **create safe space**, and to **make connections**, even across cyberspace so that our supervisees can feel secure enough for exposure and discovery.”*
~ Kaitlin Mulcahy



What did we learn?

YOU ARE EXACTLY WHERE
YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
ALWAYS.
AND SO IS EVERYONE ELSE.

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#CarryOnWarrior



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Resources

Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health (2018). Best Practice Guidelines for Reflective Supervision/Consultation.

<https://www.allianceaimh.org/reflective-supervisionconsultation>

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