

10 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE CAREER COUNSELLOR SUPERVISION



- 1. Establish a clear purpose for supervision.** Supervision may be formative, enhancing skills and encouraging reflective practice; normative, monitoring quality of service; or restorative, building confidence and supporting counsellor self-care (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014; McMahon, 2003; Reid, 2010). Collaborate with supervisees to establish a focus for your work together.
- 2. Access relevant competency frameworks.** It is important for career counselling supervisors to be fully versed in the national competency frameworks for both counsellors (Task Group for Counsellor Regulation in British Columbia, 2007) and career development practitioners (Canadian S&Gs, 2012b) and to understand which frameworks apply to each individual on the team. Set high professional standards, but avoid expecting supervisees to work beyond their scope of practice or boundaries of competence.
- 3. Identify applicable ethical codes.** Within Canada there are several ethical codes and professional practice standards within both counselling and career development. These are attached to various national and provincial associations as well as professional regulatory bodies. Within a single organization, each member of the team may be working under a different ethical code. It is imperative, therefore, to examine similarities and differences and identify possible contradictions or areas that may cause confusion between colleagues and/or members of interdisciplinary teams.
- 4. Develop supervision competencies.** Just as there are specific competency frameworks for both counsellors and CDPs, supervision itself is an area of specialization. Before taking on supervisory responsibilities, ensure that all of the foundational supervisor competencies are in place (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014; Falender & Shafranske, 2004).
- 5. Select a preferred supervision format.** Supervision may be formal or informal, offered one-to-one or in a group. Sessions may be paid or unpaid, regularly scheduled or only as needed or requested, in person or using technology to connect from remote locations (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014). Combinations could also work, for example, combining a peer group focused on reflection and self-care with regularly scheduled individual skill development sessions.
- 6. Form an effective working alliance.** A strong working alliance between the supervisor and supervisee contributes to the success of any supervision process (Hoppin & Goodman, 2014; Parcover & Swanson, 2013; Watkins, 2015). Consider separating the role of clinical supervisor from line manager, especially when the latter is responsible for ensuring targets are met.
- 7. Provide a reflective space.** Although many in the career development sector are juggling large caseloads and being held to high performance target standards, a key part of supervision will be to ensure counsellors and practitioners are able to engage in self-reflection (Hoppin & Goodman, 2014; Stoltenberg et al., 2014). Just making time to reflect can be a restorative strategy; also consider journaling and open-ended prompts to stimulate reflection.
- 8. Support both process and content.** Competencies in process supervision for counsellors easily transfer to supervision for career counsellors and CDPs. However, it's also important for supervisors to effectively support content-related concerns. Ongoing professional development will help to keep you current re career-related content.
- 9. Facilitate self-care.** As counsellor self-care is recognized as a core competency in the Canadian National Entry-to-Practice Profile for Counselling Therapists (Task Group for Counsellor Regulation in British Columbia, 2007) and supervision can serve a restorative function (Reid, 2010), don't overlook this as an important focus for supervision.
- 10. Stay current.** The professions of counselling and career development are both changing rapidly, as is the speciality of counsellor supervision. Therefore, it is essential to engage in lifelong professional development and to access clinical supervision of your own, to ensure you remain competent and effective as a career counsellor supervisor.

Source: Supervision of Career Counsellors and Practitioners (Neault, Massfeller & Pickerell, 2017)

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