GUIDANCE MANUAL ON

Strengthening Supervision for the Social Service Workforce

OCTOBER 2020

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GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

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PREFACE

This document represents the work of the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (Alliance) Supervision Interest Group (SIG). As a global network, the Alliance convenes individuals and organizations across stakeholder groups to advance knowledge on the latest trends, share innovative practices to overcome challenges, and devise tools to address gaps affecting the social service workforce. We support the work of task-focused and result-oriented groups of Alliance members to share expertise and interest in thematic topic areas.

Given the increasing interest of Alliance members on the topic of supervision and the social service workforce, the Alliance established the Supervision Interest Group in March 2020. This document is a result of their efforts to review existing resources and develop guidance for strengthening planning, development and support for supervision of the social service workforce. As this is a first version with plans for future additions, we hope that after reviewing and using this document, you will share with us additional ways it can become more relevant and applicable to different contexts. We would also like to hear from you on how it has impacted your work and strengthened supervision in your organization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Alliance	Global Social Service Workforce Alliance
APCHA	Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
CMTF	Case Management Task Force
CPIMS+	Child Protection Information Management System Plus (Primero)
Global Statement	Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
INGO	International non-governmental organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SIG	Supervision Interest Group
SSW	Social Service Workforce
TOT	Training-of-trainers
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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1. INTRODUCTION

Practice-based evidence and research has shown that structured, supportive and reflective supervision helps to improve worker retention and performance and results in higher quality services and support to children and families.[1] When workers are provided the time and space to critically reflect on their work through the guidance of a trained supervisor, the quality of their work increases. They gain confidence from positive models of supervision and can, in turn, more effectively move to supervisory positions. This creates and a stronger management pipeline.

Despite what is known about the importance of supervision, it remains challenging to implement for a range of reasons. In many contexts where supervision systems are in the early stages of development, supervisors are working to increase their own skills and confidence to supervise at the same time as working to support their frontline staff. Providing quality supervision requires organizations to allocate time and resources that are often in scarce supply. An adequate number of supervisor positions at the right levels and in the right locations need to be funded for the overall system to be effective. Supervisors need to be trained and prepared for the role; they need time and space to meet with workers. Social service workers and managers also require access to capacity building tools and resources and methods of guiding and tracking effective supervision.

The purpose of this manual is to offer guidance on supervision to individuals working to provide, manage or coordinate social services. This manual defines what is meant by supervision in social services, outlines the key elements of good practice in supervision and summarizes the different forms of supervision. This manual presents general recommendations as well as specific case examples and draws from documented best practices. It is the hope that readers will gain greater awareness of the significant positive benefits of supervision and key elements of carrying out quality supervision. Most importantly, the manual aims to improve supervision practice. Effective supervision results in improved quality of service to clients, reduced risk of poor practice owing to stronger reflection in action, integration of knowledge and research in daily practice, and reduced worker stress and burnout.

1.1 GLOBAL SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE INTEREST GROUPS

The Alliance has a four-pronged approach to its work as a network, as outlined below. Alliance Interest Groups are task-focused and result-oriented groups of Alliance members who have expertise in the thematic area. Their work integrates elements of each of these four approaches.

- Serving as a convener for an inclusive, representative network of stakeholders, including government organizations, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, donor groups, professional associations and community practitioners, to create a forum for discourse and collective learning

- Generating knowledge and building the evidence base for effective social service workforce strengthening by deriving, organizing and disseminating critical evidence-based research, resources, tools, models and best practices

- Building capacity of humanitarian and development actors to implement strategies to strengthen the social service workforce

- Promoting effective advocacy and stimulating an active network of workforce strengthening advocates through information sharing, collaboration and networking

Given increasing interest in better understanding and implementing supportive supervision, recognition, recognition of gaps in the availability of supervision for the social service and concerns around the level of quality supervision that exists in many parts of the world, the Alliance Interest Group on Supervision and the Social Service Workforce was established in March 2020.

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[1] Chiller, Phoebe & Crisp, Beth. (2012). Professional Supervision: A Workforce Retention Strategy for Social Work? Australian Social Work. 65. 232-242. 10.1080/0312407X.2011.625036. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233062889_Professional_Supervision_A_Workforce_Retention_Strategy_for_Social_Work

1.2 THIS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT AND TOOLKIT
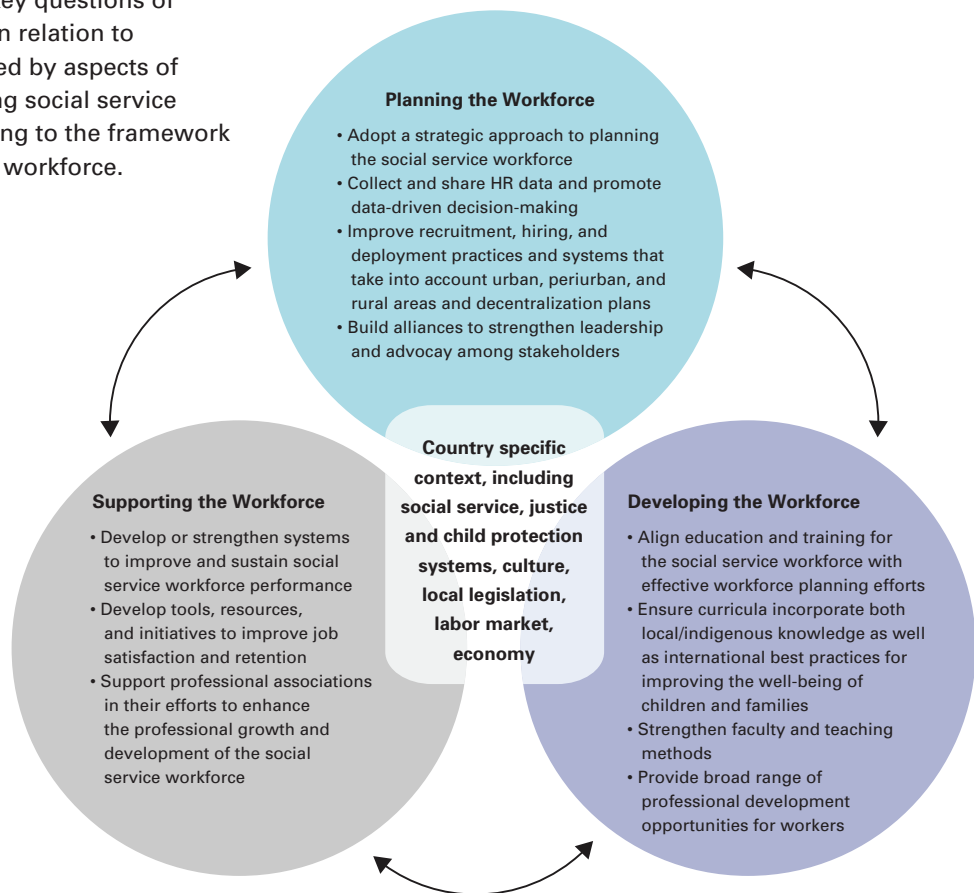
1.2.1 Who is this guidance for?

The practice and principles of supervision within this guidance are designed to be applied across contexts and types of service provision. This guidance is intended for:

- **All members and employers of the social service workforce**, including state or government entities and non-government and civil society entities.
- **A variety of country contexts** including middle- and low-income countries, either with an established and resourced social service workforce or where there may be limited numbers of social service workers and weaker systems to support those workers.
- **A variety of practice settings** including individual casework with children, families and adults at risk or in need; community education and mobilization; group work; social services in schools, health settings and criminal justice services; work in humanitarian crises and emergencies; and in a myriad of other specializations, such as work with people with disabilities or people who have been displaced.

1.2.2 How is this guidance and toolkit organized?

This guidance is structured by the key questions of What, Why, Who, How and When, in relation to supportive supervision. It is informed by aspects of planning, developing and supporting social service workforce supervision, corresponding to the framework for strengthening the social service workforce.

FIGURE 1: Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce[2]

Planning the Workforce
- Adopt a strategic approach to planning the social service workforce
- Collect and share HR data and promote data-driven decision-making
- Improve recruitment, hiring, and deployment practices and systems that take into account urban, periurban, and rural areas and decentralization plans
- Build alliances to strengthen leadership and advocay among stakeholders

Country specific context, including social service, justice and child protection systems, culture, local legislation, labor market, economy

Supporting the Workforce
- Develop or strengthen systems to improve and sustain social service workforce performance
- Develop tools, resources, and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and retention
- Support professional associations in their efforts to enhance the professional growth and development of the social service workforce

Developing the Workforce
- Align education and training for the social service workforce with effective workforce planning efforts
- Ensure curricula incorporate both local/indigenous knowledge as well as international best practices for improving the well-being of children and families
- Strengthen faculty and teaching methods
- Provide broad range of professional development opportunities for workers

The diversity of contexts and approaches in providing support and interventions for children, families and communities means that contextualization is an important initial component of setting up a system of supervision. The context for workforce strengthening is also influenced by the broader social service, protection, health and education systems surrounding the workforce as well as the political, social, cultural and economic contexts that affect those systems. This range of characteristics must be considered in order to effectively design and build viable supportive supervision plans.

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[2] Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2013). Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/sites/default/files/uploads/SSWS%20Framework%20-%20Planning%2C%20Developing%2C%20Supporting%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf and United Nations Children's Fund. (2019). Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection. UNICEF, New York. http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/guidelines-strengthen-social-service-workforce-child-protection

1.3 SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

> **The social service workforce is an inclusive concept referring to a broad range of governmental and nongovernmental professionals and paraprofessionals who work with children, youth, adults, older persons, families and communities to support healthy development and well-being. The social service workforce focuses on preventative, responsive and promotive services that are informed by the humanities and social sciences, indigenous knowledge, discipline-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, and ethical principles. Social service workers engage people, structures and organizations to: facilitate access to needed services, alleviate poverty, challenge and reduce discrimination, promote social justice and human rights, and prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation.**

The social service workforce constitutes a broad array of practitioners, researchers, managers and educators, including – but not limited to: social workers, social educators, social pedagogues, child care workers, youth workers, child and youth care workers, community development workers/community liaison officers, community workers, welfare officers, social/cultural animators and case managers. While social work and social pedagogy have the advantage of years of learning behind them in contexts in which the profession is quite developed, and are quite dominant in the sector, other categories of professionals and paraprofessionals have evolved over time and make invaluable contributions to ensuring human well-being and development.

Given the diversities across contexts, this definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. **Read the full definition commentary**[3] for additional information on the roles, titles and diversity of this workforce.

This guidance and the set of standards for supervision is intended to promote the practice of good quality professional supervision for all social service workers, in whatever setting they practice. The guidance is relevant to all involved in social service delivery – caseworkers, para social workers, child and youth care workers, social work assistants, family support workers, residential workers, advocates, volunteers and more. In many contexts, volunteers play a role in delivery of social services. Supervision of those volunteers is critical to enabling them to do their work effectively, while also motivating and retaining them in this work. Collectively, this guidance refers to the above as 'social service workers', as it is clear that this practice, and the principles and standards promoted, can be usefully applied to all involved in social service delivery.

2. WHAT IS SUPERVISION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL SERVICES?

2.1 BRIEF DEFINITION OF SUPERVISION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Drawing on a variety of contemporary sources from diverse parts of the world, and consensus from members of the Supervision Interest Group, the following definition of supervision within the social services is offered to describe the functions and operation of supervision for all members of the social service workforce:

> **Supervision in the social services is a supportive relationship. It is carried out in regular meetings, which focus on accountability, well-being and skill development. Through regular contacts, the supervisor provides coaching and encourages the supervisee to critically reflect on their practice. The ultimate aim of supervision is to improve the service to clients.**[4]

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[3] Definition of the social service workforce. Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. (2019). http://socialserviceworkforce.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Definition-Social-Service-Workforce.pdf

[4] This definition draws from Kadushin's influential original definition and several recent resources including the Supervision and Coaching Training package, Coordinating Comprehensive Care for Children (4Children) from Namibia and M'Lop Tapang from Cambodia (see Reference list in Annex). Led by Ian Milligan, the planning sub-group of the interest group comprised of 12 members from nine countries reviewed, discussed and agreed on this final definition, which was then shared for input with the larger interest group.

2.2 THE FUNCTIONS OF SUPERVISION

It is widely agreed that supervision comprises three core functions, which are often imagined as a three-legged stool. If any one function is missing, the supervision process, like the stool, falls over.[5] The three legs are managerial, supportive and developmental functions. However, in recent years, a number of experts have suggested a fourth function, mediation, described further below.[6]

MANAGERIAL
functions include:

- Reviewing workload in detail according to agency policies and procedures, giving feedback on performance and helping workers reflect on their strengths and weaknesses
- Supporting supervisees to undertake work they find difficult and encouraging them to take on new challenges
- Helping supervisees understand their roles, responsibilities and workload,
- Advocating for staff to have the resources and materials to do their job effectively (phones, computers, transport, etc.)

SUPPORTIVE
functions include:

- Providing a safe environment in which workers can speak openly about the challenges and difficulties they face in their work, and seeking to help them identify the source of their difficulties and examine ways to overcome these challenges
- Helping supervisees reflect on their own biases and prejudices and providing space to deepen workers' understanding of their value base in relation to race, gender, sexuality and disability and how this impacts their work
- Providing empathic and emotional support and taking time to reflect, which is the most distinctive aspect of professional supervision in the social services
- Supporting social service workforce well-being and ensuring that the organization has the right supports in place to address any issues

DEVELOPMENTAL
functions include:

- Helping supervisees develop and improve their practice skills and knowledge through regular and constructive feedback on all aspects of their performance
- Providing continued upskilling through coaching and practice advice
- Helping supervisees to identify their preferred learning styles and barriers to learning and professional development, to reflect on their learning opportunities
- Helping supervisees gain access to additional training according to individualized professional development plan and ensuring that they know how to apply the learning in practice

MEDIATION
functions include:

- Serving as a bridge between the supervisee, other staff members, and the larger organization and conveying information upwards to the organization
- Advocating for larger organizational change to improve the culture, policies and procedures of the agency to promote professional growth of the workers
- Assuring that staff needs are represented to higher management and that staff are involved in decision-making, appropriately assisted and supported through sensitive and clear complaints procedures

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[5] Kadushin, A. & Harkness, D. (2014). Supervision in Social Work. P. 9. http://cup.columbia.edu/book/supervision-in-social-work/9780231151764
[6] Roby, J. (2020). Supervision for staff of FCF REACT partners. Cambodia, SCF/REACT; http://socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/supervision-staff-family-care-first-react-partner-organizations; Kolb, D.A. (1984). Experiential learning. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall; Wonnacott, J. (2013). Supervision: A luxury or critical to good practice in times of austerity? http://www.in-trac.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Supervision-in-times-of-Austerity-July-131.doc; Morrison, T. (2005). Staff Supervision in Social Care. 3rd edition. Brighton: Pavilion.

2.3   SUPERVISION IS GROUNDED IN ETHICAL PRACTICE

Modern social work and all social service professions are founded on humane caring relationships and human rights. Supervision should help social service workers and teams to practice in an ethical manner.

Social service systems are always located within a national context, with all that implies for the legal basis of its work, the religious or secular environment and the cultural norms of the society within which it is located. As the profession of social work has globalized, IFSW and IASSW have developed the Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles, which provides an important reference point and respects the diversity of cultures across the world. Social work has a particular focus on excluded groups, ethnic minorities and refugees, working with people with disabilities, upholding the rights of the vulnerable, including those in conflict with the law, and empowering marginalized communities. This necessarily involves challenging discrimination of all kinds, including in relation to 'physical and/or mental disabilities, capacity, age, culture, gender, identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, language, religion, spiritual beliefs, political opinions, socio-economic status, poverty, class, family structure, relationship status, nationality (or lack thereof)'.[7]

As social workers, we (as do the people we engage with) bring to the working relationship our histories, pains and joys, values, our religious, spiritual and cultural orientations. Critical reflection on how the personal influences the professional and vice versa must be the foundation of everyday ethical practice.

– Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles

Practicing in an ethical manner and recognizing the biases within ourselves and others is central to social service practice, but always a challenge. This is where supervision plays a vital part. Supervision creates a reflective space and provides an important opportunity to monitor actual practice with clients, to review aspirations and be ready to challenge oneself and those one supervises. Supervisors must be given opportunities to examine the ethics of their own practice in order to effectively assist supervisees.

2.4 FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS OF INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISION

When defining what supervision is, it is helpful to examine a few fundamental components of supervision.

2.4.1 Confidential Meetings

The content of supervision meetings should be treated as confidential and only shared beyond the supervision meeting on a need-to-know basis. This would include situations when, during the meeting, information is disclosed about immediate and serious risk to a client, child or other individual, or about an immediate safeguarding concern in relation to the supervisee. In these cases, organizational and national policies on protection and safeguarding should be followed. The meetings are also a 'safe' space where a supervisee may reveal uncertainty or lack of confidence in dealing with particular situations and look for professional guidance from their supervisor. Assurance should be given that expressing concerns and raising challenges will not be reflected negatively in a performance review, rather raising these types of concerns should be considered good practice. At times, this can be a good reason for having technical and administrative supervision provided by two different people. Technical supervision can be provided by an appropriately skilled individual either from within or outside the social service worker's organization. This is often necessary in a small NGO that does not have a technically or professionally qualified individual who can provide supervision. For more information, see Section 2.4.8.

Supervision is an opportunity for dialogue about how the work carried out by the supervisee challenges discrimination (of all kinds) and for the supervisee to explore ethical dilemmas arising in their work and how they might be best resolved. It should, therefore, take place in a quiet, private space and away from any interruptions by others.

2.4.2 Regular Dialogue

Supervision should happen at regular, predictable and planned intervals. It should not be an irregular or occasional practice. Individual supervision should be organized optimally once a month or more frequently for new staff, and at least once every six weeks for more experience workers.

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[7] Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles. (2018). International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers. https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Global-Social-Work-Statement-of-Ethical-Principles-IASSW-27-April-2018-1.pdf

2.4.3 Focused on Staff Care

Supervisors should understand the factors that motivate staff, including intrinsic and extrinsic aspects (or external and internal aspects) of the work. This could include recognition or pay as an outside factor, or internal motivations such as sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. Supervisors play a key role in supporting their supervisees in managing workloads, work/life balance and community expectations in order to help avoid burnout, stress, work pressure, emotional distress and peer pressure, as well as other personal and professional demands. They can advocate to their organizations and encourage the inclusion of staff care as part of the organizational human resource policies and culture. For more information, see Annex 2 – The Role of Supervision in Staff Well-being.

2.4.4 Provided by Experienced Supervisors

The supervisor must have the experience and skill to provide this guidance and help the supervisee reflect on and critically evaluate their own practice, skills, beliefs and attitudes. Identifying those with this experience, expertise and confidence can be challenging where social service workforce development is in the nascent stages, yet is vitally important. In most cases, supervisors are direct representatives of social service organizations and assist supervisees in understanding the impact of context and policies in serving clients and community members. See Section 4.1 of this document for a set of suggested, foundational competencies for supervisors.

2.4.5 Supervision Agreements

Supervision agreements, or supervision contracts (see footnote for discussion of the most suitable term)[8], are a key element of good practice and should be used wherever possible. They generally consist of a simple document naming the supervisor and supervisee and outlining the agreement between them about how supervision should be arranged, including frequency, location and length of meetings. They also outline the roles and responsibilities of supervisor and supervisee, including in preparing, contributing to the agenda, conduct in the meeting and agreed expectations for recording decisions in writing or otherwise. It is good practice for the agreement to be signed and dated by both parties, with a copy of the signed version kept by each. The agreement can be amended at a later date, through discussion between supervisor and supervisee, if needed. See **Annex 3** for an example of a supervision contract.

2.4.6 Tracking and Recording Supervision through Information Management Systems

Child protection work, and case management in particular, often require extensive paperwork and administrative oversight. Decisions made during supervisory meetings should also be recorded, with the opportunity for both the supervisor and supervisee to agree to and sign notes outlining the decisions made. Paper-based systems or electronic systems can be used. Child protection information management systems (CPIMS) can help with this type of record keeping and are defined as "an integrated set of processes for the routine collection, analysis, and interpretation of data relevant to the protection of children."[9]

Aspects of supervision can be built into information management systems in order to enable supervisors to better support their supervisees and also increase accountability. Information management systems help to facilitate supervision and quality assurance when supervisors are able to:

- access to up-to-date information on child protection cases being managed by their workers;
- support caseworkers to move through the case management process by helping to prioritize tasks and cases, make decisions about actions to take with specific cases, and flag incomplete or overdue tasks;
- prepare aggregate reports on trends;
- conduct approvals on case plans and case closures;
- support organizational and time management including calendar/notifications for supervision meetings, agreed follow up, trainings and professional development, as well as archiving the Supervision Agreement;
- help workers maintain a balance between the time needed for documentation in the office and the time that can be used for actual service provision.[10]

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[8] Agreement or contract? These documents generally constitute an agreement to show a joint commitment between colleagues, so do not take the form of a legal contract. They are generally signed and dated and include mutual responsibilities and details of how supervision should be organized, but usually do not refer to costs or payments, so 'agreement' is likely to be a more appropriate term than 'contract'. An example is provided in Annex 3.

[9] UNICEF, Universitas Indonesia, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. (2007). Child Protection Information Management Mapping: Towards a Data Surveillance System in Indonesia. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/1517/pdf/1517.pdf

[10] Inter-Agency CPIMS+ Steering Committee. (2018). Summary Report: A review of the utility, systems-effectiveness and deployability of the tool. http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/CPIMS%2B_Review_Report.pdf

In 2005, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children and UNICEF formed a Steering Committee to promote the use of a standard inter-agency child protection information management system (CPIMS) for the child protection sector. Originally designed to facilitate family tracing and reunification (FTR) of children in emergencies, in 2009, the CPIMS was re-designed to support child protection systems building more broadly. In 2014, the development of a 'next generation' open source, web-based platform named CPIMS+/Primero[11] kicked off, which brought better security, online and offline capabilities, a mobile app, and other features.

CPIMS+/Primero facilitates effective case management for individual vulnerable children. It is designed to promote best practice and accountability, and to assist child protection programs in delivering quality care. CPIMS+/Primero supports social service workers in humanitarian and development settings with their day-to-day casework and planning, allowing them more time to spend with their clients, communities and teams. For supervisors, it reduces the administrative burden of casework and reporting, and improves real time support for caseworkers throughout the case management process.

CPIMS+/Primero is envisioned as a global public good and has been developed according to the Principles for Digital Development.[12] It is highly configurable so that it can be adapted to different contexts and types of programs and is now utilized in 28 countries. The software comes configured with the standard forms endorsed by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's Case Management Task Force. It is available in English, French, Arabic and Spanish. CPIMS+/Primero supports interoperability and data integration with other data management systems.[13] Version 2 of Primero will launch and be made available at the end of 2020.

2.4.7 Ad Hoc Supervision

There is also a place for informal or ad hoc supervision, which can happen in addition to planned formal supervision sessions. An ad hoc supervision session would happen in an unplanned way, to help address a specific issue or challenge that has arisen, such as to discuss difficult cases. In child protection work, this may be a very critical part of providing care and support to staff and creating space and time to develop their reflection skills. In some cases, ad hoc supervision can be provided by identified, experienced staff who may accompany lesser experienced workers on field visits. They may take on a casework mentoring role and collaborate with the person responsible for more formal supervision methods.

2.4.8 Dividing Supervision Responsibilities

Supervision is often carried out by one person who is also the immediate 'line manager' of the supervisee. However, at times, that person is not qualified (by training and/or experience) to provide supportive supervision.

In these cases, the supervision role may be divided between two people. One person would be the line manager who focuses on the management of workload, efficiency and effectiveness. The second person offers time and supportive supervision and encouragement for a reflective discussion of difficulties and challenges, including the exploration of ethical dilemmas, as part of a confidential dialogue, though making sure any concern that an individual child, adult or worker is at risk of harm is still reported to the relevant line manager or safeguarding officer. This second person could be based within the same organization, or alternatively be identified through a university, professional association or peer organization. The description below from Indonesia portrays an example where external supervision was provided by trained social work university faculty.

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[11] More information can be found here: https://www.cpims.org/
[12] https://digitalprinciples.org/
[13] An example proof of concept for Primero interoperability from Cambodia can be found here: https://www.cpims.org/blog/cambodiagolive?categoryId=46738

A partnership program carried out in Indonesia over the last 10 years is increasing the capacity of nearly 1,000 supervisors.

During phase one, from 2010-2017, Save the Children collaborated with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), the School of Social Work Bandung and UIN (Universitas Islam Negeri/Islamic State University) Yogyakarta, Academy of Social Work NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur/West Timor), UNPAD (Universitas Padjadjaran (Padjadjaran University) and UNPAS (Universitas Pasundan (Pasundan University) trained lecturers, as supervisors on case management, permanency planning, positive parenting, child rights and child safe-guarding and supervision. As a result, the university integrated case management within their laboratory and practicum process and the lecturers supervised case management practiced by their students. Additionally, lecturers received remote mentoring from an international consultant and technical advisor. Lecturers were also recruited to serve as supervisors at the PDAK (Pusat Dukungan Anak dan Keluarga/ Child and Family Support Centre).

During phase two, from 2017-present, best practices that were learned in phase one are being mainstreamed into government and university programs throughout Indonesia to provide dedicated training on supervision. Within MOSA, there are 750 social workers and 34 supervisors. Within the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP), there are 159 local child protection technical units nationwide. Save the Children supported training supervisors at national and local level on case management, permanency planning, positive parenting, child rights and child safeguarding and supervision and multi-discipline guide-lines on responding to child protection cases. Following those trainings, Save the Children has continued monitoring and supervising implementation within five provinces including through online supervision.

As part of the program, supervisees gained hours toward eligibility for the social worker certification national test and had many opportunities for professional development to obtain additional certificates and skills.

Throughout the program, lecturers identified that they also learned from the students they supervised on current social work trends and were able to add supervision into social work curriculums. By increasing capacity of supervisors, the program was able to document improved service provision to vulnerable groups and an increase in their empowerment to face challenges. During supervisory sessions, questions of ethics were discussed and support was provided to prevent burnout. Supervisees were able to apply experimental learning to enhance their skills and confidence in practicing case management for complex cases.

"I received many benefits from trainings and mentoring provided by Save the Children which has helped my work as a supervisor." –Makmur, Government Child Protection Unit, Makassar City

"Being a PDAK supervisor for more than five years has been interesting and fulfilling. All supervisors and caseworkers increased knowledge, values and skills in social work practice with children through direct training by qualified trainers. Discussion and regular meetings were conducted between supervisors and caseworkers and with partners such as MOSA to build professional relationships." –Teta, Lecturer at the Government School of Social Work in Bandung and Supervisor

"As a lecturer of Social Work Supervision at Bandung College of Social Work, I have gained experiences in delivering the actual supervision functions: 1. Educative function: I became the teacher and facilitator to improve social work knowledge in relation to professional practices that they provide. 2. Administrative function: I have been involved in determining the caseworker criteria for recruitment into positions and assessed caseworkers' performances under my supervision. I was also evaluated by PDAK (Child and Family Support Centre) teamwork. 3. Personal support function: I developed a sense of teamwork to understand and appreciate each other." –Tuti, Lecturer at the Government School of Social Work in Bandung and Supervisor

2.5 WHAT SUPERVISION IS NOT

It is sometimes helpful to explain supervision to those not familiar with social services by explaining what it is not and how it is distinguished from some apparently similar activities.

Supervision is not for routine management functions; for example, allocating workload, authorizing holidays/leave.

Supervision is not a disciplinary process. It is a confidential space in which the supervisee is helped to think reflectively and critically about their practice.

Supervision is not counselling. However, it is quite possible that in the course of a supervision process, a supervisee might disclose difficult personal circumstances and perhaps become upset. In this instance, it may be appropriate for the supervisor to say, "we are going to stop the supervision here," followed by, "can I help you with this problem in some way," or allow the person time to recover and then see if some additional help should be provided (See Annex 2 for further guidance).

The immediate 'line manager' of the practitioner is often the person providing the professional supervision. However, supervision is distinct from the standard line management function. If the line manager is providing both roles, professional supervision should be treated as a specific task with its own conditions, as described in this manual. Due to this differentiation, some organizations are able to have two different people play these different roles, as covered in Section 2.4.8.

WHAT IS SUPERVISION?
Key Conclusions and Advocacy Messages:

✓ For supervision to be effective and sustainable, it needs to be underpinned by clear organizational protocols as part of an overall system that supports social service supervision, including relevant policy, structures, budgetary resources and monitoring tools

✓ The use and provision of supervision should be included in any national Social Work Code of Ethics or other professional codes of ethics relevant to social services as a professional standard. National or local associations of professional social service workers should collaborate on discussing, developing and reviewing supervision standards

✓ There is more to supervision than paperwork and checking boxes – most importantly, it is about enabling professional development and reflective practice, through a relationship built on trust

✓ Staff care and self-care practices are essential elements for both supervisors and supervisees

✓ Donors should support supervision processes by including supervision as a requirement in all Requests for Proposals (RFPs), contract extensions and review of documents

3. WHY IS SUPERVISION NEEDED?

There are numerous reasons why supervision is vital to the work of the social service workforce. Practice-based evidence and research has shown that structured, supportive and reflective supervision helps to improve worker retention and performance and results in higher quality services and support to children and families. The Alliance's Interest Group on Building the Evidence Base created an evidence matrix listing academic and non-profit organizational reports on the topic.[14]

The first reason is that the social services sector as a whole, is a human service, and **the main tool or resource available to children and families accessing services is the worker themself:** his/her/their knowledge and skills and ethical orientation. Social service work is demanding. It engages the emotions of the worker – the heart as well as the head. It requires thought as well as action, taking care to proceed in an ethical manner when intervening in the lives of others. Good intentions or a kind heart, however, are not enough. Professional level or certified training is necessary. Social service work, in short, requires suitably trained workers who are empathic, reflective and skilled. Supervision is meant as a process to help draw out and build on these qualities and skills of workers.

Secondly, social service workers function in stressful and complex situations. They become personally aware of the effects of poverty, loss or discrimination on individuals known to them. They are impacted by the suffering of others every day in their work, which calls upon their reserves of sympathy and empathy and managing their own feelings, while they seek to provide practical assistance, guidance and advocacy. Oftentimes workers face their own challenges, such as low remuneration or lack of resources to support their work such as a phone, data or transport. They often feel caught between competing systems and priorities, inadequate resources and building trusting relationships with clients. Reflective, supportive supervision is meant as a safe space that is set aside for workers to reflect on their work and to help them cope with their responses to it.

Thirdly, work in the social services is complicated. Workers need to learn about other professional systems that significantly impact their clients' lives, such as education, health and justice. They often work in multi-professional environments, where the other professionals may not understand their role, ethical orientation and rights-based approach. They may be required to advocate for themselves and their clients to have access to these other systems or fair treatment within them. They do all this while carefully following the laws that give them their mandate, and the policies and procedures of their employing organizations or government departments. Having the backing and support of a supervisor helps guide them through these complexities and builds their confidence and self-esteem in their work.

With the complexity of the work and the high demands placed on caseworkers, we should not expect them to do it alone. Consistent, structured supervision is essential in order to provide caseworkers with the necessary support to consider children's best interests throughout the case management process and cope with the daily stressors of the work.

– Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package[16]

WHY SUPERVISION?
Key Conclusions and Advocacy Messages:

✓ Those the social service workforce assist – generally, the most vulnerable children and families - deserve and should be able to expect the highest level of professional standards, which is supported by supervision

✓ Supervision is not a 'nice-to-have, it is a 'must have' – it is essential to enable an agency to adequately carry out their responsibility to vulnerable groups

✓ Social service workers need and deserve the best possible support and supervision to do the complex jobs required of them

✓ Supervision should be viewed as a key means of helping staff do a difficult job and of promoting quality in social service work. If social service workers are managing difficult cases under intense time and resource constraints and do not receive adequate supervision, they are more likely to experience stress, secondary trauma and burnout. This then reduces workforce capacity

[14] Evidence Matrix for the Social Service Workforce. (2016). Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Evidence%20Matrix%20for%20the%20Social%20Service%20Workforce.pdf
[15] In social pedagogy, a worker's 'stance' (or 'Haltung' in German) is seen as crucial – the degree to which their values align with their behavior. 'Haltung' roughly translates as ethos, mindset or attitude. For a useful discussion see, Eichsteller, G. (2010). The Notion of 'Haltung' in Social Pedagogy. Children Webmag. http://www.childrenwebmag.com/articles/social-pedagogy/the-notion-of-'haltung-in-social-pedagogy
[16] Case Management Supervision and Coaching Package. (2017). Case Management Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. P. 1. https://www.alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-online-library/case-management-supervision-and-coaching-training-package-0

4. WHO PROVIDES SUPERVISION?

The quality of supervision is very dependent on the skills, attitudes, behavior, knowledge, empathy and experience of the person(s) providing it. It is important for organizations to carefully plan who will be providing supervision and the type of experience and training they need to do it well. Each department or organization needs to work out what level of supervision capacity is required based on the number of practitioners, their level of experience, the realistic availability of supervisors, the nature and intensity of supervision planned for (one-to-one, peer or group), the intensity or complexity of the supervisee's responsibilities and caseload, and the desired or possible frequency of these meetings. The organization can then determine who is best to provide supervision. Supervision might be provided by a line manager or a practice supervisor or mentor within the same organization as the supervisee. Or it could be provided by someone external if the organization is too small or under-resourced to hire someone with the competencies outlined below.

4.1 SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

The selection and hiring of future supervisors should be based on careful consideration of a candidate's current or potential competencies, as exemplified through their skills, attitudes, behavior, knowledge, empathy and experience. In the social services, progressing to a supervisor role generally involves starting at the frontline, with direct work with children, families or other individuals in need. This enables supervisors to develop the range of skills and experience needed to inform their supervision and understanding, which can enable them to gain trust and credibility in the eyes of their supervisees. Supervisors should have completed their own training in the core competences of the role, and ideally, as a frontline member of staff, will have received ongoing on-the-job coaching and quality supervision themselves. Where regular, formal supervision is not yet in place, the Child Protection Mentoring Guide[17] from Save the Children, for example, requires staff to mentor others and seek mentoring support themselves in the absence of regular formal supervision. Indeed, experiencing quality supervision is perhaps the best way to learn the key skills and attributes of a supervisor.

Many organizations tend to focus on minimum education requirements for a role when recruiting, rather than determining what skill set and experience is needed. Focusing solely on educational training can inadvertently discriminate against minority groups or leave out those who don't have formal degrees who may be best able to do the work effectively. In many contexts, particularly low-income countries with minimal resources, workers lack access to professional education degrees, such as in social work or child and youth care work. Data and findings from a 2015 mapping across 15 countries show this to be the case.[18] A competency-based approach provides an alternative and potentially more realistic, practical and effective means to establish social work career paths for the social service workforce across different contexts.

Supervision Interest Group members conducted a review of competency-based approaches to describe the ideal supervisor attributes. Organizations can adapt this outline of expected competencies as needed and use it to guide selection, training and performance evaluations. Interest group members provided a range of resources and tools with supervisor competencies. After a scoping of 11 documents, two global in nature and the others with a national focus in the US, UK, Canada, Myanmar, Namibia and South Africa, they developed the brief summary of supervisor competencies below.[19]

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[17] Child Protection Mentoring Guide. (2020). Save the Children Australia. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/18179/pdf/stc01706_child_protection_mentoring_guide_.pdf
[18] State of the Social Service Workforce 2015 Report – A multi-country review. (2015). Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. http://socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/State%20of%20the%20Social%20Service%20Workforce%202015%20Report%20-%20A%20Multi-Country%20Review.pdf
[19] The 28-page detailed analysis of the 11 documents can be reviewed from the Alliance's website. http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Social-Service-Supervisor-Competencies-Review-Summary.pdf

Supervisor Competencies

SKILLS

- Holds supervisees accountable for performance of their roles and responsibilities
- Provides constructive feedback to supervisees and builds trust
- Provides direction in a way that promotes the strengths of supervisees
- Identifies and builds upon practitioners' strengths and helps them analyze their own capacity gaps
- Provides coaching to strengthen gaps in skills
- Supports supervisees with time management and recognizes when practitioners are overwhelmed and require intervention
- Gives time for reviewing the most difficult aspects/cases in the workload while supporting professional judgments and decision-making skills of supervisees
- Promotes approaches to anti-discriminatory practice and manages diversity
- Facilitates the process whereby practitioners can learn from each other
- Models and applies techniques for mediation and negotiation
- Communicates effectively up as well as down the management ladder
- Clearly communicates agency policies and procedures

ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS

- Has a positive attitude about the social service sector
- Embodies the values of the sector (see for example the Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles)[20]
- Maintains good interpersonal relationships with supervisees
- Actively prepares for individual and group supervision meetings
- Encourages and motivates, listens and provides an empathetic approach
- Is appropriately supportive while not being emotionally intrusive in regard to supervisees' private concerns
- Shows a commitment to continued professional development, for self and supervisees

KNOWLEDGE/EXPERIENCE

- Obtains and maintains qualifications specified in local criteria
- Updates own knowledge of legislation, theory and practice, and is ready to share expertise in relation to practice problems
- Is able to distinguish between the roles of manager and supervisor
- Is able to identify when a lack of cultural competence is affecting a worker's direct practice and can model culturally relevant practice
- Can provide advice on practitioner safety and security
- Can enable access to specialist supervision, support, advice or consultation as required
- Is able to identify training needs and opportunities for supervisees
- Is able to recognize, raise and address current and potential ethical issues

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[20] Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles. (2018). International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers. https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Global-Social-Work-Statement-of-Ethical-Principles-IASSW-27-April-2018-1.pdf

4.2 JOB DESCRIPTIONS

In reviewing a number of job descriptions for supervisory roles, many break down the different duties, requirements and skills into categories similar to the competencies above. For example, a job description for the post of practice supervisor within a children and families bureau in the UK provides an overview of the responsibilities within the areas of operational management, communications, partnership/corporate working, resource management, systems information and strategic management.

The description then details person-specific requirements that are either essential or desirable in the areas of knowledge, experience, occupational skills, professional qualifications/training/registrations required by law. The job description should clearly note that relevant experience and learned skills are necessary for supervisory functions. These roles should not be filled only by natural hierarchy or years of experience.

As many roles in the social service sector require meeting with individuals in challenging situations, job descriptions may list skills to cope with the mental and emotional demands of the role and the working conditions and risks that may arise. Job descriptions should also mention adherence to organizational and or national safeguarding guidelines on prevention of violence, abuse and exploitation. They may also require background checks due to working with vulnerable groups including children. Including the organization structure can also be helpful to know who will report to the supervisor as well as to whom the supervisor will report.

4.3 SUPERVISOR TRAINING

In addition to their experience of providing social services, and ideally, a professional social work qualification, child and youth care work qualification or similar competency-based accreditation, supervisors should be specifically trained in how to plan, support and deliver good quality supervision. In designing training for supervisors, organizations and governments and other actors need to consider the existing levels of knowledge and skills. For example, managers who are expected to supervise caseworkers, require both technical knowledge of their specific area of practice, and the requirements of case management, on top of which they will need to gain knowledge and skills in supervising caseworkers.

The department or organization will require a plan to build supervision capacity, if it finds it does not have enough capacity currently. Training for supervisors is ideally integrated and embedded into national training approaches provided by accredited training providers such as universities or other higher education institutions. In many countries, there is a separate qualification or license for passing supervision training. The competency-based approach is a practical alternative that allows for "on the job" training and practice that is systematically assessed against competencies. Government and NGO partners can work with these institutions to develop a curriculum that will lead to a recognized certificate or recognition of learning and competence in supervision. An emphasis on practical, competency-based training for social service workers, integrating on the job training, mentoring and supervision, increases their knowledge skills and fosters social work values while promoting scale and sustainability.

The competency-based approach and accredited training implemented by Save the Children International in Myanmar targets three levels: Community Social Workers (i.e. para social workers), NGO / government Caseworkers and Case Supervisors. All training is based on job roles and job tasks in line with the key competencies required at each level. In addition, on the job training is provided to workers at each level to assist them to carry out their role and meet their competencies through on the job support, supervision and assessment. The assessment includes built-in verification and supervision. This is intended to enable community social workers, caseworkers or case supervisors to gain accreditation or certificates based on actual post-training performance and not simply for attending training. The process and roadmap to establish a competency-based approach to case management in Myanmar therefore includes:

Step 1: Development of Job Descriptions - Job descriptions were developed for the context of Myanmar using several resources to clarify the roles/responsibility of key actors in the case management process. These job descriptions have gone through several revisions to ensure they fit the context, match the overall understanding of roles/responsibilities and are easy to understand.

Step 2: Development of Key Competencies - Competencies developed for caseworkers and case supervisors for the context of Myanmar were adapted from the Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection[21] to define knowledge, skills, personal attitudes and experiences needed. For the role of community social workers, competencies were adapted from the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance's Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies.[22]

Step 3: Training to Meet Competencies - Phased training outlines have been developed for the three roles based on the expectations of the job role and the related competencies. The training includes sessions on ways to provide evidence, using different tools to show that they are meeting the competencies.

Step 4: Supervision & Support on the Job - Coaching and mentoring practices are embedded throughout the process. Case management teams in Myanmar are adapting and integrating Coaching and Mentoring tools within the competency-based approach to case management. This includes assessing and understanding the key gaps/needs of the social service workforce in meeting their key core competencies.

Step 5: Ongoing Training to Meet Gaps - Based on the key gaps identified, ongoing on-site technical support and training will be provided. This ensures training is not a one-off activity, but rather part of an ongoing process to help staff to practice and strengthen their competencies.

Step 6: Completion (meeting the competencies) - This step entails the community social worker, caseworker or case supervisor providing all evidence that he/she/they has met all the required competencies for the role. The supervisor will confirm that he/she/they has done so, or "not yet" so that further evidence should be sought.

Step 7: Certification accreditation - The final step of the process is recognition through certification, which confirms that all required competencies for the role have been met. Ideally, this is done by the government, or in contexts like Myanmar, this may be an assessment center.

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[21] Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management & Child Protection - The role of case management in the protection of children: A guide for policy & programme managers and caseworkers. (January 2014). Child Protection Working Group Case Management Taskforce. http://www.cpcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CM_guidelines_ENG_
[22] Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies. (2015 and 2017). Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/para-professionals-social-service-workforce-guiding-principles-functions-and-0

4.3.1 Training Content

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The key topics to cover in training of supervisors include:

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- What is supervision: a clear definition, examples to show how it overlaps with but differs from other management activities (monitoring and performance management) and types of support for staff development (including coaching and mentoring)

- Managerial functions: how does supervision complement and enable, but also go beyond, monitoring and management of performance

- Support functions: how supervision can support staff to gain confidence, self-awareness, assertiveness and resilience in practice, and develop skills in reflective practice, and self-care

- Development functions: how do adults learn, and how supervision can help staff with their professional learning and development

- Mediation functions: how supervision can serve as a bridge between the supervisee, colleagues and the larger organization, helping the supervisee practice in line with organizational goals and policies, while ensuring the organization supports the professional growth of its staff

- The main types of supervision – in what situations and how can they be used to best effect?

- The purpose and content of supervision agreements, in planning, agreeing and applying minimum standards and expectations for the conduct of supervision

- The use of technology and information management systems to support quality supervision

- Planning and carrying out supervision sessions, including role plays and practice asking guiding questions (see examples from ChildHub and the Reflective Supervision Resource Pack[23] below)

- The key roles, responsibilities and required competencies of the supervisor

- The role of supervision in enabling and ensuring good practice in case management

- The role of supervision in helping the supervisee:

  - Manage change, conflict and other challenging situations

  - Understand and apply the ethics of the social service workforce in practice

  - Understand and apply key theories relevant to their practice

  - Understand and participate in research and apply evidence-based practice

  - Understand and reflect on how their values, culture and upbringing influence their practice

  - Be aware of the social, economic and political contexts of their work, and how their service users are impacted by these factors, in line with an ecological systems approach to practice

  - Understand and address issues of diversity in all aspects, including gender, sexual orientation and racial equality, and develop insight and skills in empathic, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice

  - Understand and uphold their responsibilities for safeguarding and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, of both children and vulnerable adults, in line with national legislation, organizational policy and standard operating procedures

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[23] Tools to help move supervisors toward a more reflective style of supervision are provided within the Reflective Supervision Resource Pack by Research in Action: https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/2568/reflective_supervision_resource_pack_2017.pdf

4.3.2 Training Modalities

There are a wide range of models and approaches to providing training in supervision. Training can be a stand-alone course and such programs vary from one to several days. However, ideally, training in supervision should be embedded within both initial and ongoing training and professional development. This training should be provided for managers of social service workers and others who may be brought in to provide supervision as a function additional to management, which may include facilitating supervision in groups.

Training on supervision should ideally not be delivered in a traditional lecture style, with information just flowing in one direction, and rather should model some of the key approaches and techniques of supervision itself: exploration, reflection, constructive feedback, discussion and learning from practical examples and role plays and exercises in pairs. For this reason, supervisors should ideally be trained in small groups of no more than 12.

It is also important to adapt training in supervision to the specific requirements of different contexts, which will vary according to the service and model of practice in which the supervisees will operate, as well as the wider social, economic, cultural and legal context. This will require emphasis on different skills that supervision will need to help supervisees develop. Training models should also be developed according to statutory and professional requirements.

A number of supervisor training programs were reviewed and two of these are featured below:

CELCIS, University of Strathclyde, Scotland was commissioned by ChildHub[24] to develop online courses on supervision for those working in various roles in child protection. ChildHub is an online resource to support individuals working in child protection and family support, primarily aimed at South-east Europe. These courses are available for free. The two trainers produced a number of short role-play videos which illustrate both 'good' and 'bad' examples of one-to-one supervision. These videos can be found on YouTube.[25]

The Case Management Task Force (CMTF)[26] **of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action** created the Case Management Supervision and Coaching Training Package four-day training, to increase case management supervisors' confidence, capacity and support to caseworkers to provide safe, ethical and competent case management services to vulnerable children and their families. This training package is the result of two years of work led by the International Rescue Committee on behalf of the CMTF. The package was developed through researching and consolidating good practices globally. The curriculum and materials were developed through a lengthy and iterative process with feedback provided by members of the CMTF as well as pilots in Northern Syria/cross-border Turkey, Nigeria and Myanmar. In 2017, Trainings of Trainers were convened to disseminate the content to humanitarian actors in eight countries.

The training materials (available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic) can also be accessed here:

1. Defining Supervision and Coaching
2. Supervision Practices and Tools
3. Supervision and Coaching Skills
4. Staff Care and Wellbeing
5. Closing the CM Supervision Training
6. Training Admin

A set of seven videos provides an overview of the initiative, a review of Case Management Supervision and Coaching, and case studies to help participants apply what they have learned.

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[24] https://childhub.org/en
[25] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoGfTRo7nXHSOb3HSc-11e4-UfPkDcytA
[26] https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-hub/case-management-task-force

WHO PROVIDES SUPERVISION?
Key Conclusions and Advocacy Messages:

✓ Both receiving and providing supervision and the carrying out of supervision should be taught as part of the social work curriculum and included in any training schemes for the social service workforce

✓ In many contexts, particularly low-income countries with minimal resources, there is a lack of social work professional education degree and so the competency-based approach provides a practical and systematic framework to establish career paths for the social service workforce across different contexts, through accredited on the job training and assessment

✓ Given the wide range of supervisors' capacity, expertise and styles, it is necessary to define a required common set of competencies for supervisors in each sector, adapted to national context

✓ The competency-based approach proposes a more structured and phased approach to training with close supervision and support to allow the social service workforce in-country to develop the competencies to ensure quality of service

✓ Training is not a one-off activity. Ongoing support is required to help supervisors regularly practice and strengthen their competencies. Supervisors should actively seek training and coaching opportunities in line with their identified professional development needs, including through refresher training, workshops, meetings, group discussions, case conferences, learning from peers, or participation in monitoring or study visits.

✓ Organizations need to establish a clear path to enable workers to transition from practice into a supervisory role.

5. HOW IS SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION PROVIDED?

5.1 MODELS OF SUPERVISION

Various formats for supervision can be utilized including: individual; group; peer to peer; and peer group. Often a blend of models is good practice. Group and peer supervision can supplement individual supervision and be important components of an effective supervisory system.

5.1.1 Individual supervision

Individual supervision is a one-to-one model of supervision, with supervisor and supervisee. This type of supervision is the most frequently practiced and written about in English-language literature. Elements specific to this type of supervision are further discussed in Section 2.4.

5.1.2 Group supervision

For the purposes of this guidance manual, group supervision is viewed in a similar way to individual supervision, but in this case the supervisor supervises a group of practitioners. This is a demanding role, as the supervisor needs to draw on group work skills and knowledge of group processes, as well as be suitably trained and experienced. Group supervision is thus clearly distinct from 'peer group supervision' as it is led by one person, who is recognized (by the organization) as the person responsible for providing supportive supervision for all the people in the group. Group supervision needs to be distinguished from regular 'team meetings.' In group supervision meetings, the focus is on accountability, support and skill development. All members are expected to participate in the discussion, offering and receiving feedback under the guidance of the supervisor.

There is a considerable volume of literature about group supervision, notably in the United States of America. It is used in a number of professional disciplines, including social work, but in most established social service settings is understood to be less used than one-to-one supervision. Within social work, it is more often used during social work education when one field supervisor is supporting a group of students in completing their field placements.

Recent literature on supervision includes reference to the potential benefits of group supervision:

> 'There may be circumstances where group supervision is being considered. This may be where there are larger staff groups, for example, in residential or domiciliary care settings…and group supervision might be seen as a viable alternative to individual supervision, particularly for the hard-pressed supervisor.' [27]

However, one-to-one supervision is still often regarded as the most effective form of supervision in developing, supporting and maintaining high quality practice. Some argue that group supervision should supplement rather than replace individual supervision. Individual supervision is also preferable when there is a need to discuss confidential matters. The additional benefits that participation in a group process can provide include: 'peer feedback, practicing public speaking and presentation, and modelling productive discussion'.[28]

Kettle's paper, which is a survey of (mainly United Kingdom) evidence about supervision, also notes advantages of a good group process:

> 'The impact of the group process may foster a sense of team cohesion and reduce the risk of dependence upon an individual supervisor. It can expand the skills and knowledge base of group members and may increase the pool of options and ideas. It may also help the development of more innovative practice.'

However, Kettle adds that a great deal depends on the skill of the supervisor, and that a group supervision structure could, at worst, actually amplify dysfunctional team processes or be dominated by a few loud voices, preventing other participants from benefiting from it.

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[27] Kettle, M. (2015). Insight 30: Achieving effective supervision. IRISS, United Kingdom, https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/achieving-effective-supervision
[28] Valentino, A.L., LeBlanc, L.A. & Sellers, T.P., (2016). The Benefits of Group Supervision and a Recommended Structure for Implementation. Behav Analysis Practice 9, 320–328.

5.1.3 Peer to Peer Supervision

Peer to peer supervision differs from traditional forms of supervision, in which a more senior and experienced person manages the process. In contrast, peer to peer supervision refers to a reciprocal arrangement in which peers work in pairs together, reflecting on each other's practice. They are, in essence, supervising each other for mutual benefit.

5.1.4 Peer Group Supervision

In peer group supervision, a group of social service workers with similar knowledge and skill levels meet regularly to discuss professional challenges, new interventions and solutions, ethical dilemmas or situations, difficult caseloads and case management.

Peer group supervision in the social services is less widely used compared to one-to-one supervision. It has been used in situations where there are few experienced and suitably qualified practitioners available to act as supervisors for one-to-one supervision. Using peer group supervision in the social services may be a good way to build up the pool of people who have experience of supervision and thus the capacity of organizations. The experience of online peer group supervision has been researched among social service staff in remote locations in the far north of Queensland, Australia, by Amanda Nickson. We have drawn on her research and other literature in this guidance.

Peer group supervision is based upon the same principles as one-to-one supervision in terms of making a commitment to meet regularly and follow an agreed set of ground rules. The orientation of the group is that everyone is <u>equal</u> and everyone contributes to the discussions. One person may accept nomination to be the regular chair of the group, or the chairing could be rotated between a number of people. An agenda and an agreed plan, including agreement on confidentiality, should be devised.

The group members should agree on the purpose of the group and the frequency and length of meetings. Each person should bring examples of practice to share with the group and over multiple meetings, everyone's work will be discussed within an agreed time limit.

Research from rural Australia shows that peer group supervision using online video-meeting technology has worked.[29] Three of the most important reasons were:

1. *There was a connection with like-minded people.* "People understood what you were talking about" and trust between participants grew. This allowed members of the peer groups to share details of practice and challenges they were facing. Many participants found the experience very supportive.

2. *Learning happened.* Many participants had hoped to learn from others through the group process and they found it very beneficial in this regard. "They not only valued sharing similar experiences with their fellow group members, but they also valued learning from the differences."

3. *Reflection on practice was promoted.* Participants really valued the opportunity to reflect on their own practice – often in preparation for the group meeting and also reflecting on the practice of others.

As noted above in Section 5.1.2 on Group supervision, some researchers have noted potential weaknesses in relying only on peer groups to support practice. They suggest that very difficult cases might be too difficult to explore in depth in a group situation. This could be due to lack of time, with group members taking turns to share their practice experience. Or it could be due to a concern that practitioners will feel inhibited from asking probing questions about their peers' practice, wanting not to appear to be judging each other. In one-to-one supervision, by contrast, probing and deeper exploration, while still remaining non-judgmental, is expected. Certainly, all workers who are receiving group supervision should also have the opportunity to discuss particularly difficult situations with an experienced colleague in a one-to-one situation. In this setting, individual professional development needs or challenges in personal practice may not be as easy to identify and address.

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[29] Nickson, A & Gair, S & Miles, D. (2016). Supporting Isolated Workers in their Work with Families in Rural and Remote Australia: Exploring Peer Group Supervision. Children Australia. 41. 265-274. 10.1017/cha.2016.41

5.2 PROVISION OF REMOTE SUPERVISION

In locations where workers are at significant geographic distance from their supervisor or during emergencies, such as natural disaster, conflict or health crisis (Ebola, COVID-19) shifting from in-person to remote service provision and supervisory meetings may be mandatory or considered necessary because of access issues, or in order to minimize risks to the health and safety of both workers and clients.

Supervision is even more critical during an emergency. Workers who do not see colleagues regularly may feel cut-off and isolated, which impacts on the quality of practice. Workers may need more support to maintain their effectiveness, well-being and safety, as well as manage more challenging situations with clients during a time of increased workloads and limited resources.[30]

Supervisors will need to review available technology to enable regular contact with supervisees and continue to set aside dedicated time for supervision. The four core functions of supervision will continue to be important, namely:

- managerial functions, such as ensuring workers have access to technology or adapted work hours;
- supportive functions, such as discussing ethical challenges workers are facing during the emergency when trying to provide services and supporting staff well-being;
- developmental functions, such as identifying training needs to work effectively in the new remote service environment;
- mediation functions, such as ensuring the organization is providing appropriate safety equipment or technology to workers.

The transfer to remote service provision and remote supervision during an emergency is greatly aided when there is a child protection information management system already in place prior to the emergency and when the worker and supervisor have adequate internet access to remotely update client service data and enter records of supervisory meetings.

HOW TO PROVIDE SUPERVISION?
Key Conclusions and Advocacy Messages:

✓ Agencies should analyze the various forms of supervision available and seek input from their line workers on their preferences for supervision – including one-to-one, group, peer and distance / online supervision – and evaluate the various methods on a trial basis before incorporating them

✓ In emergency preparedness planning, agencies should take into account technology and other supports needed to shift to remote supervision and service delivery when necessary

6. WHEN IS SUPERVISION PROVIDED?

6.1 TIME ALLOCATION

Typically, staff with supervisory functions also perform additional functions. Therefore, supervisors need to monitor their work-load and allocate adequate time to their supervisory functions as part of their normal working hours. Supervision should then be carried out on a timeline as planned by the organization and as agreed between supervisor and supervisee. The responsibility to make it happen lies with the both the supervisor and the supervisee. The supervisee has responsibilities to also prepare, contribute to the agenda, and attend and participate fully in supervision sessions.

Building the required supervision capacity can be achieved even from a low baseline, such as when the relevant department does not initially have the amount of experience required to provide supervision to all staff at the frequency required. This capacity could be built through training, recruitment to new posts, as well as bringing in temporary external supervision capacity. It is also often helpful to form a partnership with a nearby university which runs social work courses. See example above.

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[30] UNICEF, IFSW, ACPHA, GSSWA. (2020). Social Service Workforce Safety and Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Response: Recommended Actions. http://socialser-viceworkforce.org/resources/social-service-workforce-safety-and-wellbeing-during-covid-19-response-recommended-actions

6.2 FREQUENCY

Each department or organization will set its own standards for the types and frequency of supervision. Supervision should happen at regular, predictable and planned intervals It is recommended that supervision should occur at least <u>once a month</u>, but allow for urgent consultations with a supervisor as and when needed. It should be noted that recent guidance for humanitarian or emergency situations recommends a much higher frequency, as a result of the high stress and intensity of the work and rapidly changing case responsibilities of workers.

Furthermore, new workers should receive more regular supervision; for example, once a week for their first 8-12 weeks of practice, followed by once every two weeks for three months and then moving to the standard interval. If group supervision (whether peer-led or expert-facilitated) is the norm, then groups should also meet on a monthly basis, but for at least 1.5 hours, while recognizing that in a group, more time may be needed for each worker to participate and gain some value from bringing up and discussing at least one of their cases. In some contexts, the agency or department may provide a mixture of forms of supervision.

6.3 DURATION

Supervision sessions should normally aim to last between 60 to 90 minutes, recognizing this can vary based upon the needs of newer staff.[31] It is important for supervisors to offer this time, commit to it regularly, and honor the time by avoiding conflicts, rescheduling or interruptions. This will ensure the supervisee is able to rely on being heard, sharing ideas for discussion and preparing points to raise.

WHEN TO PROVIDE SUPERVISION?
Key Conclusions and Advocacy Messages:

✓ Supervision sessions, in order to be effective, need to be regular, predictable, at dedicated times and in a suitable, uninterrupted space or communication channel

✓ Supervision sessions should be documented with follow up actions clearly noted

✓ Supervision sessions should be scheduled and only changed in exceptional or mutually agreed circumstances

✓ Supervision sessions should be conducted in an appropriate setting that is free of interruptions

✓ It is important that organizational leadership support the proper structures for effective supervision to take place (funding, time allocation, space, etc.)

7. CONCLUSION

The social service workforce engages with children and families in often complex and uncertain environments. Supervision provides social service workers with space to reflect and engage in ethical decision making. When workers are better supported through supervision, they in turn provide stronger support to children and families. Agencies, therefore, need to make investments in time and resources to allow supervisors to provide regular and good quality supervision. This will allow social service workers to flourish in the challenging environments in which they work.

It is important for agencies to develop clear definitions of supervision and promote the managerial, supportive, developmental and mediative functions of supervision. In fulfilling these functions, supervision can take on different forms, but all of them require supervisors with the right skills, attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, empathy and experience. To meet this requirement, agencies need to support supervisors to engage in competency-based training opportunities, and ensure supervisors and supervisees are provided with the time and space they need to provide and benefit from regular and effective supervision.

Governments, donors and other partners are, therefore, called upon to support policies, prioritize funding, enable reflective time and space, and encourage professional development, all of which are required to enable quality supervision. Having these supports at all levels will enable staff to develop and flourish in their work and children, families and communities, in turn, to benefit from quality services.

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8.0 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: KEY CONCLUSIONS AND ADVOCACY MESSAGES

What is Supervision?

✓ For supervision to be effective and sustainable, it needs to be underpinned by clear organizational protocols as part of an overall system that supports social service supervision, including relevant policy, structures, budgetary resources and monitoring tools

✓ The use and provision of supervision should be included in any national Social Work Code of Ethics or other professional codes of ethics relevant to social services as a professional standard. National or local associations of professional social service workers should collaborate on discussing, developing and reviewing supervision standards

✓ There is more to supervision than paperwork and checking boxes – most importantly, it is about enabling professional development and reflective practice, through a relationship built on trust

✓ Staff care and self-care practices are essential elements for both supervisors and supervisees

✓ Donors should support supervision processes by including supervision as a requirement in all Requests for Proposals (RFPs), contract extensions and review of documents

Why Supervision?

✓ Those the social service workforce assist – generally, the most vulnerable children and families - deserve and should be able to expect the highest level of professional standards, which is supported by supervision

✓ Supervision is not a 'nice-to-have, it is a 'must have' – it is essential to enable an agency to adequately carry out their responsibility to vulnerable groups

✓ Social service workers need and deserve the best possible support and supervision to do the complex jobs required of them

✓ Supervision should be viewed as a key means of helping staff do a difficult job and of promoting quality in social service work. If social service workers are managing difficult cases under intense time and resource constraints and do not receive adequate supervision, they are more likely to experience stress, secondary trauma and burnout. This then reduces workforce capacity

Who Provides Supervision?

✓ Both receiving and providing supervision and the carrying out of supervision should be taught as part of the social work curriculum and included in any training schemes for the social service workforce

✓ In many contexts, particularly low-income countries with minimal resources, there is a lack of social work professional education degree and so the competency-based approach provides a practical and systematic framework to establish career paths for the social service workforce across different contexts, through accredited on the job training and assessment.

✓ Given the wide range of supervisors' capacity, expertise and styles, it is necessary to define a required common set of competencies for supervisors in each sector, adapted to national context

✓ The competency-based approach proposes a more structured and phased approach to training with close supervision and support to allow the social service workforce in-country to develop the competencies to ensure quality of service

✓ Training is not a one-off activity. Ongoing support is required to help supervisors regularly practice and strengthen their competencies. Supervisors should actively seek training and coaching opportunities in line with their identified professional development needs, including through refresher training, workshops, meetings, group discussions, case conferences, learning from peers, or participation in monitoring or study visits

✓ Organizations need to establish a clear path to enable workers to transition from practice into a supervisory role to ensure the next generation of supervisors

✓ Organizations need to establish a clear path to enable workers to transition from practice into a supervisory role.

How to Provide Supervision?

✓ Agencies should analyze the various forms of supervision available and seek input from their line workers on their preferences for supervision – including one-to-one, group, peer and distance / online supervision – and evaluate the various methods on a trial basis before incorporating them

✓ In emergency preparedness planning, agencies should take into account technology and other supports needed to shift to remote supervision and service delivery when necessary

When to Provide Supervision?

✓ Supervision sessions, in order to be effective, need to be regular, predictable, at dedicated times and in a suitable, uninterrupted space or communication channel

✓ Supervision sessions should be documented with follow up actions clearly noted

✓ Supervision sessions should be scheduled and only changed in exceptional or mutually agreed circumstances

✓ Supervision sessions should be conducted in an appropriate setting that is free of interruptions

✓ It is important that organizational leadership support the proper structures for effective supervision to take place (funding, time allocation, space, etc.)

ANNEX 2: THE ROLE OF SUPERVISION IN SUPPORTING STAFF WELL-BEING

Supervision is **necessary** to support social service workers, but **not always fully sufficient** to meet all of a staff person's support needs. Supportive supervision is essential to ensure staff have space for reflection and a supportive professional relationship in which to think through and plan their response to stressful and complex cases or other aspects of their work. Thus, it plays a vital role in ensuring they do not experience excessive or negative stress and in preventing burn-out. However, supervision on its own cannot meet all staff well-being needs. At times it will help identify when a member of staff needs additional help with a personal issue, which falls outside of the remit of work-related supervision. The supervisor can then direct the supervisee to the appropriate form of help.

Other forms of help that should be available include individual confidential counselling (in person or by telephone) and guidance on self-care. Guidance on self-care should include advice on how staff can look after themselves physically and mentally in order to maintain a positive attitude to work, and positively manage work tasks and relationships, to better manage normal stress and prevent negative stress. It also should include advice on how to maintain a positive work-life balance.

Counselling and other forms of support can be organized by or offered through a confidential staff hotline usually paid for by the employing organization, by a professional association or trade union, or through assessment and then referral by a doctor, if specialist counselling or other mental health or psychosocial support is needed.

It is important that both supervisors and supervisee understand the crucial differences between the purpose and function of supervision and that of counselling, as follows:

SUPERVISION	COUNSELLING
Is focused on all aspects of the supervisee's day to day work, workload, responsibilities and professional development	Can help the individual to explore, understand and come to terms with personal or family issues, which may impact on their work, but go beyond the work setting
Regular supervision enables the supervisee to reflect on, understand and plan their response to stressful and complex situations at work. It helps the supervisee develop both work skills and coping strategies	Counselling usually seeks to help the individual not only understand and cope with day to day situation, but to identify and address deeper and more long term emotional and psychological issues, which stem from or be influenced by earlier life experiences, not necessarily related to the current work situation
Supervisors can help staff develop practical ways to manage work-related stress, including through positive team relationships, peer to peer or 'buddy' support systems, through making sure staff take enough holiday and breaks during work, through setting realistic expectations for individual and team performance, and through overall staff empowerment and protection of staff well-being and safety	Counsellors explore the deeper and more personal causes and manifestations of stress or other problems being faced by the member of staff, including the link between problems at work and problem in their personal life, but without specifically advising them how they should manage or organise their work
Supervisors should be able to recognize signs of stress and burnout and refer the supervisee to additional or specialist help, that may include counselling, when needed. In doing so they should also coordinate with HR/management	Counsellors can usually assess or diagnose the severity of a personal problem, and advise on the need either for more specialist or long-term counselling, or other specialist, psychotherapeutic or psychiatric help, if the problem is affecting the individual's overall mental health

ANNEX 3: SAMPLE SUPERVISION AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

A review of literature and examples online reveals that there are many different ways to structure and record a supervision agreement. Below is some suggested wording, under the most commonly included sections.

Name of employing organization:_____

Name of Supervisee _____ Job title _____

Name of Supervisor_____ Job title _____

Purpose of supervision

Include the organization's definition of supervision, its purpose and functions here (for example, the definition and description on pp.7-8 of this guidance)

Legal basis and professional standards for supervision

Include here a reference to relevant article(s) in the national social work law, or other legislation on social services, social welfare or the area of practice (e.g. Children's Act, Code or Policy), and any relevant formal professional standards, either national or specific to the organization.

Responsibilities and expectations

The supervisor and supervisee agree and commit to:

• Meet at least once every four weeks for at least one hour for the purpose of supervision.

• Meet on the following regular day and time: _____, in the following location _____ (unless otherwise agreed).

• Ensure supervision takes place in a confidential space, which is appropriate and free from distraction

• Respect the confidentiality of supervision, except in cases where information is disclosed regarding an individual at immediate risk, if this needs to be reported in line with the employing organization or local authority's safeguarding or child protection procedure.

• Agree to take part in open and honest discussion of the supervisee's work or cases. This should be based on mutual respect, support and constructive criticism.

• Pose and respond to challenging questions with regard to action, progress and outcomes for vulnerable individuals, children and families.

• Devote sufficient time in discussion to the cases with the highest needs, concerns or risk for children, young people, vulnerable adults or the family as a whole.

• Identify and address or prevent oppression, bias and discrimination in the provision of social services, including through identifying and reflecting on personal feelings and biases, which may be unconscious, and may be connected to culture, upbringing, or previous personal or professional experience, as they may impact on professional judgment and decision making in a case.

• Identify, recognize and track good practice, which can be transferred or built upon when supporting other cases.

• Discuss contribution to teamwork and any team issues arising.

• Identify the supervisee's professional learning and development needs and plan his/her participation in ongoing training opportunities.

• Ensure that each supervision meeting is recorded in writing including key points discussed and decisions on any actions required. Such records will be stored safely and confidentially, kept up to date, and available for audit when required.

• Follow up to ensure any actions agreed are implemented as agreed and recorded.

In the event that there is an unresolved dispute between the supervisor and supervisee, both parties will agree to meet together with _____(name of appropriate person within the organization), to ensure that any difficulties are satisfactorily resolved. Both parties will ensure that the other is aware in advance that a dispute resolution meeting has been arranged.

Name of Supervisee _____

Signed _____ Date_____

Name of Supervisor_____

Signed _____ Date_____

Additional sections that may be included in supervision agreements, depending on local or organizational requirements:

- Separate lists of roles and responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisee.

- Separate lists of rights of both supervisor and supervisee, in the context of supervision.

- Other people who may attend supervision – this could include the supervisee's line manager, if different from their supervisor or other key senior colleague.

- Arrangements for any group supervision, on either a regular or ad hoc basis, in addition to individual supervision, if appropriate, and defining in which circumstances the individual or group format would be suitable or necessary.

- Standard agenda items that supervision meetings should cover, which may include:

  - Key cases that need to be discussed (a separate form may need to be completed for each discussion, to be added to the case file).

  - Any staff absence to be requested or approved (annual leave / time off for overtime / sickness/ other)

  - Learning and development (identification of needs, preparation of plans, discussion of learning and impact on practice development and service delivery)

  - Supervisor feedback, direct observations or general appraisal of practice

  - Any personal issue impacting on the supervisee's work or professional boundaries, including related to health and safety, stress and wellbeing at work, including any difficulties in working relationships.

Basic format for recording supervision meetings

(to be adapted in line with local and organizational requirements and for multiple sessions)

Name of employing organization and local office: _____

Name of Supervisee _____

Name of Supervisor_____

Date _____

Notes of points discussed under the following agenda:

1. General wellbeing of staff member – any updates since last supervision.

2. Requests for leave or sickness absence.

3. Review of progress on agreed action points from last meeting (other than those specific to cases, recorded below).

4. Cases discussed in this meeting (at this point a separate form may be required for each case, a copy of which can be placed on the relevant file for each case).

    Each case discussion may be recorded under the following headings:

    • Name of individual / family, including details of key family members.

    • Key presenting problems or issues in this case.

    • Goals of the supervisee's work on this case – any goals agreed with the individual or family.

    • Developments and progress on the case since last supervision, including supervisee's observations from recent contact with the individuals involved.

    • Highlight any new areas of risk or concern.

    • Decisions and actions – record decision, action required, by whom and by when.

5. Team / organizational issues

6. Learning and development:

    a. any recent progress or achievements?

    b. any new learning and development needs identified?

7. Any other business?

8. Date of next meeting

Supervisee's signature _____ Date_____

Supervisor's signature _____ Date_____

ANNEX 4: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON SUPERVISION

Cross-cutting Resources

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Case Management Task Force. (2018). Case Management Supervision and Coaching Training Package. https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-online-library/case-management-supervision-and-coaching-training-package-0

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Institute for Human Services for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. (2009). Supervisor/Manager Core Competencies. Ohio, United States. http://ocwtp.net/PDFs/Competencies/Super-Man%20CORE%20Competencies.pdf

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Tri-borough Adult Social Care. (201). Supervision Policy. United Kingdom. https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Learning-and-development/CPD-for-social-workers/Supervision-policy.pdf

Resources on Planning Supervision

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Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center. Supervisor Training Series Module 5: Endings and Transitions – Managing Staff Retention, Satisfaction and Separation. School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh, USA. http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/Curriculum/540SupervisorTrainingSeriesMod5EndingsTransitionsManagingStaff.htm

Resources on Supporting Supervision

ARTREACH. (2013). Caring for Yourself is a Radical Act – Self-care guide for youth working in community. https://www.artreach.org/selfcare

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Online Training Courses

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