



### III. DEFINITIONS

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For a complete list of definitions, see the [OCFS Policy Manual Glossary](#). In this document, the first reference to any word that is defined is hyperlinked to the Glossary.

### IV. Policy

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Supervision is essential in the day-to-day operation of child welfare services. Supervision consists of three modules: administrative, educational, and supportive supervision. Supervision provides direct oversight of casework practice and assures relevant laws and policy are followed. Supervision is a collaborative process focused on the quality of service provided, meeting child and family needs, conducting job responsibilities accurately and in a timely manner, and supporting staff in their work and in being able to grow and develop their skills. It also provides the bridge between direct service and management to ensure that all information is shared when agency changes are being implemented. [Supervisors](#) ensure that collaboration occurs between families, service providers, agency colleagues, and community stakeholders.

The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) recognizes that while the nature of the work is influenced by emergency situations and family crises, supervisors will ensure supervision is not entirely driven by crisis management. All planned supervision, as it is recognized that there will be times when supervision is needed for a specific issue that arises, will be focused on outcomes and should be proactive, planful, structured, and routine.

### V. PROCEDURES

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#### Supervisor Competencies

Clear supervisor competencies help to ensure effective supervision and successful outcomes for children and families by guiding and offering consistency to the practice of supervision and setting high expectations for those leading and supporting the complex, multi-dimensional work which must occur. Supervisor Competencies have been adopted by OCFS as the standards by which supervisors are held (Appendix A).

#### Procedures for New Supervisors

New supervisors will participate in Managing in State Government as required by [Human Resources](#). New supervisors will also participate in the Supervisory Academy. The Supervisory Academy provides supervisors with a training base to develop skills to supervise frontline staff. The Academy consists of three modules covering the following:

1. [Administrative Supervision](#) – Supervisor as Manager focuses on the importance of ensuring policy and procedures are followed. This module includes, but is not limited to, the supervisor as a leader and communicator of the agency mandates, being a unit manager, how to monitor performance, conflict management, and transitioning to supervision.
2. [Educational Supervision](#) – Supervisor as Coach focuses on increasing the knowledge and

skill of staff. This module includes, but is not limited to, adult learning styles, new caseworker training, transfer of learning, the stages of staff development, the benefits of and how to conduct [individual supervision](#) and [group supervision](#), solution focused practice, safety and Structured Decision Making©, and providing feedback to staff.

3. [Supportive Supervision](#) – Supervisor as a Team Leader focuses on improving morale and job satisfaction. This module includes, but is not limited to, crisis and in-depth supervision, task centered supervision, the elements of critical thinking, secondary trauma for staff, characteristics of teams, and [coaching](#).

## Supervision for All Staff

- a. **Assigning Workload.** Supervisors will assign investigations, cases, resource home applications, and home studies within agency timeframes. In doing so, consideration will be given to a caseworker's or community care worker's (CCW) experience and current workload. Supervisors will attempt to assign cases evenly among staff, taking into account the number of critical case members for each case and balance of assignments among staff. Operational needs must also be considered as it is the agency's responsibility to ensure all appropriate reports are investigated.

Supervisors that supervise case aids, clerical staff, or others who work in child welfare will ensure work assignments and duties effectively support casework staff in carrying out their duties.

Note: New caseworkers will be assigned investigations/cases in a phased-up approach until assigned a full caseload. Exceptions must be discussed with the Program Administrator and will only be allowed due to staffing challenges.

- b. **Individual Supervision.** Individual supervision allows a supervisor to develop a collaborative relationship with their worker and conduct a comprehensive assessment of the worker to understand their strengths, capabilities, areas of growth and address challenges. This includes holding staff accountable for their assigned workload. Timeframe: Individual supervision must occur a minimum of two (2) times per month with each caseworker or Community Care Worker (CCW). More frequent supervision may be needed when a staff person is new, has cases that require additional oversight, or there are performance issues that need to be addressed or monitored. Individual supervision with support staff must occur at least monthly.

Individual supervision is used to review progress in investigations, cases, and resource licensing and to outline steps necessary to build engagement with the family and ensure child safety, permanency, and well-being. Individual supervision should also be a time for the supervisor to discuss self-care and the impact of secondary trauma with their worker. Supervision notes are to be documented by the supervisor and shared with the caseworker and the Program Administrator (PA) or Assistant Program Administrator (APA). Investigation/case specific consultation and decisions are documented in the case conference notes within the child welfare information system. Supervision related to professional growth, performance, and other areas not specifically related to a case is

documented in separate supervision notes kept by the supervisor. Note: It is also expected that caseworkers will take their own notes during supervision to track casework priorities, next steps and timelines for completion of activities.

Supervisory expectations include, but are not limited to, the following activities to be discussed with staff during individual supervision. Supervisors will:

- i. Review the caseworker's strengths and challenges, investigations/cases, timeframes, plans, and Family Team Meetings (FTM), etc.
  - ii. Listen to one fact finding forensic interview for each CPS caseworker per month. Feedback will include the caseworker's strengths and challenges and will be documented in supervision notes.
  - iii. Review two entries of monthly caseworker contacts in the child welfare information system for each Permanency Caseworker per month. Feedback will include the caseworker's strengths and challenges and will be documented in supervision notes.
  - iv. Conduct a field observation at least once per quarter per caseworker. This can be done, and should be considered, more frequently for new caseworkers or as part of a professional development plan. Note: Supervisors should make sure they are observing all types of contacts (e.g., contacts with parents, children, and youth; FTMs, court, and family visits, etc.).
  - v. Discuss with staff information considered in case decision making and how the information was analyzed. This will help staff develop critical thinking skills and learn to transfer this skill to the caseworker's other investigations/cases.
- c. Unit Meetings. [Unit meetings](#) focus on administrative practice such as ensuring that a new policy is read and the quiz is taken, that information regarding new services is shared, etc. Unit meetings will include all members of the unit, including support staff. It is important that clerical staff and case aides understand how critical their work is to support staff in meeting the needs of children and families. Timeframe: It is expected that supervisors will convene unit meetings at least once per month. Note: A unit meeting may be combined with group supervision if the meeting delineates a portion of time to unit meeting topics and a portion to group supervision.
- d. Group Supervision. Group supervision focuses on practice and policy. It may include case consultation or review of policy or practice. Group supervision allows caseworkers to practice their skills and integrate learning into their interactions with children and families. Timeframe: It is expected that the supervisor will conduct group supervision at least once per month for caseworkers, CCWs, and support staff. Group supervision can ensure that duties are being completed and staff have the support they need to be successful.
- e. Training. Supervisors will ensure that:
- i. Staff are able to attend training to enhance their job performance as well as meet the mandatory training hours to maintain their social work license. Note: Supervisors will ensure that staff are able to attend and fully participate in trainings by coordinating coverage for staff attending training, as necessary.

- ii. Staff know how to access law and policy and are aware of any changes.
  - iii. Experienced staff are providing job shadow opportunities for new caseworkers. The new caseworker will utilize the [structured job shadow](#) guide questions in preparation for, during, and after the job shadow experience. New caseworker staff will then meet with the caseworker they shadowed and their supervisor to debrief the experience.
- f. Data. Reports and Quality Assurance (QA) data should be utilized in supervision to assist workers in understanding the agency's performance measures, how their work impacts the outcomes, and how they can improve their outcomes as outlined in their performance evaluation.
- g. Performance Evaluations. Supervisors will follow the guidelines related to performance evaluations as outlined in the "Human Resources" section of this policy. New staff receive additional evaluations, including the three-month probation report and the six-month evaluation from their date of employment.
- h. Role Modeling. Supervisors will role model engagement and collaboration for staff to ensure they are partnering with families in a way that increases child safety. This includes using strength-based language and awareness of the family's culture. The supervisor will provide feedback regarding the development of these skills to the worker.
- i. Professional Growth and Development
  - i. Supervisors will ensure that staff have a professional development plan and the opportunity to attend advanced training, join workgroups, and represent the agency at meetings. Note: It is important to remember that supervisors contribute to and set the tone for office culture so supervisors should act in a non-judgmental manner and foster a respectful work environment.
  - ii. The professional development plan is part of an employee's performance evaluation. Supervisors will discuss with staff their professional development goals. Their strengths and areas of interest will be incorporated into the plan. These goals may include career opportunities or a desire to gain more expertise in certain areas of practice, such as domestic abuse and violence or substance use disorder.
- j. Supporting and Retaining Staff. Retaining qualified staff benefits both the families served and the agency itself. Supervisory support is vital to staff retention. Supervisors should:
  - i. Ensure staff have the knowledge and tools needed to successfully carry out their duties.
  - ii. Ensure staff have the ability to attend events that promote a sense of belonging, and connection to their unit, office, and community.
  - iii. Encourage supportive peer relationships. Peers can be powerful sources of support for one another that aid in retention by listening to concerns, providing opportunities to talk, offering encouragement, covering cases, offering tangible resources, task assistance, and consulting on cases.
  - iv. Provide regular opportunities for acknowledgment of and recognition for the ways in

which day-to-day casework is making a positive and meaningful difference for children and families.

- v. Continually assess for and provide an adequate balance of autonomy and support in the supervisory relationship.
- vi. Create a supportive learning environment in which staff can develop skills and competence in critical functions of their role such as prioritizing their work activities. Acknowledge and reward examples of growth in one-on-one and group settings.
- vii. Check in with staff, offer empathy and learn what additional support may be needed after difficult interviews, court hearings, and cases involving child injuries.
- viii. Actively engage staff in opportunities that allow them to grow and be involved in agency practices and changes. Examples of this include representing the agency at community meetings, attending conferences, and participating in policy workgroups, etc.
- ix. Acknowledge the need for ongoing self-care and respond appropriately to secondary traumatic stress inherent in working as a child welfare caseworker, by:
  - 1. Regularly discussing the emotional, mental, and physical impacts of the work with staff in individual supervision both in a general way and, more specifically, regarding their current workload.
  - 2. Asking staff what would help them to better handle stress and being responsive to the type of support requested.
  - 3. Encouraging staff to take time off as needed, and within personnel guidelines.
  - 4. Helping staff identify and engage in a variety of self-care strategies; and
  - 5. Informing staff of the supports available including district clinical support, debriefs held regarding serious injury and child death cases, and the Living Resources Program.
- k. Staff Safety. Supervisors will discuss staff safety with workers to ensure all information available is being considered to ensure their safety during interactions with families throughout their workday. The supervisor will assist the worker in developing a Personal Safety Plan, if needed. ([10.1 Staff Safety and High Risk Situations Policy](#)). The supervisor will also complete the DHHS Threat and Unusual Incident Reporting Form when required.
- l. When an employee terminates their employment with state government their supervisor will complete the Employee Offboarding Checklist (Appendix F). In addition, the supervisor will ensure that, for caseworkers, the voice recorder is turned in and all interviews are uploaded into the child welfare information system and the recorder is cleared.

## Supervision for New Staff

- a. Hiring and **Onboarding** Staff. Supervisors may participate in both panel and individual interviews to assess an applicant's qualifications and ensure they are able to meet the job requirements of both the agency and social work licensing board. When new staff are hired, supervisors will follow the Onboarding Checklist (Appendix C).
- b. Orienting New Staff. Supervisors will orient new staff during regular individual supervision and through role modeling. This will include accompanying staff on initial meetings with

families, attending Family Team Meetings, and ensuring they participate in structured job shadowing experiences with experienced staff to learn the skills necessary to meet the needs of the children and families served by the agency.

- c. Use of the Supervisory History and Supervisory Agreements. The supervisor will complete the Supervisory History (Appendix D) and the Supervisory Agreement (Appendix E) with all staff in their unit. This is done to ensure the supervisor has knowledge of past supervisory relationships and can discuss a successful approach to supervision for both the staff person and supervisor. In addition, expectations regarding supervision should be discussed and written into the Supervisory Agreement.
- d. Training.
  - i. It is expected that supervisors support new caseworkers throughout Foundations training and attend and actively participate in the pre, mid, and post Foundations meeting with their caseworker, district training liaison from the Policy and Training Unit, and the Foundations trainers, as well as address any issues brought to the supervisor's attention during training.
  - ii. Supervisors will ensure that new staff attend all required training during their first year of employment and any training mandated by the agency.
  - iii. Supervisors will ensure that staff are aware of training requirements, such as having one's camera on if the training is over video, and an appropriate environment that is conducive to work, etc.
- e. Structured Job Shadowing. Supervisors will be planful in coordinating job shadowing opportunities for new caseworkers. They will adhere to the Structured Job Shadow Guide when scheduling and preparing staff for job shadowing experiences. They will align job shadowing with the activities assigned in Foundations, will prepare both the new caseworker and the worker they are shadowing prior to the field experience and will debrief the experiences after the shadowing experience. Supervisors will ensure that trainees have scheduled job shadowing experiences that enhance their training, orient them to their role, and support the transfer of learning.
- f. New Worker Support Group. Supervisors will ensure that new caseworkers are informed of and attend the new worker support group. The New Worker Support Group is a consistent statewide program that supports the further growth and development of caseworkers during their first year of employment with OCFS. This support group provides further education, support, and tools to assist in the development of a caseworker's knowledge and application of skills. This support group meets monthly within each district office. These meetings consist of trainings on specific topic areas and presentations by OCFS trainers, Policy Specialists, District Staff, and community and agency partners. It is the expectation that Program Administrator (PA) and/or Assistant Program Administrator (APA) attend these meetings.
- g. Performance Evaluations. Supervisors will meet with new staff prior to or directly after Foundations training to review the worker's performance expectations and explain the performance evaluation process. The supervisor will ensure the worker has read and understands the caseworker competencies. The supervisor will complete an evaluation for a



new worker within three months, at six months, and annually from their date of hire.

## Human Resources

The supervisor is responsible for knowing Human Resource policies. It is the expectation that supervisors consult with the PA/APA as well as Human Resources when disciplinary action is being considered.

- a. Performance Evaluations. The supervisor must complete a yearly performance evaluation, in a timely manner, with all of their staff. The performance evaluation includes performance standards and expectations, an employee development plan, performance rating categories, comments/review of employee performance, an overall rating, and a section for the employee's comments and signature.

It is important for the supervisor to be thoughtful and comprehensive when developing the employee's performance evaluation. This should include both qualitative (e.g., how the employee engages with families, peers, providers, and administration) and quantitative data (e.g., if the employee has met agency goals regarding the number of investigations or monthly caseworker contacts completed). Specific incidents should be outlined and both the strengths and areas needing improvement addressed. Employee development should also be discussed and incorporated into the evaluation.

The employee should be given a copy of their evaluation prior to the meeting where it will be discussed to give them time to review it and develop any questions or comments they may have. The evaluation should be reviewed with the employee during either an individual supervision or a separate meeting for this purpose. Adequate time to discuss the performance evaluation should be set aside and the meeting should be free from distractions and interruptions. Performance Management. When performance issues arise, they should be addressed in as timely a manner as possible. This timeframe may vary as some issues may be dealt with directly by the supervisor through counseling memos prior to formal discipline, while others require consultation with the Program Administrator/Assistant Program Administrator and/or Human Resources prior to the issue being addressed with the employee.

The intervention should be dealt with at the lowest level of discipline that is appropriate to correct the performance issue. For example, counseling prior to discipline may include, but is not limited to, the following performance issues:

- i. Chronic tardiness.
- ii. Employee not completing work in a timely manner.
- iii. Poor work quality.
- iv. Failure to follow proper work procedures.
- v. Failure to notify supervisor when late/absent.
- vi. Providing incorrect information; and/or



- vii. Providing poor customer service.

These types of performance issues should be discussed with the employee in individual supervision as well as outlined for the employee in writing through either a counseling memo or email.

Performance issues that require discussion with the PA/APA and Human Resources include behaviors that may result in progressive discipline. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Insubordination.
- ii. Violating confidentiality policies.
- iii. Assaulting a co-worker, supervisor, or others when performing their duties as an employee.
- iv. Sexual or other types of harassment.
- v. Being under the influence of substances in the workplace.
- vi. Theft; and/or
- vii. Falsification of records.

Discussions with the PA/APA and Human Resources should include:

- i. Details of the issue and the level of discipline required:
  - 1. Written Warning.
  - 2. Written Reprimand.
  - 3. Suspension or Written in Lieu of Suspension.
  - 4. Demotion; or
  - 5. Dismissal.
- ii. Who and how will this be discussed with the employee.
- iii. The development of any action plans to correct the issue.

Note: If progressive discipline is being administered, the employee must be told that they have a right to have a union representative present at any meeting where discipline will be discussed and provided three (3) days' notice of the meeting.

## VI. POLICY SUPERSEDES

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I. E. - Standards of Supervision in Child Welfare

## VII. LINKS TO RELATED POLICIES

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[10.1 Staff Safety and High Risk Situations Policy](#)

## VIII. APPENDICES

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[Appendix A: Supervisor Competencies](#)

[Appendix B: New Supervisor Checklist](#)

[Appendix C: Onboarding Checklist](#)

[Appendix D: Supervisory History](#)

[Appendix E: Supervisory Agreement](#)

[Appendix F: Employee Offboarding Checklist](#)

**Note:** The hyperlinks to these documents only work on DHHS issued computers. If you would like to request a copy of these documents, please email your request to:

[OCFSPolicyTraining.DHHS@maine.gov](mailto:OCFSPolicyTraining.DHHS@maine.gov)