

STRENGTHENING CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISION: A Participatory Design Process

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Overview of This Presentation

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1. Why child welfare supervision is such a critical issue today.
2. Successful child welfare agencies: an "aligned" child welfare system.
3. The ultimate purpose of child welfare supervision.
4. The goal of this Supervision Redesign Process.
5. Why earlier supervision improvement efforts haven't gotten better results.
6. What child welfare practice needs to look like.

Overview of This Presentation (cont'd)

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7. Roles in the Supervision Redesign Process.
8. Stages in the Supervision Redesign Process.
9. The seven steps in the Supervision Redesign Process.
10. Technical assistance for this Process.
11. Five essential ingredients for the success of this Process.
12. Other notes.
13. Special thanks.
14. Sources.
15. Contact information.

Why Is Supervision such a Critical Issue Today in Child Welfare?

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Because we now know that when child welfare supervision is strengthened and child welfare supervisors are fully supported:

- Practice improves.
- Better child and family outcomes are achieved.
- Worker retention improves.
- Measures of supervisor effectiveness, team effectiveness, and worker and supervisor job satisfaction improves.

Our Goal: A Totally "Aligned" Child Welfare System

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Child welfare agencies that are getting better results for children and families are "aligned systems":

- The agency has invested time and energy in a participatory effort to define its mission, vision, and the values and principles that guide its work and operations.
- All the agency's subsystems are aligned with these definitions: (1) practice model; (2) training system; (3) information technology (it) system; (4) quality assurance (QA) system; (5) the supervision system.

The Ultimate Purpose of Child Welfare Supervision

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We have to be clear about the ultimate purpose of child welfare supervision: to achieve positive outcomes for children, youth, and families in safety, permanency, and well-being.

- We do that through caring, defined, and mentoring relationships with our workers.
- Through our workers, we do this in a caring, defined, and mentoring partnership with the children, youth and families who have come into the child welfare system.

The Goal of This Process: Agency Leaders and Supervisors Partner to Improve Outcomes

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- The leadership helps the agency as a whole come to a consensus about what child welfare outcomes need improvement now.
- The leaders and supervisors—together—determine what practice changes need to be made to achieve these outcome improvements:
 - A hypothesis.
 - Experiment.
 - Try until you achieve what you need to accomplish.
- Supervisors act as the agency’s practice change agents to implement these practice changes.
- Supervisors become the agency’s practice experts.
- A continuous dialogue between leaders and supervisors, a continuous improvement process. It never ends.
- The supervisors collectively become a “supervisor academy” for the leadership to consult and use to achieve the agency’s desired outcomes.

Why Haven’t We Gotten Better Results from Earlier Attempts to Improve Supervision?

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- In the first round of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), over 20 States decided to focus on child welfare supervision as a strategy to improve outcomes in their Program Improvement Plans (PIPs).
- Most of these States, however, were not as successful as they hoped to be in their PIP because they took a one-dimensional approach—for example, focusing on strengthening supervisor training, or rewriting supervision policy.
- Another approach is now being used currently in seven States: taking a systemic, holistic, comprehensive, and strategic approach to improving supervision (to be described GENERICALLY shortly).
- The one-dimensional approach of States was “necessary” but not “sufficient.” Comprehensive is the key.

Building Block:
If Supervisors are Practice Change Agents,
What Does Practice Need to Look Like?

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- **The CFSR Practice Principles:**
 - Family-Centered Practice.
 - Community-Based Practice.
 - Individualized Services.
 - Strengthening Parental Capacity.

Building Block:
If Supervisors are Practice Change Agents,
What Does Practice Need to Look Like (continued)?

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- **The Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Model.**
Minnesota’s public child welfare system is committed to, and guided by the following values and principles:
 - Safety.
 - Permanency.
 - Fostering Connections for Youth.
 - Well-Being.
 - Family Focus.
 - Partnership.
 - Respectful Engagement.
 - Organizational Competence.
 - Professional Competence.
 - Cultural Competence.
 - Accountability.

Roles in the Supervision Redesign Process

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Roles and Tasks of the State/Jurisdiction:

- **Leadership:**
 - Broadly defined: State leadership, county leadership (including MACSSA), tribal leadership, private sector leadership.
 - Vision, buy-in, participation in the process, partnership with supervisors, ownership of the results, “barrier buster.”
- **State Coordinator:**
 - Work intensively with NRCs in developing and implementing the process.
 - Ensuring constant feedback loops and transparency of the process.
 - Ensuring productive meetings, participation, continuity.
- **Supervision Work Group:**
 - Focus group.
 - Practice change agents.
 - Experts in their own field, empowered to develop the Supervision Plan.
 - Ambassadors.

Roles in the Supervision Redesign Process (continued)

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Roles and Tasks of the Two NRCs:

- Facilitation of the process.
- Subject expertise, brokering knowledge and resources.

Roles and Tasks of NRCOI:

- Strategic Planning.
- Organizational Excellence.

Roles and Tasks of NRC-CWDT:

- Use of Data in Supervision.
- Time and Activity Study.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process

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1. State, County, and Tribal Readiness and Capacity Self-Assessment.
2. Planning (development of the Supervision Strategic Plan).
3. Plan Implementation.
4. Sustainability.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process: Step 1: NRCs' Meeting with Leadership (State, County, Tribal)

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- Determine Leadership's Vision for Child Welfare Supervision.
- Relate Vision to Agency Framework:
 - Agency Mission.
 - Agency Vision.
 - Agency Guiding Principles and Values/Practice Model.
 - Agency Program Improvement Plan
- Areas of Focus.
- Leadership Commitment to:
 - This Supervision Redesign Process as a major effort to build the Agency's practice capacity.
 - Meeting with the Work Group after each session for continuous feedback loop (no surprises).
 - Act on resultant plan.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process: Step 2: Formation of the Supervision Work Group

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Range of Membership—approximately 12 (small population States) to 24 (large States):

- State Coordinator to manage the process.
- Representative supervisors chosen by State, Counties, and Tribes (highly respected by their peers):
 - Representing all programs (e.g., CPS, in-home, foster care).
 - Representing both small and large counties.
 - Representing different levels (time) of supervisor experience.
- Mid-managers (supervisors of supervisors).

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process: Step 2: Formation of the Supervision Work Group (cont'd)

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- Central Office Representatives (for example, CFSR/PIP, QA, IT, Training Unit).
- Representatives of State Association of County Directors/appropriate Committee(s).
- University partners.
- Partner agencies if the Child Welfare Agency has privatized services.
- Ad hoc participants as needed (e.g., human resources).
- NRCs staff/consultants.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process: Step 3: First Meeting of the Work Group

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Four Agenda Items for the First Meeting:

1. Meet with the State, County, and Tribal Leadership and hear directly from them :
 - × The charge for the Work Group.
 - × The support the Leadership will provide the Work Group.
 - × Plans for ongoing meetings between the Leadership and the Work Group.
2. Work Group serves as a focus group to provide a full picture of current supervision in the jurisdiction:
 - × Current *culture* of child welfare supervision (how valued supervision is by workers and by the agency, and how supervisors and supervision are supported in the jurisdiction).
 - × Current *structure and practice* of child welfare supervision (current policy and expectations across the jurisdiction about how often and how supervision is provided to workers and supervisors and the content of supervision, and the actual practice of supervision which may or may not be the same as the policy or expectations).

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process: Step 3: First Meeting of the Work Group (cont'd)

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3. Work Group Vision of Child Welfare Supervision:
 - × Agency's mission, vision, guiding principles and values.
 - × Leaders' vision of child welfare supervision.
 - × Work Group's application of this vision to their own vision of supervision.
4. Work Group Definition of the Purpose of Child Welfare Supervision:
 - × Supervisors' definition.
 - × What supervisors do to achieve this definition (i.e., supervisory activities such as coaching and mentoring).
 - × Principles and values that should guide child welfare supervisors and supervision in the jurisdiction (defining the implications of Minnesota's Practice Model for supervision and supervisors).

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 4: Supervisor Time and Activity Study

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- **Activities:**
 - Identified by Work Group.
 - Four categories of Supervisory Activities:
 - Recruitment, Training, and Professional Development.
 - Administrative Supervision.
 - Case Specific/Casework/Clinical Supervision.
 - Supervisors' Roles within the Agency and Community.
- Time spent on each activity, plus Planned vs. Unplanned.
- One "typical" week captured (a choice of one of three weeks).
- Automatic compilation of results (daily and weekly).
- Analysis and report writing done by NRC-CWDT to preserve confidentiality.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 4: Supervisor Time and Activity Study (cont'd)

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- **Benefits to individual supervisors:**
 - Captures how the supervisor's time is really spent.
 - Allows for the supervisor's comparison with others.
 - Provides basis for supervisor to determine desired changes.
- **Benefits of aggregate data to the Agency:**
 - Depicts child welfare supervision work.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 5: Development of the Supervision Strategic Plan

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- Developed by the Work Group (ad hoc participants are brought in as needed—Work Group members are responsible for soliciting input from others).
- Participatory design (more later).
- Meetings in person, by conference call and by webinar.
- Meetings of entire Work Group and sub-groups (assigned different sections of the strategic plan (see the next slide).
- Work requires 4-8 months to complete the Supervision Strategic Plan (not implementation).

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 5: Development of the Supervision Strategic Plan (cont'd)

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The Impact of the Interaction between Agency Leadership and Supervisors in Step 5:

- In many jurisdictions, there is a lack of relationship between leaders and supervisors.
- Interaction gives both a chance to learn, and there is a transference in both directions:
 - Supervisors learn what it takes to get something through the state office and implemented in counties and Tribes.
 - State office staff see what supervisors deal with at the local/field level.
- So in the development of the Strategic Plan, Work Group members go beyond "pie in the sky" ideas and focus on practical goals and actions that will really make a difference.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 5: Development of the Supervision Strategic Plan (cont'd)

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Each State's Supervision Strategic Plan has been different and unique. However, the categories of topical areas have tended to be the same (six subgroups in the Work Group):

1. Supervisor Recruitment, Training, and Professional Development.
2. Supervisor Support.
3. Casework/Clinical Supervision.
4. Administrative/Management Supervision.
5. The Supervisor's Role in the Agency and the Community.
6. The Supervisor's Use of Data to Manage for Results/Outcomes Achievement.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 5: Development of the Supervision Strategic Plan (cont'd)

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- Goals are developed for all six topical areas.
 - Action Steps are developed for each goal.
 - Tasks are developed for each action step.
 - Intended Effects of each action step are identified.
 - Persons Responsible for each action step are identified.
 - Completion Dates for each action step are specified
- Critical task: *prioritize* and *sequence* all the goals so the Supervision Strategic Plan is a multi-year plan.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 6: Presentation of the Strategic Plan

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The draft of the Child Welfare Strategic Plan is completed, and has been prioritized and sequenced into a multi-year plan:

- Presentation to leadership (State, Counties, Association of County Directors/ Committees, Tribes).
- Modifications are made as needed.
- Presentation to the various internal and external stakeholders, with opportunities for feedback and modification.
- Finalize.

Steps in the Supervision Redesign Process:
Step 7: Beginning Implementation

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- Agency leadership assigns each goal to appropriate persons/departments/counties/agencies/ stakeholders.
- Work Group members sign up as liaisons and monitors for each of the goals.
- Work Group liaisons meet with each assigned person/ department, etc. for background and orientation to the goal and its meaning.
- Work Group meets quarterly to monitor implementation, celebrate successes, deal with emergent barriers, and modify the plan as needed; meets with leadership quarterly to report progress and get assistance with barriers.

Technical Assistance with this Process:
Why Two NRCs?

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- NRCOI: This is essentially a strategic planning process which is one of the NRCOI's core activities. It results in a comprehensive strategic plan covering all areas of the supervision and what the agency needs to do to strengthen supervision and support child welfare supervisors and improve the child welfare organization.
- NRC-CWDT: Use of data is critical in strengthening child welfare supervision. NRC-CWDT takes the lead in:
 - The Time and Activity Study.
 - Helping the Work Group determine how supervisors can use data to manage for better results. NRC-CWDT can also work with IT and QA staff to build the capacity to generate the needed data and the Training Unit to develop training and mentoring for supervisors in using data.

Essential Ingredients for Success:
#1: Leadership and the Supervision Redesign Process

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Leadership (State, County, Tribal):

- Vision.
- Buy-in.
- Participation in the process.
- Partnership with supervisors.
- Ownership of results.

Essential Ingredients for Success:
#2: Participatory Design Process

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- The Principle of Participatory Design: the people who will be responsible for implementing the work should be involved in designing the plan.
- This is a principle which guides all the work of this Supervision Redesign process.
- Of course, this means the supervisors.
- But it also means leaders, mid-managers, and other internal and external stakeholders who can make or break this plan, including (especially) counties and tribes).

Essential Ingredients for Success:
#3: Feedback Loops and Transparency

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- Leadership consultation and buy-in is critical for the success of this process. At the end of each meeting of the Work Group, State, County, and Tribal leaders are asked to meet with the Group for a review of what happened at the meeting.
- Supervisors serve as "ambassadors" back to their offices and to the leadership and supervisors in their region, briefing them on developments at each meeting and asking for feedback.
- Regular presentations to the MACSSA and/or appropriate Association Committee(s) and solicitation of feedback.
- The goal: a totally transparent process where there are no surprises and everyone owns the Plan.

Essential Ingredients for Success: #4: Marketing Plan

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- The feedback loops are, in a sense, part of a marketing plan.
- As and after the Strategic Plan is developed, the Work Group needs to spend time on how to “sell” the plan to internal and external stakeholders.
- The Work Group “spins” for different stakeholders, identifies potential barriers, and develops plans to address these.
- A Marketing Plan is particularly helpful in state-supervised/county-administered systems and in states that have fairly autonomous counties.

Essential Ingredients for Success: #5: Ensuring Sustainability

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- Conclusion we have reached: if a child welfare system does not continuously monitor child welfare supervision, it will deteriorate.
- Our goal: change the agency culture of practice and supervision AND create a child welfare supervision system in the agency.
- Our means: to embed systemic reform at the mid-level of the agency by making child welfare supervisors the agency’s practice change agents. This is one way for agencies to “weather” change in leadership.
- Some States have formalized the Supervision Work Group to continue after development and implementation of the Strategic Plan as a means to monitor supervision continuously and to provide the leadership a forum for ongoing dialogue about child welfare practice and outcomes.

Other Notes:

Use of a Supervisory Case Review Tool (SCRT)

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- Some jurisdictions have asked the Supervision Work Group to develop a Supervisory Case Review Tool (SCRT) as part of the Group’s Casework/Clinical Supervision goals, or because the SCRT is part of the State’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP).
- The purpose of the SCRT is to provide a uniform case review tool and monitor CFSR issues for the State’s QA unit.
- In addition, supervisors can use this tool in casework/clinical supervision.
- For example, in one State, supervisors use this tool—together with each frontline worker—for one case per quarter. The tool is used not for performance evaluation, but to identify the worker’s strengths and challenges and this information feeds into the worker’s annual Professional Development Plan.

Other Notes:

CW and JJ; Technical Assistance; Peer Network

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- In some jurisdictions, child welfare and juvenile justice are part of the same organizational division. In these instances, the strategic plan has to address supervision of the work with both populations.
- Some jurisdictions need help only in developing the Supervision Strategic Plan. Others also need technical assistance in implementing the plan.
- Potential future development: setting up a peer network of States/jurisdictions who are working to reform child welfare supervision.

Special Thanks to:

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- Paula Neese and JoAnn Lamm, who were the child welfare directors in Missouri and North Carolina where this process was “co-invented.” They taught us how critical leadership vision, participation, and ownership is to this process.
- The child welfare supervisors of Missouri, North Carolina, Idaho, Alabama, Vermont, Oregon, and Alaska. They taught us that when supervisors are truly empowered, they can serve as practice change agents and help the agency achieve the best possible outcomes.

Sources

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Contact Information

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- The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI), University of Southern Maine.
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